INTEGRATION: Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies
ISSN 3123-6928 (online)
Vol. 2 Iss. 1 Pg. 190-207
https://ejournal.scmdigi.id/index.php/integration

Living with family discord: a qualitative exploration of anxiety experiences

Intan Rahmayani, Sri Nurhayati Selian*
Universitas Muhammadiyah Aceh, Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia
*Correspondence author: seliansrinurhayati@gmail.com
DOI: https://doi.org/10.65881/integration.v2i1.247

ARTICLE INFO

History:
Received: 10-23-2026
Revised: 10-28-2026
Accepted: 10-29-2026
Published: 11-07-2026

Keywords:
family disharmony;
anxiety;
emotional insecurity;
coping strategies;
qualitative research.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: to explore anxiety experiences among individuals experiencing family disharmony, focusing on emotional manifestations, family-related triggers, impacts on everyday life, and coping strategies.
Method: this study used a descriptive qualitative approach with three participants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation, then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes related to participants' anxiety experiences.
Findings: revealed that anxiety associated with family disharmony manifested as fear, persistent worry, restlessness, and emotional insecurity. These experiences affected participants' academic concentration, emotional well-being, sleep, and social interactions. Participants used various coping strategies, including emotional expression, personal activities, conflict avoidance, and seeking social support.
Implications: the findings highlight the importance of emotional support, healthy family communication, and appropriate coping strategies in addressing anxiety associated with family disharmony. They may also inform the development of more sensitive psychological counselling and support services for individuals experiencing family-related distress.
Originality: in-depth exploration of the diverse ways individuals experience and respond to family disharmony, highlighting the interconnected dimensions of emotional responses, perceived family conflict, psychological impacts, and individual coping mechanisms through personal narratives.

Open access article under CC–BY-SA license.

Introduction

The family represents the primary social environment in which individuals develop their emotional, psychological, and interpersonal capacities (Chen & Chen, 2025; Hu et al., 2025). Through interactions with family members, individuals acquire a

sense of security, emotional support, affection, and fundamental experiences that shape their understanding of relationships and themselves (Aziz, 2025). A harmonious family environment is generally characterized by open communication, mutual respect, emotional availability, and the ability to resolve disagreements constructively (Hikmatullah & Subrata, 2025). Conversely, family disharmony, which may involve recurrent arguments, ineffective communication, emotional distance, and persistent tension among family members, can create an emotionally unstable environment (Addai, 2026). Such conditions may influence how individuals perceive their surroundings, regulate their emotions, and respond to stressful situations in everyday life. Rizkillah et al. (2023) emphasize the relevance of family characteristics and parenting styles to adolescents' quality of life, while Dewi & Purwandari (2024) identify family harmony as an important aspect of psychological well-being. Similarly, family climate has been recognized as relevant to adolescents' social adaptation and developmental experiences (Kurock et al., 2022; Ruiz, 2022). Therefore, understanding family disharmony is essential not only for examining the quality of family relationships but also for exploring its potential implications for individuals' psychological experiences (Don et al., 2026; Zahra et al., 2023).

One of the psychological experiences that may emerge in the context of family disharmony is anxiety (X. Li et al., 2025). Individuals who live in conflictual family environments may experience persistent worry, fear, emotional tension, and uncertainty regarding their family circumstances (Atay & Bayraktaroglu, 2026). These experiences may arise from witnessing parental disagreements, anticipating recurrent conflicts, feeling caught between family members, or worrying about the stability and future of their family relationships (Ali et al., 2026). Anxiety may also manifest through physical and behavioural responses, including heart palpitations, muscle tension, sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, emotional withdrawal, and avoidance of situations perceived as threatening (Demir, 2026). However, individuals do not necessarily respond to family conflict in the same way. Some may openly express their distress, whereas others may suppress their emotions, remain silent, withdraw from interactions, or attempt to maintain family stability despite experiencing internal psychological pressure (Arshad et al., 2026). In some cases, individuals may even see themselves as responsible for conflicts beyond their control. These variations indicate that anxiety in disharmonious family environments is not merely a psychological reaction but also a subjective experience shaped by how individuals interpret, internalize, and respond to family interactions (G. Li & Lin, 2025). Consequently, the phenomenon requires an exploration that considers the personal meanings and everyday experiences of individuals living in such environments (Chikobola & Mwanza, 2026).

