

Grieving the Death of the Loved Ones among the Incarcerated Women: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract: Incarcerated women faced multiple stresses due to both different situations in prison and daily life stressors such as the death of a loved one. The aim of this study was to understand the meaning of grief on the death of a loved one among incarcerated women by using a phenomenology approach. The phenomenological study used in this study was an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Langdridge, 2007). Four incarcerated women who experienced the death of a loved one participated in this study. The results revealed seven common meanings of grief, as well as an opportunity to forgive the deceased one, release problems and anger, be more able to sympathize and empathize, protect the loved ones, have the desire to do more deeds, be close to God, and focus on the future. The findings generated from this study are expected to help healthcare providers in prison to understand the grief experienced by incarcerated women and develop a program to facilitate it.

1 INTRODUCTION

Incarcerated women faced multiple stresses due to the different situations in prison. Punishment requires inmates to be able to adapt to the scheduled activities, rules and time constraints to meet loved ones. Therefore, inmates at the beginning will be psychologically affected (Williams, 2007). Incarcerated women have additional women's needs such as gynecology and obstetrics (Bastick & Townhead, 2008; Nastami, 2012). Whereas because of the psychological conditions typical of incarcerated women they are more vulnerable to mental disorders due to the burden owned, despite both imprisoned men and women having similar experience. Incarcerated women have a specific role in domestic affairs, such as keeping the family intact, taking care of children, and related marital conflicts or unresolved relationships (Gussak, 2010). Therefore, incarcerated women have a heavier burden coupled with the grieving experience that must occur inside the prison.

Grief can happen to everyone, including an inmate, while undergoing a period of imprisonment, such as the death of a loved one because it is a specific event (Aiken, 1994; Howarth, 2011; Tomlinson, 2011). Grief is a common term used to describe the response to loss (Walter & McCoyd,

2009). Being separated from a loved one is the primary stressor among inmates (Bastick & Townhead, 2008; Harner, Hentz & Evangelista, 2010; Keaveny & Zauszniewski, 1999; Sarafino, 1998), more so if the loved one died (Ferszt, 2000). The interesting fact is that almost half of the incarcerated women population experience the death of a loved one during their imprisonment (Harner et al., 2010).

Only a few studies explained the grieving experience (Ferszt, 2000; Harner et al., 2010). Though prison is described as an unsafe place to suffer, release emotions or lose their control (Harner et al., 2010). The imprisonment has limited space where the site is the iron bars surround the prison and the high walls surround the prison area. Of course, this situation means inmates are limited in expressing or realizing what they want to do, including in mourning. A prison is a place where movements and options are limited. Indeed inmates are put in the subordinate and dependent role. So inmates believe that prison is not the right place to refer to their expression (Houck, 2001; Tesh, 1996). Detention is not provided as a healing environment, and many of the prisoners are released in a worse situation than before they enter. Imprisonment only exacerbates the underlying problems of trauma and creates more complex problems, especially post-

liberation (Ferszt, 2000; Leach, Burgess & Holmwood, 2008), such as difficulties in adapting (Ferszt, 2000), communicating and expressing emotions, to recidivism trends (Leach et al., 2008), coupled with grieving experience combined with limited facilities and facilitation in the prison.

Basically, theoretically grief is greatly influenced by the relationship with the loved one, the event of the death, personality (Aiken, 1994; Bolwby, 1980; Kristjanson, Lobb, Aoun, & Monterosso, 2006), sex of the griever (Aiken, 1994; Bolwby, 1980; Kristjanson et al., 2006; Mallon, 2008; Simon, 2001; Tomlinson, 2011), age (Aiken, 1994; Bolwby, 1980; Howarth, 2011), culture (Aiken, 1994; Howarth, 2011; Mallon, 2008; Tomlinson, 2011), religion and social values (Mallon, 2008; Tomlinson, 2011), and social support (Bolwby, 1980; Mallon, 2008). Also, Sabar (2000) explained that grief could be defined through several concepts, sadness, grief, mourning and bereavement. Conceptually, the explanation of pain consists of two things: causes level and meaning level, so that can be researched further in this study.

The author has found several previous studies that discussed the same theme by Ferszt in 2000, Harner and colleagues in 2010, and also Leach and colleagues in 2008. But these studies took a background outside of Indonesia. While in Indonesia, the author didn't find any research on the same theme. Though they may be inter-dependent due to differences in characteristics and values between Indonesia and others. Culture is an essential aspect of form and pattern in interpreting and valuing individual experience (Nagel, 2002). Moreover Papalia, Sterns, Feldman and Camp (2007) and also Solomon, Mitchell, Dutta and Thilakan (2010) emphasized that the grieving process is a universal experience, yet remains influenced by the cultural context. So this is what makes this research unique and significant. Therefore, there are various previous explanations behind the author reviewing this. The author wants to know how incarcerated women interpreted the grieving experience; can it intensely be formulated in the grand tour question, what is the meaning of grief for incarcerated women?

