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Adolescent Self Disclosure in Non-Functional Family Situations due to Infidelity Case Study in Lamongan Regency

Nadhifah Bernice Tsaniyah 1, Ririn Puspita Tutiasri 2

¹ UPN "Veteran" East Java, Nadhifah Bernice Tsaniyah, Surabaya, Indonesia, <u>21043010042@student.upnjatim.ac.id</u>
² UPN "Veteran" East Java, Ririn Puspita Tutiasri, Surabaya, Indonesia, ririn puspita.ilkom@upnjatim.ac.id

Corresponding Author Email: <u>21043010042@student.upnjatim.ac.id</u>

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ABSTRACT

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Self Disclosure, Family Crisis, Adolescents, Interpersonal Communication, Social Media This study explores self-disclosure among adolescents who experience dysfunctional family dynamics due to parental infidelity, specifically in the cultural context of Lamongan, Indonesia. The research highlights how adolescents negotiate personal boundaries in sharing their emotional experiences within interpersonal relationships. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involved in-depth interviews with seven adolescents aged 17-22 who have experienced direct or indirect consequences of parental infidelity. Findings reveal that adolescents tend to be selective in their selfdisclosure, particularly when interacting with new acquaintances. In early interactions, they only share surface-level information such as the number of family members or parents' occupations, avoiding emotionally sensitive topics. The study shows that emotional closeness significantly influences the depth of information shared adolescents disclose more when trust and empathy are present in a relationship. Furthermore, digital media has emerged as an alternative space for self-disclosure. Some informants report greater comfort in sharing personal stories with strangers online than with close friends in real life, due to perceived anonymity and lower emotional risk. However, this behavior also poses risks related to privacy and misuse of information. The research emphasizes that self-disclosure is a gradual and context-dependent process shaped by interpersonal trust, emotional safety, and the communicative medium used. This study contributes to the understanding of adolescent psychological resilience and the role of communication in emotional recovery from family crises, highlighting the importance of creating supportive environments both offline and online.

INTRODUCTION

Family is the main foundation for the communication and social development of an adolescent. However, not all families are able to carry out their functions in their entirety. Infidelity as a form of betrayal in domestic relationships is one of the main factors that cause divorce which has serious implications for the stability of adolescent development in the family. In Lamongan Regency, the number of infidelity cases is quite high, which was recorded by the Central Statistics Agency as 95 cases of divorce due to infidelity and 123 cases of divorce

due to adultery in 2023, making it one of the regions with the highest number of cases in East Java (BPS, 2024).

Teenagers who grow up in domestic conditions disrupted by infidelity are often caught up in social crises. They lose their sense of security, trust, and emotional stability. This kind of crisis not only impacts the relationship between parent and child, but also on the ability of adolescents to establish healthy interpersonal relationships in their social environment (Susanto & Hermanto, 2023). In this situation, self-disclosure is important because it is part of

adolescents' interpersonal communication strategies to express themselves, express their feelings, thoughts, and experiences.

Teenagers don't always feel safe doing self-disclosure. This can be caused by negative responses from parents, such as judging or scolding, that make teens reluctant to open up. In fact, self-disclosure is an important mechanism in healthy interpersonal communication. When teens are able to talk about how they're feeling, whether to parents, friends, or counselors, they have a greater chance of building supportive relationships and reducing the emotional stress they experience (Aninda et al., 2023). Self-openness is also a way for adolescents to gain validation, empathy, and support from their surroundings.

Self-disclosure, as one of the important elements of interpersonal communication, is a big challenge for teenagers who grow up in a family that is experiencing a crisis due to infidelity. The process of self-disclosure involves the ability to express personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences to others honestly and openly. However, for teens who have experienced family trauma, this process is often hampered by fear, shame, or confusion. They may feel that talking about their feelings will only make things worse or make things worse. They look weak in the eyes of others. Crisis The family is a condition in which family relationships are not harmonious and the family does not function as a complete unit, since there are often conflicts and quarrels that cause instability in the household (Willis, 2021).

Unfortunately, research that specifically addresses adolescent self-disclosure in the context of family crisis due to infidelity in areas with collectivistic norms such as Lamongan is still very limited. This is an important gap to study, especially since the process of self-disclosure is strongly influenced by cultural contexts, communication dynamics in the family, and the characteristics of late adolescence (Hartanti & Salsabila, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Family Crisis Due to Infidelity

Family crisis is a very labile condition in the family, where two-way communication in democratic conditions no longer exists between family members.

