

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Self-Acceptance in Adolescent Girls with Stepmothers

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the phenomenon of self-acceptance in adolescent girls who have stepmothers, using an interpretive phenomenological approach. The main focus of this study is to explore the subjective experiences of adolescent girls in building self-acceptance in the context of their relationships with their stepmothers. The data collection technique used interviews with five research subjects. The data analysis technique in this study used the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach with the help of the Nvivo Version 12 program. The results of the study indicate that self-acceptance in adolescent girls with stepmothers is influenced by various factors, including the dynamics of interpersonal relationships with stepmothers, the role of emotional support from the family, and the adolescent's personal experiences related to self-identity and feelings of being accepted in the family. This self-acceptance is influenced by how adolescent girls relate to their stepmothers, as well as how they accept changes in their family structure. Adolescent girls may feel threatened or unaccepted, especially if their relationship with their biological mother was previously very strong. The mismatch between the real self and the ideal self, especially if they feel they have to adjust to the expectations or standards of their stepmother, can affect their self-acceptance.

Keywords: Stepmother, Self-Acceptance, Adolescents

INTRODUCTION

A harmonious and happy family is the aspiration of every individual, both for married couples and for the children born from such unions. The family serves as the first and foremost environment for children to learn about the world, receive love, and develop their character and personality. Children rely heavily on a stable family structure to ensure that their emotional and

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psychological needs are met. When this structure undergoes a drastic change such as due to the death of a parent or divorce children are likely to experience significant emotional upheaval. They must not only cope with the loss of a key figure in their lives but also adapt to a new family dynamic that may emerge, including the presence of a stepparent.

According to Sejati and Suhita (2023), no child wishes for their family to fall apart, and such changes often leave deep psychological impacts. While adults may view remarriage as a solution for rebuilding life after divorce or the loss of a spouse, for children, it can result in a sense of double loss not only the absence of a biological parent but also the challenge of accepting a new figure in the family, such as a stepfather or stepmother.

The presence of a stepparent can be a highly challenging experience for adolescents. As found by Sari et al. (2022), the family is an irreplaceable component in a child's educational and developmental process. Therefore, family structure and dynamics significantly influence a child's psychological growth. When this structure is incomplete or changes—such as through parental divorce followed by remarriage it can lead to dysfunctions in the educational and developmental process. Children in such families face additional challenges in adapting and redefining their role within the altered family system.

Adolescence, in particular, is a highly vulnerable stage that is profoundly influenced by the family environment. It is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood, marked by significant physical, emotional, social, and cognitive changes (Papalia & Olds in Lindawati & Utami, 2021). During this phase, adolescents strive to establish their identity and deeply need support and acceptance from those closest to them especially their nuclear family. When they must navigate a new family arrangement with the presence of a stepmother, the process of identity formation becomes even more complex. Adjusting to the stepmother's presence requires adolescents to accept changes in the emotional bonds they previously had, particularly with their biological father.

Various studies show that adolescent girls often have strong emotional attachments to their biological mothers, making the presence of a stepmother feel like a threat to that bond (Aini & Zuhdi, 2021). Many girls face internal conflict when asked to accept a stepmother as part of their daily lives. When the process of acceptance does not go smoothly, they may experience identity crises, low self-esteem, and difficulty forming social relationships. Conversely, if they can adapt and accept the presence of a stepmother positively, this contributes to psychological balance and overall family harmony.

According to Burns (1993), self-acceptance is a crucial process in adolescent psychological



development, whereby individuals learn to view themselves positively, embrace both their strengths and weaknesses, and build self-confidence. Positive self-acceptance also influences how adolescents perceive and accept changes in their environment, including changes in family structure. Adolescents who are capable of accepting themselves are generally better able to accept others, including a stepmother, into their lives.

However, in reality, not all adolescents are able to easily accept a stepmother's presence. Preliminary interviews conducted by the researcher with five adolescent girls from three different areas (Leksono District, Kedung Waringin, and Kembangan) revealed a range of emotional responses reflecting the challenges of self-acceptance and adjustment to a stepmother. Some subjects showed a positive acceptance of the stepmother, although initially accompanied by feelings of loss and confusion. Others expressed sadness, anger, disappointment, and even rejection, feeling that their father's decision to remarry did not consider their emotional needs.