2 METHOD

This study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which focuses on how individuals view their particular experiences, without going through the hypothesis phase. The grief consists of

several responses, such as emotional, physiological, cognitive, behavioral, social or spiritual responses. In addition, the sampling method was a purposive sampling technique with some characteristics of subject, 1) incarcerated women, 2) having experienced the death of a loved one during the confinement, such as family members (birth or step), (3) adult, over 20 years (Santrock, 1985) (when death occurs), 4) the period of the death is not restricted because grief can happen for years and even a lifetime (Hoyer & Rodin, 2003; Park & Halifax, 2011), and 5) willing to be subject of research without any coercion. Furthermore, the data collection method used an in-depth interview with the semi-structured interview type. Interviews were conducted in four sessions for each subject, 1) the first session was rapport, trust building and informed consent, 2) the second session was continuing the trust building, 3) the third session was the core interview, when the subjects were given questions related to the research topic, and 4) the last meeting was a closing interview.

The data was examined using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is the process of coding producing a list of themes, theme models or complex indicators, qualifications usually associated with the issue, or things between or a combination of which have been mentioned. For credibility, this study used multiple encoding, where the author asked others to codify the transcripts, then the results from the numerous coders are compared with the result by the author. The result showed that the multiple coders give note that the data of the social and socio-cultural support factors don't explain fully or still need to dig deeper.

3 RESULT

This study explained the meaning of grief among incarcerated women.

Table 1: Identity of research subjects. Source: Results of data process, 2017.

	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4
Age	30 years old	49 years old	23 years old	26 years old
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam
Ethnicity	Betawinese	Javanese	Javanese	Javanese
Relation	Husband	Husband and	Son	Step Father

		Birth Father		
Time of the Death	2 days	Husband: ± 1 year Birth Father: ± 6 months	± 2 month s	± 3 months

First, in the explanation of the research subject according to Table 1, the author found four subjects. The subjects have the variation of the death experience of a loved one, while the time of the death is two days to one year.

Second, the study identified seven themes of grief among incarcerated women. But these themes are not wholly owned by the whole subject. Each subject generates only a few themes.

3.1 Theme 1: An Opportunity to Forgive the Deceased One

Theme 1 appears in several excerpts submitted by Subject 1 who claimed to have forgiven the mistakes of the loved one.

I felt peevisish, but now am fine, I already forgive him. (Subject 1)
Cause I was sincere, I already forgive him. Once I said, when I found he passed away, I feel my burden off (Subject 1).

This theme means that forgiving the mistakes of a loved one produced a sense of calm, sincerity, and burden off. Mainly this implies to be able to think positively about the loved one.

3.2 Theme 2: Release Problems and Anger

Theme 2 appears in several excerpts submitted by Subjects 1 and 2.

The person has died, so the problem is over (Subject 1).
The problem has released, I live with sincerity (Subject 1).
If they don't die, maybe I'm still angry (Subject 2).

This theme means that the death of the loved one is considered as an opportunity to release problems and anger that existed between the subject and the loved one. And it makes the subjects feel surrender in the destiny of life.

Themes 1 and 2 can be understood by a study conducted by Martinčeková & Klatt (2017), which explained that there is a significant relationship between grief and forgiveness. The anger of a griever is usually associated with interpersonal outrage and poor adjustment to the loss experienced. To be able to continue life without the presence of the loved one, it is necessary to make some efforts to achieve it. Forgiveness is considered an effective way of reducing feelings of depression, anxiety and anger as well as improving mental health. The role of forgiveness is believed to minimize grief because it focuses on the elimination of anger, resentment and guilt.

3.3 Theme 3: Be More Able to Sympathize and Empathize

Theme 3 appears in some excerpts submitted by Subject 2 and three that feel more reflective of the experience of other grievers.

I realized when one of my friends lost her father. I could feel what she feels, I become emotional. I hug her, she cried. Before it was not like that, now I can handle it (Subject 2).
I feel sorrier for my friends (the grievers) because I know (Subject 3).
Like I can see myself, I imagine myself, how it would be when I was in that position (Subject 3).

This theme means that there is an ability to feel what others feel when faced with loss experience. The subject showed it with a hug as solidarity and sympathy. In the context of grief, the griever will make an effort to form collective solidarity. It has benefit for themselves as an opportunity to gain support and share the pain. To build a solidarity group, it begins with sympathy and empathy (Stierl, 2016).