Previous empirical studies have demonstrated the relevance of family relationships and family functioning to individuals' psychological conditions. Judodihardjo et al. (2024) found that family functioning plays a moderating role in the relationship between overprotective parenting and adolescent anxiety, suggesting that the broader family context is important in understanding anxiety-related experiences. Similarly, Syakarofath & Sudiana (2025) examined the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of their relationships with parents and internalizing and externalizing problems, highlighting the psychological relevance of parent–adolescent relationships. Hasanah et al. (2023) also investigated parental communication, self-control, and stress in the context of problematic internet use, demonstrating the interconnectedness of family interaction and adolescents' psychological experiences.

Furthermore, Nurcintame et al. (2025) explored the role of parent–adolescent attachment in the relationship between parents' romantic relationships and adolescents' emotion regulation difficulties. These findings suggest that family relationships, communication patterns, attachment, and family functioning constitute important dimensions for understanding psychological adjustment. Nevertheless, the relationship between family disharmony and anxiety should not be understood as a simple or universal causal association, since individual psychological responses may also be shaped by personal characteristics, social support, coping resources, and the meanings people attribute to family experiences.

Family disharmony may also intersect with other circumstances that shape family members' emotional experiences (Vitale, 2025). Economic pressure, parental stress, relationship difficulties, and limited emotional support may intensify household tensions and affect the quality of family interactions (Azhar et al., 2025). Azzara et al. (2022), for example, examined the relationship between economic pressure, stress, financial management, religiosity, and family quality of life, illustrating the multidimensional nature of family well-being. Hapsari et al. (2024) further examined family harmony in relation to aggressive behaviour among early adolescents, while Pratiwi & Hertinjung (2023) investigated the roles of self-esteem and family harmony in university students' mental health. Fikry et al. (2025) also identified family harmony as a relevant predictor of self-esteem among late adolescents in Indonesia. In addition, Rahman & Paryontri (2023) and Sophia & Andriany (2025) examined stress-coping experiences among adolescents from disharmonious families, offering relevant insights into how individuals manage difficulties associated with family conditions. Although these studies offer valuable evidence on psychological outcomes and coping processes, they also suggest that family disharmony includes experiences beyond observable behavioural or psychological indicators. In particular, the subjective experience of anxiety, including its emotional manifestations, perceived triggers, personal meanings, and implications for everyday functioning, deserves further investigation.

Despite the growing body of literature addressing family harmony, family functioning, and psychological well-being, several limitations remain in understanding anxiety experiences among individuals living in disharmonious families. Much previous research has used quantitative approaches to examine relationships, predictive factors, or statistical associations between family-related variables and psychological outcomes (Fikry et al., 2025; Hapsari et al., 2024; Judodihardjo et al., 2024; Pratiwi & Hertinjung, 2023). Although these approaches are valuable for identifying patterns and associations, they provide relatively limited insight into how individuals personally experience and interpret anxiety within their family environments. Previous qualitative and coping-related investigations, including those by Rahman & Paryontri (2023) and Sophia & Andriany (2025), have contributed to understanding stress management among adolescents from disharmonious families; however, the specific subjective dimensions of anxiety remain important to explore. The research gap, therefore, lies not in the absence of studies connecting family conditions with psychological difficulties, but in the need for a more in-depth understanding of how individuals experience anxiety in the context of ongoing family disharmony. Addressing this gap, the present study offers a qualitative perspective by focusing on individuals' narratives, emotional responses, interpretations of family situations, perceived consequences, and ways of coping with anxiety. Its novelty lies in examining anxiety as a lived and context-dependent experience rather than merely as a measurable psychological outcome or a variable associated with family conditions.