The inability of the stepmother to establish emotional closeness and communication further deteriorated the relationship between adolescent and stepmother. Some subjects felt ignored, unaccepted, or even rejected by the stepmother, intensifying the difficulty in achieving self-acceptance. This illustrates that accepting a stepmother is not a simple process, but one influenced by many factors both internal (the adolescent's psychological readiness) and external (family support and the stepmother's parenting style).

This situation becomes even more complex as adolescents are simultaneously navigating other developmental pressures such as identity exploration, the need for social acceptance, and attraction to the opposite sex (Wulandari & Mawardah, 2023). Within a family context full of stress and uncertainty, the search for self-identity can be disrupted, potentially leading to an identity crisis (Huriati, 2016). Erikson (in Huriati, 2016) notes that an identity crisis arises when individuals feel incapable of determining their life direction due to disturbed interpersonal relationships and negative self-perception.

Therefore, it is essential to understand how adolescent girls interpret the presence of a stepmother in their lives and how their self-acceptance process unfolds within the context of a transformed family. This study aims to explore in depth the psychological dynamics experienced by adolescent girls who have stepmothers, using an interpretative phenomenological approach. This approach is considered relevant as it allows an in-depth exploration of the adolescents' subjective experiences, including the meanings they construct from those experiences. Through a more comprehensive understanding, this research is expected to contribute to the development of more effective psychological support and family education strategies in dealing with post-



divorce and remarriage dynamics. Based on this background, the researcher is interested in further examining this issue in a thesis entitled *"Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Self-Acceptance in Adolescent Girls with Stepmothers."*

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative phenomenological approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of adolescent girls in accepting the presence of a stepmother. This method was chosen for its flexibility and its ability to explore emotional responses and personal meanings within specific social contexts. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation conducted in three locations: Leksono District, Kedung Waringin, and Kembangan.

RESULTS ANDA DISCUSS

Results

Theme Stages of Self Acceptance

Subtheme: Aversion (instinctive reactions to unpleasant situations)

Aversion refers to the instinctive emotional responses that arise when someone is confronted with a situation perceived as unpleasant. At this initial stage of facing an unwelcome change, individuals exhibit various emotional reactions based on their personal circumstances and psychological readiness.

Research Subject 1

This subject experienced a mix of emotions upon learning that her father was going to remarry. Although she had been informed of the plan beforehand, she still felt shocked and saddened when the marriage actually took place. As an adolescent girl, this change in family structure was emotionally intense and difficult to fully accept. She felt emotionally unprepared, even though she did not show excessive reactions. The subject tried to see the positive side of having a stepmother, viewing it as an opportunity to build a new relationship. However, she openly admitted that her affection remained stronger for her biological mother. The emotional bond with her mother was still very strong, and she had not yet fully accepted the presence of the stepmother on an emotional level.



Research Subject 2

This subject showed a rather indifferent attitude toward her father's marriage to her stepmother and chose not to become emotionally involved. She did not learn about the marriage from her father, but from her biological mother. At the time of the wedding, she was still very young and did not fully understand the implications of the family change, although she recalled feeling surprised when attending the wedding. Afterward, she never communicated with her father or stepmother due to a prohibition from her biological mother, as well as her perception that her stepmother was unfriendly toward her. This situation created emotional distance between the subject and both her father and stepmother. Even into her teenage years, the subject still felt confused and struggled to understand her complex family situation.

Research Subject 3

This subject reported that when her father remarried, she was too young to grasp the full meaning of the situation. She adopted a passive stance, simply following her father's decisions without expressing any particular reaction, considering it to be an adult matter. Initially, she did not experience any negative emotions and carried on with her life as usual. However, as she grew older—especially during her early teenage years in junior high school—she began to perceive uncomfortable dynamics within the family, particularly in her relationship with her stepmother. She felt that her stepmother treated her and her sibling differently compared to other family members, especially in terms of attention and gifts. Although the stepmother never openly showed anger, the subject sensed emotional distance and a lack of full acceptance. The relationship started out relatively fine but always felt emotionally limited. As she matured, the subject became more sensitive to the behavior of those around her, including her stepmother, which occasionally led to feelings of annoyance, even though some level of comfort remained in their interactions.