3.4 Theme 4: Protect the Loved One

Theme 4 appears in several excerpts submitted by Subjects 3 and 4. They think that they are the cause of the death.

Now, I often oversee Sheila (her other child), take care of her although I am here (Subject 3).
First, I have to take care of this one (her other child), more. I have this one only. Her caregiver should be aware with her more. Because we don't know, she is a kid (Subject 3).

Call for my mom often. "Take care yourself". She is diabetic. Remind her to eat healthy food every time. I don't want a loss of both of my parents in the jail (Subject 4).

This theme is a result of the thought and feeling that the subject has contributed to the death of the loved one. This theme means that there is still an attempt to correct mistakes being more protective of other loved ones to avoid loss experience. Rosenblatt (2008) in his study explained that a mother who loses her children wants to love other ones more. It causes awareness of vulnerability to loss. The protection is many things such as more awareness, faster response to the signs of trouble, and organizing the personal needs of loved ones.

3.5 Theme 5: Have Desire to Do More Deeds

Theme 5 appears in several excerpts submitted by Subjects 2 and 4.

There are differences in doing good, I want to do more. I realized that the barrier between life and the death is so thin. I have to see my savings for the afterlife (Subject 2).

Honestly, I'm thinking about my mother that she is alone. Taking care of sick people is not easy, difficult. Keep the shop too, I imagined that she must lift up (Subject 4).

This theme means that awareness to live after death and live in the world is an opportunity to prepare to face the grave. And also hope that when the subjects helped others, it would make the loved ones maintained by others too.

3.6 Theme 6: Be Close to God

Theme 6 appears in several excerpts submitted by Subjects 2, 3 and 4.

Regarding religious activity, I increased. For me, the rightest place is God, not to the peoples. With prayer (on a middle night), I feel comfort. I used the time because it's quiet and nobody. I want to cry and anything else, so I used it rightly. And also I took fasting to push my needs (Subject 2).

After my son died, I was praying. Fortunately, I can read the Qur'an. Now it's useful. I prayed for my son. Anyway, after maghrib prayer I read the Qur'an. This is for my family too (Subject 3).

More diligent to worship, pray, pray for my father, for my family who have died (Subject 4).

This theme means the discovery of tranquility in the spiritual and religious paths, thus raising the need to draw closer to God and study about religion, in addition to merely praying for the loved ones.

Themes 5 and 6 are about religion or spirituality. Religion is a central theme because it is regarded as a way to handle the burden of grief in the experience of death. Death and loss are motivation to develop religious commitment. Religion helps grief find solace in the form of spiritual practice, but doesn't show suppressed grief. And religious activities are related to cultural ritual (Park & Halifax, 2011).

The Javanese-Islamic culture signifies death as a reminder to death. And to face the death, people are encouraged to do many good things that they believed it to be carrying when they died. The death should not be met with crying and sadness because in time everyone would die. So the attitude that should be shown in the face of the death is sincere by always praying for the loved ones (Geertz, 1973).

3.7 Theme 7: Focus to the Future

Theme 7 appears in a few excerpts delivered by Subject 1 and two in which they started to focus more on the future overtime.

I want to think about my future with my son. He doesn't exist, no need to remind all the time (Subject 1).

Focus on the future because I am realistic (Subject 2).

This theme has meaning if there are still other expectations and responsibilities that must be faced and not only dissolved with the grief situation. This is the reorganization stage of grief. The final stage but this stage could be very emotional to the griever to try to build a new life and create new goals in his life (Hoyer & Rodin, 2003).

4 DISCUSSION

Society and culture form individuals regarding spirituality, religion and interrelated rituals. And these aspects also affect beliefs, social values and philosophical ideas in their lives and deaths. Especially in supporting and influencing the diversity of grief responses in adults (Mallon, 2008). Unfortunately, however, prisons are described not as a safe place for individuals to suffer, release emotions or lose their control (Harner et al., 2010).

5 CONCLUSION

This study identified themes, in which incarcerated women interpret grief as an opportunity to forgive the deceased, release problems and anger, be more able to sympathize and empathize, protect loved ones, desire to do more good, get closer to God and study religion, and focus on the future.

An understanding of the grief experience of women should be able to assist healthcare providers in prison, especially in developing programs to facilitate the grief and support the state healthcare system. Mental health services are also needed to provide support for self-management when dealing with crises by reducing the possibility of using unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as medications and emergency evaluation of risky behaviors, such as suicidal or offensive inclinations, and possible use of alcohol after their release later.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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