The factors that cause family crises are: 1). Lack or breakdown of communication between family members, especially fathers and mothers. 2) The egocentrism of each husband and wife causes complications in the household which leads to continuous fighting. 3) Economic problems, namely poverty, clearly have an impact on family life, if the emotional life of the husband and wife is immature, there will be quarrels because the wife demands a lot beyond her primary needs.4) The problem of parents' busyness is focused on finding material, namely property and money (Siregar, 2015).

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, feelings, and meanings through verbal and nonverbal messages between two or more people, which take place in person or face-to-face. In the context of this study, interpersonal communication is key in understanding and overcoming the trauma experienced by adolescents, with important elements such as empathy, active listening, and providing support (DeVito, 2019). A special form of this communication is diadik communication, which is an interaction between two individuals who have a certain relationship, such as between mother and child or doctor and patient.

(2019)emphasizes **DeVito** that this communication creates a strong emotional connection. Deddy Mulyana (2000, 2005) also explained that interpersonal communication allows each individual to capture the response of his interlocutor directly, either through words or nonverbal gestures, which is important in the process of understanding each other, such as in the relationship between husband and wife, close friends, or teachers and students. According to Devito, closeness and intimacy are formed through the communication process, with the aim that the message conveyed can have a direct influence. Interpersonal communication ideally begins with a psychological approach to create closeness, so that the message can be well received and produce a real impact (Nerissa & Tutiasri, 2022).

Definition of Teenager

Human development includes several stages, one of which is adolescence. According to Mappiare, adolescence lasts between the ages of 12 to 21 years for females, and 13 to 22 years for males, which is divided into two stages: early adolescence (12/13–

17/18 years) and late adolescence (17/18–21/22 years) (Akbar et al., 2023). During this period, there are various rapid changes, both hormonal, physical, psychological, and social. Noticeable physical changes include the development of secondary sex signs, growth spurt, and shifts in behavior and social relationships. If not properly observed, these changes can trigger certain disorders or diseases (Baharuddin, 2019).

Social Penetration Theory

The Social Penetration Theory developed by Altman and Taylor (1973) explains that interpersonal relationships develop through stages of deepening openness, ranging from relationships that feel unfamiliar to become very familiar, depending on the interests and needs of each individual. In the context of traumatized adolescents, this process of openness is often hampered by several factors such as fear of rejection, lack of trust due to bad experiences, and unstable emotional states, all of which make it difficult for adolescents to be open. This theory initially development of interpersonal described the relationships in a linear manner from the beginning of relationship, maintenance, rift disconnection but in its development, it was refined into a more circular process, illustrating that social penetration also involves the dilution of tensions in complex relationships (Nurdin, 2020).

Social Penetration Theory according to Littlejohn (2009: 911) identifies five stages of development in interpersonal relationships, starting from the orientation stage, where individuals engage in short and superficial conversations. The next stage is affective exploration, in which individuals begin to express personal attitudes about general topics, but are still within the bounds of ordinary friendships. Then it enters the affective stage, which is characterized by openness to personal matters, criticism of each other, and the existence of emotional and physical closeness such as hugs. The fourth stage is the stable stage, where openness is deepened, both parties can predict each other's emotional responses, and the relationship feels established. However, relationships do not always run linear, as they can enter the stage of depenetration, which is the phase when the relationship begins to deteriorate due to conflict and emotional distance, which can eventually lead to the breakup of the relationship. Altman and Taylor emphasized that the process of self-disclosure is at the core of openness in human relationships, which needs to be done realistically and gradually as the relationship progresses (Nurdin, 2020).

Self Disclosure

This theory discusses the process of self-disclosure carried out by individuals in different ways, where self-disclosure is interpreted as an expression in conveying personal information that is descriptive, affective, and evaluative. In its development, self-expression is no longer limited to face-to-face communication, but also extends to written, audio, and visual forms through digital media such as the internet (Nurdin, 2020). Raven and Rubin (1983) explain that self-disclosure tends to follow the principle of reciprocity (*Reciprocal*), where when someone shares personal information, the other person will be encouraged to give a balanced response. It reflects the basic need of human beings to be treated as they treat others (Zulkifli, 2018).