Research Subject 4

This subject tried to understand her father's reasons for remarrying. She speculated that he might have been seeking qualities he didn't find in her biological mother, such as greater attention or more emotional compatibility. Initially, her family did not tell her about her father's second marriage. She found out indirectly after discovering a baby's photo with a name containing part of her father's name. Her curiosity led her to ask her mother, but she received no answer. Eventually, a younger relative innocently informed her that her father had two wives. Her initial



reaction was disappointment, anger, and denial. She believed that a child should have only one mother. However, over time, she tried to accept this reality. She realized the situation could not be changed and tried to let go, seeing it as a part of her life journey. Her first meeting with her stepmother triggered feelings of anger and resentment, as she blamed the stepmother for the family's separation. Nonetheless, witnessing her biological mother remain calm and accepting of the situation motivated the subject to do the same, as a way of honoring and protecting her mother's feelings.

Research Subject 5

The subject expressed feelings of happiness and enthusiasm when her father announced his intention to remarry. She looked forward to the formation of a new family, including the possibility of having a stepmother and perhaps stepsiblings, which sparked excitement. Although some initial worries arose, her feelings of joy and optimism remained dominant. Over time, the subject began to feel increasingly comfortable with the presence of her stepmother. Their relationship developed positively, as the stepmother was open, not overly controlling, and showed genuine care. This attitude created an atmosphere of mutual understanding, making the subject feel accepted and valued. In conclusion, despite the early anxiety, the subject successfully adapted and built a harmonious relationship with her stepmother. This acceptance process illustrates that emotional attention and open communication can strengthen the dynamics of a new family structure, even when the roles differ from those in the original nuclear family.

Annoyed	Disappointed	Nervous	Shock
	Angry		Sad

Figure 1: Hierarchy Chart of Emerging Negative Emotions

Sub theme: Allowing (Accepting Discomfort)

Research Subject 1

Initially, the subject felt annoyed and resentful toward their father, particularly because he had not been emotionally close prior to remarrying, but suddenly became affectionate after marrying the stepmother. This abrupt change in behavior made the subject uncomfortable and question the sincerity of the father's attention. Furthermore, during times of stress or fatigue—

such as when staying at the boarding school the subject often recalled unpleasant feelings related to the family, especially the question of why a new person (stepmother) had to enter their life. Nevertheless, after their emotions subsided, the subject was still able to remember and appreciate the kindness shown by the stepmother to them and their siblings. Overall, the subject's experience reflects a complex emotional dynamic from feelings of disappointment and rejection to emerging understanding and appreciation for the stepmother's role in the family.

Research Subject 2

At first, the subject felt annoyed and resentful toward their father, particularly due to the father's emotional distance before remarrying, followed by a sudden shift to a kinder demeanor after marrying the stepmother. This abrupt change caused discomfort and made the subject question the father's genuine intentions. In moments of stress, such as while at the boarding school, the subject would recall unpleasant emotions tied to their family—especially questioning why there had to be a new person (stepmother) in their life. However, after the emotional wave passed, the subject was able to recall and value the stepmother's acts of kindness toward them and their siblings. The subject's experience illustrates an emotional journey filled with disappointment and rejection, evolving into understanding and appreciation of the stepmother's role in the family.

Research Subject 3

The subject realized that ever since the father remarried, his behavior became increasingly irritable and prone to anger. This change became more noticeable as the subject grew older, since as a child they had not fully grasped the family dynamics. The father's change in behavior created confusion and discomfort. With emotional maturity over time, the subject slowly began to accept the stepmother's presence. Whereas they previously felt rejection, sadness, and disappointment, they gradually came to understand that such circumstances were a part of life. The subject acknowledged that holding on to negative emotions would only burden them. Therefore, they made an effort to focus on the positives and adapt to the new family reality. Though this process of acceptance was gradual and did not entirely eliminate the emotional distance, the subject showed clear progress in their attitude and perspective toward their family situation.