Conceptually, this study views anxiety as an emotional and psychological response involving feelings of worry, fear, apprehension, and uncertainty when individuals perceive situations as potentially threatening or difficult to manage. Within the context of family disharmony, anxiety is explored in relation to individuals' experiences of family interactions, particularly recurrent conflict, communication difficulties, emotional insecurity, and uncertainty regarding family relationships. Family harmony and family functioning provide an important contextual foundation for understanding these experiences, as they reflect the quality of interactions, emotional support, and relational conditions within the household (Dewi & Purwandari, 2024; Judodihardjo et al., 2024). Furthermore, Syakarofath & Sudiana (2025) on internalising problems and Nurcintame et al. (2025) on parent–adolescent attachment and emotion regulation offer additional conceptual insights into how family relationships may relate to internal emotional experiences. From this perspective, anxiety is not assumed to occur uniformly among individuals experiencing family disharmony. Instead, it is understood as a subjective phenomenon shaped by personal interpretations, emotional responses, relational experiences, and available coping resources. Accordingly, a qualitative approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to examine participants' experiences in their own words and understand the meanings they attribute to the situations they encounter.

Based on this background, the present study aims to explore and describe anxiety experiences among individuals who have experienced family disharmony. Specifically, it seeks to identify the emotional and psychological manifestations of anxiety, explore family situations and interactions perceived by individuals as associated with the emergence of anxiety, understand the perceived effects of these experiences on everyday life, and examine the strategies individuals employ to cope with and manage their anxiety. Rather than determining causal relationships or measuring the prevalence and severity of anxiety, this study emphasizes the subjective meanings and contextual dimensions of participants' experiences. This focus matters because individuals in similar family circumstances may experience, interpret, and respond to conflict differently. Understanding these differences may provide a more comprehensive perspective on the psychological experiences that cannot be fully captured through numerical measurements or relationships between predetermined variables. By prioritizing participants' voices and personal narratives, this study seeks to reveal the complexity of anxiety experiences within the context of family disharmony.

This research matters because it can deepen understanding of the psychological consequences of family disharmony, especially from the perspective of those who experience it directly. Exploring anxiety as a lived experience may help identify emotional needs, family-related stressors, and coping responses that are often overlooked in conventional assessments of psychological well-being. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the literature on family relationships and psychological adjustment by enriching the understanding of how family disharmony is experienced and interpreted in relation to anxiety. Practically, the study may offer useful insights for psychologists, counsellors, educators, and other professionals in developing more sensitive assessment, counselling, and psychosocial support approaches for individuals experiencing family-related distress. Furthermore, the findings may encourage families to recognize the psychological importance of healthy communication, emotional support, and constructive conflict resolution. Ultimately, this research is expected to provide a foundation for future qualitative and quantitative investigations while supporting the development of more context-sensitive

psychological interventions and family support services for individuals living with family disharmony.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive qualitative research design to explore anxiety experiences among individuals who have experienced family disharmony. This design was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences, emotional responses, and personal interpretations of the family situations they encountered. Rather than measuring anxiety or examining causal relationships between variables, the study focused on describing how individuals experience and make sense of anxiety within the context of disharmonious family relationships. As Rizkiyani & Selian (2025) emphasize, theoretical paradigms provide a foundation for understanding and investigating psychological phenomena. Accordingly, this study adopted an exploratory perspective that prioritized participants' narratives and the contextual meanings of their experiences.

The study included three individuals selected through purposive sampling. This sampling technique involved deliberately recruiting participants based on characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The inclusion criteria were: (1) individuals aged 18 years or older; (2) individuals who were currently experiencing or had previously experienced family disharmony; (3) individuals who had experienced anxiety or persistent worry perceived to be associated with their family circumstances; and (4) individuals who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Khalefa & Selian (2021) explain that non-random sampling is appropriate in qualitative research when participant selection is based on the relevance of their characteristics and experiences to the research focus. Based on these criteria, three participants, identified as Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3, were recruited to provide insights into different experiences of anxiety in the context of family disharmony.