METHOD

Research Approach

This study uses a type of qualitative research method with a case study approach, as it allows researchers to examine in depth the experiences of selected adolescents in their social and family contexts. By focusing on cases of family infidelity, research can provide an in-depth and detailed picture of interpersonal communication in family crisis situations. The qualitative method was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meaning, emotions, and dynamics of communication that occur in the situation. Through this method, research can reveal how individuals in the adolescent age group manage feelings, rebuild trust, and navigate interpersonal interactions after facing traumatic experiences. One of the important aspects studied is self-disclosure, which is the extent to which individuals share their feelings, thoughts, and experiences with others as a form of emotional recovery and social support seeking. This research focuses not only on the psychological impact, but also on how interpersonal communication plays a role in the process of recovery and reconstruction of family relationships for adolescents in crisis.

The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling, where participants are selected based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. Adolescents who experienced family crises due to infidelity were chosen to provide in-depth data so that they could clarify the communication process and emotional dynamics in the situation. The data collection technique used in this study is in-depth interviews. This method allows researchers to obtain narratives directly from participants, exploring their perspectives, feelings, and coping mechanisms. Through interviews, this study seeks to capture the ways in which adolescents *self-disclosure*, seek support, and rebuild interpersonal trust after facing a crisis.

RESULTS

Teens in Family Crisis Due to Infidelity

Self-disclosure in adolescents who experience family crises due to infidelity requires an approach that considers social and cultural aspects. This section serves as a bridge that connects the theoretical foundations in the previous chapters of the results that will be presented. By understanding the characteristics of the research object (self disclosure) and the profile of the research subject (adolescent victims of parental infidelity), we can contextualize the research findings in a more comprehensive framework.

The object of this research is *self-disclosure* in adolescents who experience family crises due to infidelity in Lamongan Regency. The focus of the research lies on how adolescents express their personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences regarding their family conflicts, as well as the factors that influence the process of self-disclosure. This study uses an interpersonal communication approach to analyze the dynamics of *self disclosure* in the context of family crisis.

The subjects of this study involved seven adolescents aged 17-22 years from Lamongan Regency who experienced a family crisis due to parental infidelity. The subject group consisted of six women and one man with varied family backgrounds, ranging from separated parents to divorce due to infidelity. The respondents were selected based on the criteria of having witnessed or known about parental infidelity and experienced significant psychological impacts. The age range was chosen because it represents a late adolescence phase with typical developmental challenges. The selection of the

location of Lamongan Regency is based on the high number of cases of infidelity recorded in the area. Here is a brief profile of the research subject:

Informative Information	Age	Home	Background
Informant N	18	Lamongan	His parents separated since he was a child due to his father's infidelity.
Informant L	20	Lamongan	His father divorced three times, one of which was due to infidelity.
Inform A	21	Lamongan	Parental infidelity from the age of 12–13 years.
Informant D	19	Lamongan	The parents divorced in 2021 due to infidelity, now living with the father.
Informant C	17	Lamongan	Experienced severe trauma to the point of once attempting suicide due to divorce due to parental infidelity.
Infroman M	21	Lamongan	Facing emotional instability, as well as severe physical pain due to father's infidelity.
Informant S	22	Lamongan	Parents divorced due to infidelity in junior high school

According to Mappiare (1982), adolescence occurs in the age range of 12 to 21 years for women, and 13 to 22 years for men. This period is divided into two stages, namely early adolescence which lasts from the age of 12/13 to 17/18 years, and late adolescence which covers the age of 17/18 to 21/22 years (Akbar et al., 2023). In this study, the researcher took an age range of 17-22 years which is late adolescence. The family backgrounds of all the subjects came from families that were separated due to infidelity, with diverse psychological and social impacts. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews (in-depth interview) to explore the subjective experiences of adolescents related to Self-Disclosure and the impact of the family crisis. The research was conducted in Lamongan Regency, which has the highest divorce rate due to infidelity in the East Java province.

DISCUSSION

Selective Personal Information in Self Disclosure

The selectivity of information in *self-disclosure* reflects adolescents' adaptive efforts to maintain privacy. Sharing a story with an unknown person can backfire, such as getting a negative label or opening up an old wound that hasn't healed. Therefore, they are more comfortable conveying information that is already considered "safe" emotionally and socially.

Teenagers, especially in Lamongan Regency, tend to be cautious or selective in sharing personal information, especially about their families. When talking to new people, they usually only tell them things that are general, such as the number of family members, the parents' job, or where they live. They are not willing to share deeper or sensitive things, such as problems in the family or personal feelings for their parents.