Research Subject 4

Initially, the subject kept their father's second marriage a secret. They had hidden this



information since fifth grade and only dared to reveal it in ninth grade. However, the secret was exposed when a cleric at the boarding school publicly mentioned that the subject had two mothers, causing everyone at the school to find out. This made the subject uncomfortable, as their private issue had become public knowledge. Over time, however, the subject began to accept the reality more maturely. They came to view the situation as a test from God and realized that many others also face even more difficult challenges. This awareness helped them develop a sense of sincerity and acceptance toward their family circumstances as part of life's journey.

Research Subject 5

The subject initially felt anxious and doubtful about the presence of a stepmother after their father remarried. However, over time, through open communication and the stepmother's understanding and non-controlling attitude, the subject began to feel comfortable and eventually accepted her presence. The stepmother consistently showed care and support, which helped the subject build an emotional bond without feeling forced. The subject no longer saw the stepmother as a threat or replacement for their biological mother but as someone who could provide a new sense of safety and affection within the family. Their relationship developed harmoniously, reflecting that acceptance within a family can be fostered through communication, empathy, and patience. The stepmother's presence was even considered to have a positive impact on the overall family dynamic.

Sub-theme: Friendship (Discovering and Realizing Hidden Value)

Research Subject 1

Subject R initially experienced doubt and awkwardness in forming a relationship with her stepmother. However, over time, she began to recognize that her stepmother was a kind, caring, and sincere person who showed genuine affection. The stepmother actively maintained communication and showed concern, even when Subject R did not reach out. Through her patience and understanding, the stepmother successfully built emotional closeness with Subject R. A sense of comfort and affection developed naturally, and eventually, Subject R regarded her stepmother as an important part of her life who provided warmth and support, just like any other family member.



Sub-theme: Self-Understanding**Research Subject 4**

Subject NN began to accept her stepmother after her father's passing. Initially, she experienced doubt and difficulty in accepting her stepmother's presence, particularly amid the deep sorrow of losing her father. However, over time, the subject realized that her stepmother played an important role in her life, especially after the father was gone. The affection and emotional support from the stepmother helped the subject to embrace her more openly. The subject also underwent a process of self-understanding after her father's death. Although she initially felt devastated, she eventually understood that she had to accept the reality. Through this acceptance, she learned to release her negative emotions and make peace with the loss, discovering inner strength to move forward, even though the sadness remained.

Research Subject 5

Initially, the subject felt doubtful and had difficulty accepting the situation. However, over time, these feelings began to shift. The subject became more capable of accepting the circumstances because the people involved behaved kindly without force or control, which helped the subject feel at ease and secure. The subject also began to realize that her stepmother truly cared for her. Although there had been initial hesitation and awkwardness, over time, the stepmother's attention, affection, and patience helped the subject see that their relationship was built on love and deep emotional connection, rather than merely a formal bond.

Dynamic of Self-Acceptance**Research Subject 1**

The subject initially experienced negative emotions such as anxiety and annoyance upon learning that her father had remarried. Anxiety arose from uncertainty about how their relationship would change, while annoyance stemmed from the arrival of a new partner that disrupted the father-child closeness. These feelings disrupted the subject's emotional comfort and raised concerns about the future of their bond. This shift also made the subject more self-centered, influenced by low self-acceptance. Difficulty in accepting the father's new partner led to feelings of jealousy, anger, and insecurity, which worsened her social interactions. The subject eventually chose to move out and isolate herself from her social environment, feeling alienated and struggling to adapt to a new setting, which intensified her loneliness. However, through the process of self-acceptance, the subject began to understand that her father's love would not



diminish due to the presence of a new partner. This realization eased her fear of losing affection and security, allowing her to rebuild trust and accept the changes in her family without sacrificing her emotional connection with her father.