The study was conducted in Banda Aceh, Aceh Province, Indonesia, in October 2026. Data collection took place through individual interviews scheduled at times and locations mutually agreed upon by the researcher and participants. The interview settings were selected to ensure participants' comfort, privacy, and freedom to express their experiences without unnecessary interruptions. The researcher also considered participants' availability and personal circumstances when arranging interviews to create a supportive, conducive environment for data collection. Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews, supported by non-participant observation when feasible. Semi-structured interviews were used to provide flexibility in exploring participants' experiences while maintaining consistency with the research objectives. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to describe their experiences in their own words. The interview topics covered their experiences of family disharmony, the emotional and physical manifestations of anxiety, family situations perceived to trigger anxiety, the effects of anxiety on everyday activities and interpersonal relationships, and the strategies employed to cope with these experiences. Follow-up questions were also used to clarify participants' statements and explore significant experiences in greater depth. Non-participant observation served as a supplementary technique for documenting observable nonverbal responses during interviews, including facial expressions, pauses, and changes in vocal intonation. These observations were used to provide contextual information rather than to establish clinical interpretations or psychological diagnoses.

The researcher served as the primary research instrument, conducting interviews, observing participants' responses, documenting relevant information, and interpreting the collected data. Supporting instruments included a semi-structured interview guide, an observation sheet, an audio-recording device, and field notes. The interview guide was developed based on the main research focus and consisted of open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences without directing them toward predetermined answers. The researcher remained flexible throughout the interviews, adjusting follow-up questions based on participants' responses and emerging information. With participants' permission, the researcher used audio recordings to accurately document their statements, while field notes captured relevant contextual information and preliminary observations.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in participants' narratives. Following the thematic analysis principles discussed by Sitasari (2022), the analytical process involved several interconnected stages. First, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the data. Second, meaningful statements and relevant excerpts were identified and assigned initial codes. Third, related codes were organized into broader categories based on similarities in meaning and relevance to the research objectives. Fourth, these categories were examined to develop preliminary themes representing participants' anxiety experiences. Fifth, the emerging themes were reviewed and refined by comparing the accounts of Participant 1, Participant 2, and Participant 3, while considering both shared experiences and individual differences. Finally, the themes were defined, interpreted, and presented descriptively, supported by relevant verbatim quotations to illustrate the participants' perspectives and strengthen the connection between the findings and the original data.

To establish the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed several strategies to support the credibility and consistency of the research process. The study triangulated techniques by comparing interview data with observational notes when feasible. Saadah et al. (2022) identify triangulation, careful observation, and consistency checks as relevant strategies for maintaining the validity of qualitative research. Susanto et al. (2023) similarly emphazise systematic procedures for examining data trustworthiness in scientific research. In addition, member checking was conducted, where feasible, by inviting participants to review summaries of their experiences or clarify statements considered important to the interpretation. Ahmed et al. (2025) and Zairul (2025) also highlight the importance of systematic procedures for maintaining data trustworthiness in qualitative studies. An audit trail was maintained by documenting the data collection and analysis processes, including coding decisions and the development of themes. Researcher reflexivity was also practised to acknowledge and critically examine personal assumptions and potential biases that might influence data interpretation. These procedures were applied as implemented during the research process.

The study addressed ethical considerations throughout to protect participants' rights, privacy, and psychological well-being. Before data collection, participants were informed about the research objectives, procedures, potential discomforts, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Informed consent was obtained before interviews were conducted. Participants were informed of their right to decline specific questions, request a break, or withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by using participant codes instead of real names and excluding personal information that could reveal their identities. Given the

emotionally sensitive nature of family disharmony and anxiety, the researcher adopted a nonjudgmental approach, respected participants' emotional boundaries, and allowed them to determine the extent of personal information they wished to disclose. The researcher used audio recordings and interview transcripts exclusively for research purposes and stored them securely. Throughout the process, the study focused on understanding participants' subjective experiences rather than making clinical assessments or establishing psychological diagnoses.