This corresponds to the orientation stage in social penetration theory, which explains that at the beginning of getting to know someone, the individual will only open up on a surface level. At this stage, the conversation is still polite, public, and not too personal. This means that they are trying to build comfort first before opening up further. The process of forming interpersonal relationships, individuals will exchange various types of information, ranging from the most superficial to the deepest, such as surface, peripheral, intermediate, to core information. The first layer of this process, the surface information, contains

the most basic and accessible things about a person (Manning, 2019).

Self-disclosure Informants 3, 4, 6, and 7 are quite selective towards new people they only share general information about the family when interacting with new people. The information shared is usually about the number of siblings, parents' jobs, where they live, or family vacations, without touching on personal or sensitive matters. The following is the statement from the informant:

"Most of the standard ones are just like genealogy. The number of brothers continues, about the family like trivial questions about what your parents do, what are the general standards."Informant 3, 4 June 2025

"Usually when you first meet, eh, what else is your father? Like that. It's not like it's deep enough for a family story that doesn't seem to have a problem or whatever." Informant 4, 5 June 2025

"If the topic is about family, meeting new people may be more of a life, if we are on vacation. It's very rare to talk about the realm of privacy." Informant 6, 7 June 2025

"If you just get to know me, I usually only discuss general things like where your family is or how many relatives you have. I avoid stories that are too personal, because it's just uncomfortable." Informant 7, 8 June 2025

The four statements of informants 3, 4, 6, and 7 are that there is selective communication when they interact with new people, especially in discussing the topic of family. Informant 3 said that during the introduction process, the information shared was only limited to family tree and parents' work, without touching on deeper personal aspects. This suggests that individuals tend to limit themselves to commonly known surface information and do not pose any emotional risk. This statement is in line with the opinion of informant 4 who stated that the questions that often arise usually only revolve around parental activities, such as work, without further exploration of family conditions or dynamics. This attitude reflects the caution in maintaining privacy boundaries in the early stages of social interaction.

Furthermore, informant 6 also pointed out the same thing by explaining that conversations about

family tend to be limited to light topics such as activities during vacations. The information shared is casual and does not touch on internal family issues. This indicates the existence of a self-protection mechanism that aims to maintain comfort and avoid potential negative judgments from new people. Meanwhile, 7 informants explicitly stated that they avoid personal topics because they feel uncomfortable when it comes to revealing sensitive matters about family to people they don't know closely. This statement confirms that emotional comfort and trust factors play an important role in determining the extent to which a person is willing to open up, especially regarding personal aspects such as family dynamics.

Proximity Drives Depth of Information

The depth of information that a person shares in interpersonal communication is seen from the level of closeness of the relationship with his interlocutor. The closer the relationship between two individuals both emotionally and socially, the more likely a person is to reveal in-depth information. According to Ernala et al. (2018), the more comfortable and trusting a person has with the interlocutor, the more likely he or she is to reveal deeper personal information. This shows that self-openness does not only occur due to internal impulses, but is also greatly influenced by external dynamics in the form of the quality of interpersonal relationships.

interpersonal interactions, closeness encourages a person to reveal deeper information about his or her family. Based on the results of interviews with Informants 1, 3, and 4, it appears that the process of openness does not take place suddenly, but through stages that depend on how much trust and comfort has been built. When individuals feel that the interlocutor has a good enough level of closeness because they interact frequently, have similar backgrounds, or show empathy, the tendency to share more personal information becomes more profound. Deeper information in this context includes things that are emotional and sensitive, such as conflicts in the family, feelings towards parents, domestic pressures, or childhood experiences. In this context, closeness is driven by long-lasting relationships. The following is an explanation from the informant:

"If it's with people who are already very close, yes, I've known them for a long time. Yes, if you have

known me for a long time. Yes, I must be flowing. I mean I must tell them how it happened, how I felt, why I felt like this. In that family, it turned out that my family was like this, this, this, this. So I told them. To ease the burden of the mind on me" Informant 1, May 31, 2025

"Well, if I usually do, yes, I may be open to people who are close to me, so it's a problem about my family, but it's not a really personal problem. It's like funny things like that I often tell about my family. So it's like if I think it's funny, I'll tell you about it. If the problem is that I don't think it's funny, I don't tell you things. If it's sad like an incident, I can still tell you."