Research Subject 2

The subject felt shocked and confused after discovering that her father had remarried, especially because she had not been informed beforehand. This lack of communication made her feel excluded and suggested that her feelings had not been considered. She grew up with her biological mother, who limited her interactions with her father, resulting in emotional distance and shaping her perception of familial relationships. Additionally, she felt pressured by societal views of her family as non-traditional or imperfect, which amplified her anxiety and shame. Her father's marriage to the stepmother further strained their relationship, even though she was not particularly upset by the marriage itself. The evolving family dynamic increased the tension and made her feel more distant from her father, even though this feeling was not entirely due to the stepmother. While she eventually accepted her father's marriage, she felt unwelcomed by her stepmother. Her stepmother's lack of openness and warmth made the subject feel alienated, preventing her from feeling comfortable within the new family structure, even though she tried to remain open-minded.

Research Subject 3

The subject learned about her father's intention to remarry after the passing of her mother, when he introduced his future wife before the wedding. While the subject accepted the reality, she felt awkward and struggled to adapt to the change. The early relationship with the stepmother felt uncomfortable, with an emotional distance that needed to be bridged. Although the adjustment took time, the subject began to accept the stepmother's presence. She disliked her stepmother's lack of neatness something the subject considered essential to her own identity. This added tension to their relationship. However, as time went on, the subject began to see that her stepmother was not trying to replace her biological mother, but rather to add value to the family's life. Through patience, the stepmother began showing affection, care, and empathy, offering the emotional support the subject needed. As their interactions developed, the subject began to see her stepmother as a caring individual and a true member of the family, building a closer and more comfortable relationship.



Research Subject 4

The subject experienced a variety of negative emotions when her father decided to remarry. Initially, she felt disappointed and a sense of loss, believing her father—who had always been the central figure in her life was now sharing his attention with someone else. She no longer felt like the top priority. This disappointment evolved into uncontrolled anger, perceiving the marriage as a betrayal of their past bond. The subject felt the situation was unfair and resented the need to accept a new person who threatened her closeness with her father. She withdrew emotionally, likely due to a lack of readiness and a sense of isolation caused by changes in her family life. During her first encounter with the stepmother, the subject felt angry likely triggered by the deep disruption in her family relationships and bond with her father. This anger became an outlet to express her dissatisfaction with the difficult to accept changes. The process of accepting the stepmother was long and full of challenges. The subject admitted that the new family dynamic brought confusion, anger, and grief over the loss of her mother. Nevertheless, over time, she gradually began to accept her stepmother's presence.

Research Subject 5

The subject was upset by her father's remarriage, which she believed changed everything in her life—especially her relationship with her father. She felt neglected and unappreciated, believing she was not consulted in such a significant decision. Her father's marriage was seen as damaging to their shared memories and existing family bond, and it made her feel like she lost the attention and routines they once had. These feelings were compounded by her belief that her father did not understand the emotional impact of his decision. At their first meeting, she felt awkward and uncomfortable around the stepmother. She found it difficult to interact with someone she saw as a stranger and was hesitant to be herself due to uncertainty about the new relationship.

However, over time, the subject began to accept her stepmother more quickly than she had expected. The stepmother's warm and caring attitude helped ease the subject's doubts. Not only was the stepmother friendly, but she also showed patience in building a positive relationship. Eventually, the subject no longer saw the stepmother as a replacement for her mother, but as a reliable figure someone who became both a friend and a mentor. The harmony that developed within the family made it easier for the subject to embrace the changes more openly. Acceptance of her stepmother came naturally due to the stepmother's loving approach and the understanding and warmth that characterized their relationship.



DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observation and interviews, the researcher will present the findings of this study. From the interviews and observations conducted, it was found that acceptance and attitudes toward a stepmother vary among individuals. Self-acceptance, particularly in relation to the stepmother figure, can be examined through several aspects: responses to rejection and criticism, the balance between the real self and the ideal self, and the connection between self-acceptance and the acceptance of others.

Self-acceptance among adolescent girls who have a stepmother is a complex process influenced by various internal and external factors. Based on the data analysis, several key themes emerged from their experiences, including initial discomfort, the evolution of relationships with the stepmother over time, and the influence of family dynamics on self-acceptance and social interaction (Tessy et al., 2022).