Results and discussion

This study explored anxiety experiences among three individuals who had experienced family disharmony. The findings were organized into four main themes: (1) emotional manifestations and forms of anxiety, (2) family-related situations associated with anxiety, (3) the impact of anxiety on everyday life, and (4) individual coping strategies. Although all three participants described psychological discomfort in response to family-related difficulties, their experiences differed in terms of the situations they perceived as distressing, the nature of their worries, and the ways they responded to emotional pressure. These findings indicate that anxiety within disharmonious family environments is experienced differently depending on individuals' perceptions and positions within family relationships.

Emotional manifestations and forms of anxiety

The findings revealed that anxiety was experienced through various emotional responses, including fear, restlessness, persistent worry, sadness, and feelings of insecurity. Participant 1 primarily experienced fear and restlessness when hearing their parents arguing loudly. Participant 2 expressed more persistent concerns about the future of the family, particularly the possibility of parental separation. Meanwhile, Participant 3 experienced insecurity and fear of making mistakes, especially when becoming involved in conflicts between parents. These experiences demonstrate that anxiety was not limited to immediate emotional reactions but also involved concerns about possible future events and uncertainty regarding family relationships. The differences among participants suggest that anxiety was associated with distinct emotional concerns. Participant 1's experience was more closely related to direct exposure to parental conflict, whereas Participant 2's anxiety involved anticipating changes in family relationships. In contrast, Participant 3's experience was characterized by concerns about personal involvement in family disagreements and the possibility of worsening existing conflicts.

Table 1 anxiety experiences and emotional manifestations among participants

Anxiety dimensions	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Emotional responses	Fear, restlessness, and difficulty feeling calm	Worry and sadness	Insecurity and fear of making mistakes
Dominant concerns	Recurrent family problems and parental arguments	Possibility of parental separation	Fear of worsening family conflicts
Perceived emotional security	Feels unsettled when hearing parental arguments	Experiences uncertainty due to limited communication between parents	Feels unsafe when involved in parental conflicts

Source: primary data

As presented in Table 1, the three participants shared experiences of emotional discomfort, but the central focus of their anxiety differed. Participant 1 was more affected by direct exposure to parental arguments; Participant 2 worried about the potential breakdown of family relationships; and Participant 3 felt insecure when placed in the middle of parental disagreements. These findings illustrate how emotional experiences vary in response to family disharmony.

Family situations associated with anxiety

The participants identified several family situations that were associated with the emergence of anxiety, including loud parental arguments, prolonged silence, limited communication, uncertainty about parental relationships, and direct involvement in family conflicts. These circumstances reflected different forms of family disharmony, ranging from openly expressed disagreements to less visible relational tensions. For Participant 1, loud arguments between parents represented the most prominent situation associated with anxiety. Hearing raised voices and feeling a tense atmosphere at home triggered fear and restlessness. The conflict at home made it difficult for the participant to stay calm, especially when disagreements happened in their immediate environment.

Participant 2 described a different experience in which prolonged silence and the absence of open communication between parents contributed to uncertainty. The lack of information about the parents' actual relationship status led to concerns about what might happen in the future. The possibility of parental separation became a major source of worry, suggesting that the absence of visible arguments did not necessarily provide emotional security. In contrast, Participant 3 experienced anxiety when becoming directly involved in parental disagreements, particularly when asked to choose sides. These situations created insecurity and concern about saying or doing something that might worsen the conflict. The participant's experience reflected the emotional pressure associated with being positioned between conflicting family members.