Informant 3, 4 June 2025

"If I'm personal, yes, it's more profound if it's with people who are already close. And it also depends on how the person is." **Informant 4, 5 June 2025**

Based on the statements of the three informants, it can be seen that emotional closeness is the main determinant in the process of revealing more in-depth information about the family. Informant 1 explicitly said that openness occurs when you feel really close and know someone for a long period of time. This closeness gives her the space to tell stories in a flowing way about personal experiences and feelings about her family's condition, even used as a way to ease the burden of the mind. This shows that *self-disclosure* is not only meant to share information, but also has as a form of release emotions.

Meanwhile, Informant 3 emphasized that openness to the family also depends on the content or emotional content of the story. Informant 3 finds it easier to tell things that are considered funny or light, even if they are still to people who are close. However, when information concerns sad or personal matters, consideration for sharing it is still made selectively. This shows that proximity does encourage openness, but there are still filters based on the emotional value and sensitivity of the topic being discussed.

Informant 4 also showed a similar pattern, where the depth of information shared depended on the closeness of the relationship, as well as the character or attitude of the person who was the interlocutor. This indicates that in addition to the proximity factor, the assessment of the personality and responsiveness of others is also a consideration in deciding whether or not information is worth

disclosing or not. Closeness is the main entrance in the process of revealing personal information about the family, but this process still runs dynamically and selectively depending on the context of the relationship, the content of the story, and the individual's perception of the interlocutor.

Social Media as a New Means of Self Disclosure in the Digital Era

In today's digital era, social media has become a new space for many people to express themselves. Whereas previously *self-disclosure* only occurred in direct conversation or in close quarters, now individuals can share their thoughts, feelings, and even personal experiences through uploads, stories, or comments on social media, which allows them to express themselves more broadly and flexibly without space and time limitations.

The phenomenon of self-openness on social media is in line with Rubin's (1975) statement in Rimé (2023) which states that a person can be more open to strangers, even that openness can exceed what is usually shared in intimate social interactions. Social media creates a space where individuals can selectively share stories and feel safer due to anonymity and social distancing. In its development, the process of self-disclosure of a person occurs not only through the process of face-to-face communication, but has penetrated into written, auditory, and even visual forms through a technological network in the form of the internet (Nurdin, 2020).

Social media is now not only a means of communication, but also serves as a new forum for self-openness, especially for informants 3 who find it difficult to speak directly. Although it provides a wider and more flexible space, the use of social media for *self-disclosure* must still be done wisely and aware of the limits of personal privacy. The following is the explanation of the informant:

"People who are really strangers that we meet on the internet or we meet on social media accounts. What really does not have interaction with our social environment. In fact, I can tend to be much more open than friends who have been close to me for many years. Because I feel like it's like talking to a wall. But he could answer. So he was also probably an hour after I told him, he had forgotten too." **Informant 3, 4 June 2025**

Informant 3 revealed interesting an phenomenon in the context of self-disclosure on social media. Feel more comfortable telling stories to strangers who have no direct connection to their social environment than close friends they have known for a long time. Strangers on social media are likened to a "wall" that can hear without judgment, but can still respond. However, this convenience also brings its own challenges. Not everyone on social media has good intentions. Personal information shared may be misused, disseminated without permission, or subjected to bullying. Therefore, it is important for individuals to maintain control over what they want to share and always consider the long-term impact of each upload.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the self-disclosure process in adolescents who experience family crises, especially due to parental infidelity, takes place selectively and gradually. Teens tend to disclose personal information carefully and consider emotional and social aspects before revealing sensitive matters. Emotional closeness has proven to be a determining factor in the depth of information shared. The higher the level of trust and comfort with the interlocutor, the deeper the information revealed. In the early stages of a relationship or when interacting with new people, teens tend to share only surface information such as the number of family members, parental work, or daily activities. This is in line with the stages in Social Penetration Theory which emphasizes openness starting from general information.

Social media has become an alternative space for teenagers to do self-disclosure. Some teens feel more comfortable expressing themselves to strangers on social media than close friends in the real world. This phenomenon shows that the presence of digital media creates a new dynamic in self-openness, where the boundary between public and private becomes more fluid. Even so, using social media to reveal personal things still carries risks, such as misuse of information or privacy violations. Therefore, the process of self-openness in the digital space still requires self-control and awareness of the long-term consequences.

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