Feelings of awkwardness and the need for adjustment were frequently expressed by the research subjects. Initially, the participants described discomfort and difficulty in accepting the presence of a stepmother. This discomfort often stemmed from deep changes in the family structure, which disrupted their sense of identity. They reported feeling emotionally distant, especially due to comparisons between their stepmother and biological mother—adding further complexity to the acceptance process. These responses are natural and common, considering the strong emotional bond with the biological mother and the perception that the stepmother is an "outsider" lacking a blood connection.

This awkwardness is often rooted in difficulties related to acceptance. Children may feel threatened or struggle to acknowledge the stepmother as a replacement maternal figure or as an authority in the household (Nurany et al., 2022). The relationship with the stepmother is often perceived as fundamentally different from that with the biological mother, which can lead to confusion and emotional tension. While stepmothers may attempt to build positive relationships with their stepchildren, differences in parenting style particularly compared to the biological mother or father can increase discomfort. Children may feel misunderstood or burdened by differing expectations (Melyana, 2022).

The process of self-acceptance in adolescent girls with a stepmother is closely linked to their acceptance of the new family dynamic. This phenomenon reveals that acceptance of a stepmother involves not only a personal relationship but also the adolescent's ability to adapt to the newly formed family structure. Several participants expressed feeling torn between maintaining their relationship with their biological mother while attempting to accept the



stepmother. This illustrates the inner struggle to balance their previous family identity with the reality of a new one that includes the stepmother.

Social perceptions of families with stepmothers also significantly influence adolescents' self-acceptance. Many participants reported feeling pressured by the assumption that such families are inherently less harmonious or more complicated. This societal expectation created a burden to "prove" that their relationship with their stepmother was going well, even when facing real challenges in adapting. These pressures often led to social discomfort in interactions with peers, stemming from fears that their family circumstances would be misunderstood (Azzahra, 2024).

In general, self-acceptance among adolescent girls with a stepmother is a gradual process. In some cases, participants became more open and comfortable with their stepmothers over time. This process involved not only shifts in personal relationships but also a transformation in how they viewed themselves within the broader family context. Feeling valued, supported, and accepted without judgment played a crucial role in facilitating this self-acceptance (Saputri et al., 2022).

The relationship with a stepmother also affects the adolescent's interactions with other family members, including the father and siblings. Improved relationships with the stepmother often led to increased emotional closeness with the father and other relatives. Conversely, tension or discomfort with the stepmother could create emotional distance within the entire family dynamic. This reinforces the conclusion that family dynamics are highly influential in the self-acceptance process for adolescent girls with stepmothers (Ramadani et al., 2024).

In terms of balancing the real self and the ideal self, adolescent girls in this situation may feel caught between two worlds: the new family with the stepmother and the original family they once knew. They may sense a stark contrast between family expectations and the role of the stepmother versus their authentic identity. This can trigger anxiety and confusion in shaping their real self. When the stepmother has certain expectations or parenting styles that differ from those of the biological mother, adolescents may feel pressured to meet those standards—even when they conflict with their true self or personal goals. The mismatch between real self and ideal self can result in deep emotional conflict (Syarif, 2023).

One of the biggest challenges faced by adolescent girls with stepmothers is the feeling of not being fully accepted or recognized as part of the family. They may feel that they must "change" or adapt to be accepted by the stepmother, even when doing so makes them uncomfortable (Aini & Zuhdi, 2021). This further complicates the search for balance between the real self and the ideal



self. The adolescent may feel unable to be her true self due to pressure to fulfill specific roles or expectations imposed by the new family environment. The feeling of being unaccepted can deepen dissatisfaction with oneself and widen the gap between the real self and the ideal self.

The quest for balance between the real self and the ideal self in adolescent girls with stepmothers is undoubtedly challenging. The process of self-identification becomes more complex when a stepmother takes on a new authoritative role. However, with healthy communication, family support, and personal self-acceptance, adolescents can achieve a healthier balance between who they are and who they aspire to be.

Regarding the aspect of self-acceptance and acceptance by others, both are closely interrelated in the development of adolescent girls. When a girl struggles to accept her stepmother, it can affect how she views herself. She may feel unaccepted or unappreciated within the new family, which can worsen feelings of insecurity and low self-esteem. Conversely, when the adolescent succeeds in accepting her stepmother as part of the family, she is also more likely to accept herself. A stepmother who offers love and understanding can help the adolescent feel more valued and accepted, which boosts her self-confidence. For example, when a stepmother supports the adolescent's achievements and emotional needs, and when a strong emotional bond exists, the adolescent is more likely to feel secure in life and develop greater self-acceptance (Nurany et al., 2022).

The key to achieving a balance between self-acceptance and the acceptance of others lies in open and empathetic communication. Adolescent girls must feel that they can express their feelings to their stepmother without fear of judgment or misunderstanding. Likewise, stepmothers must make an effort to listen attentively and understand the adolescent's feelings and emotional needs. Through healthy communication, adolescent girls can feel more accepted in their new family and begin to accept their stepmother as part of their lives. In turn, the stepmother can better understand the adolescent's emotions and offer the emotional support necessary to strengthen their relationship.

From an Islamic perspective, self-acceptance is a form of awareness and deep understanding of one's position as a creation of Allah—possessing both strengths and weaknesses. In Islam, self-acceptance does not mean resignation or complacency in unfavorable circumstances, but rather accepting Allah's decree with an open heart while striving for self-improvement. Islam teaches that every individual is created with a specific purpose, and that all events whether joyful or challenging—are tests to be faced with *tawakkul* (trust in Allah). This concept also includes understanding that every trial or difference is part of divine fate and must



be accepted sincerely.

Self acceptance in Islam is closely linked to the concept of *ridhā* (contentment), which means accepting Allah's will with peace and surrender. This includes acceptance of one's physical, mental, and social condition, while continuing the effort to become a better and more faithful person. Islam discourages both excessive pride and self-deprecation. Muslims are encouraged to maintain a balance between gratitude for what they have and continuous self-improvement. Acceptance does not imply giving up, but instead acknowledging reality with gratitude and sincerity, while actively striving to better oneself in accordance with religious teachings.

For adolescents with stepmothers, self-acceptance involves deep understanding of divine decree and family teachings. Islam teaches that individuals including adolescents with stepmothers—must accept their situation with sincerity, as all occurrences in life are part of Allah's predetermined plan. Islam emphasizes that every decree from Allah is meant for the benefit of His servants, even when it is difficult to comprehend. For an adolescent, accepting a stepmother as part of life is the first step toward self-acceptance. Islam teaches not to harbor hatred or negativity toward individuals given a role in our lives—including stepmothers—because everyone has a divinely appointed role that may bring goodness, even if initially hard to accept.

Self-acceptance also means sincerely embracing one's reality, in line with Islamic teachings on *shukr* (gratitude). When an adolescent has a stepmother, Islam encourages acceptance and urges the believer to find the positive side of the relationship. Gratitude for the presence of a stepmother can help the adolescent see each relationship as a test and an opportunity for character development and maturity. For instance, Islam teaches not to approach such relationships with negativity or prejudice, but instead to regard them as part of divine destiny to be honored and lived well. While challenges and emotional difficulties may arise, Islam encourages individuals to seek the good and potential wisdom in such relationships. By practicing gratitude, the adolescent can view the presence of a stepmother not only as a test, but also as a path toward personal growth, character refinement, and emotional maturity.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the author concludes that the process of self-acceptance among adolescent girls with stepmothers is complex and does not occur instantly. This self-acceptance is strongly influenced by the quality of the relationship between the adolescent and the stepmother, as well as how the adolescent responds to changes in the family structure. Adolescent girls often face difficulties in adjusting, especially when they have a strong emotional



attachment to their biological mother. A mismatch between the real self and the ideal self particularly when they feel pressured to conform to the stepmother's expectations can worsen their self acceptance.

Nevertheless, with sufficient emotional support and a willingness from all parties to understand each other's feelings and needs, adolescent girls have the potential to achieve a healthier level of self-acceptance. Although this process is filled with challenges, success in navigating it will significantly contribute to the adolescent's psychological and emotional balance, and help them build positive relationships both within the family and in their social life.

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