The impact of anxiety on everyday life

The participants also described how anxiety affected several aspects of their everyday lives, particularly academic concentration, emotional well-being, sleep, daily motivation, and social interactions. However, these effects did not affect all participants equally. Participant 1 reported difficulty concentrating while studying and a tendency to experience sadness when thinking about family problems. Participant 2 described increased emotional sensitivity, difficulties sleeping, and reduced enthusiasm for daily activities. Meanwhile, Participant 3 reported difficulty concentrating on academic tasks, suppressing emotions, and withdrawing from social interactions.

Table 2 the impact of anxiety on participants' everyday lives

Life dimensions	Experiences reported by participants
Academic functioning	Participants 1 and 3 experienced difficulties concentrating while studying or completing assignments.
Emotional well-being	Participant 1 experienced sadness, Participant 2 became more emotionally sensitive, and Participant 3 experienced insecurity and tended to suppress emotions.
Sleep and daily activities	Participant 2 reported sleep difficulties and reduced motivation to engage in everyday activities.

Life dimensions	Experiences reported by participants
Social interactions	Participant 3 tended to withdraw socially, whereas Participant 1 sought support from close friends. Participant 2 managed emotional discomfort through enjoyable activities and academic engagement.

Source: primary data

As summarized in Table 2, anxiety was associated with difficulties across several dimensions of everyday functioning, although the specific effects differed among participants. Participants 1 and 3 reported academic concentration difficulties, while sleep difficulties were particularly evident in Participant 2's account. Social responses also differed: Participant 3 tended to withdraw, while Participant 1 sought support from close friends.

Coping strategies for managing anxiety

The findings further revealed that the participants employed different strategies to manage anxiety associated with family disharmony. These strategies included seeking personal space, engaging in enjoyable activities, expressing emotions through writing, maintaining academic activities, limiting involvement in family conflicts, and seeking emotional support from trusted individuals. Participant 1 managed emotional discomfort by spending time alone, listening to music, and sharing personal experiences with close friends. Spending time alone and listening to music provided an opportunity to temporarily distance themselves from stressful family circumstances, while talking to friends offered an opportunity to express difficult emotions.

Participant 2 used strategies such as engaging in enjoyable activities, writing personal feelings in a diary, and redirecting attention to academic activities. Writing provided a private space for emotional expression, while enjoyable activities and academic responsibilities helped maintain involvement in daily routines. Participant 3 attempted to manage anxiety by calming themselves, limiting involvement in parental disagreements, and seeking emotional support from trusted individuals. These strategies reflected efforts to maintain emotional boundaries and reduce pressure from family conflicts. Although their strategies differed, all three participants tried to regulate their emotional responses and maintain daily functioning despite family-related difficulties. Their accounts also indicated that coping did not necessarily involve directly resolving parental conflicts but rather managing personal emotional reactions and identifying ways to navigate challenging family circumstances.

Table 3 coping strategies employed by participants

Participants	Coping strategies	Primary orientation
Participant 1	Spending time alone, listening to music, and sharing experiences with close friends	Emotional regulation and social support
Participant 2	Engaging in enjoyable activities, writing in a diary, and focusing on academic activities	Emotional expression and distraction
Participant 3	Calming oneself, limiting involvement in family conflicts, and seeking support from trusted individuals	Emotional regulation, boundary management, and social support

Source: primary data

As illustrated in Table 3, participants adopted different approaches to managing anxiety according to their individual circumstances and perceived emotional needs. Participant 1 combined personal relaxation with interpersonal support; Participant 2 relied more on private emotional expression and engagement in daily activities; and

Participant 3 emphazised emotional self-regulation, personal boundaries, and support from trusted individuals. Overall, the findings demonstrate that anxiety in the context of family disharmony involves interconnected emotional, relational, and behavioural experiences. Although the three participants shared a sense of psychological discomfort, their anxiety was shaped by different family situations, perceived threats to emotional security, and individual coping responses. These findings provide an experiential understanding of how family disharmony is perceived and managed in everyday life.

Anxiety as a subjective response to family disharmony

The findings suggest that anxiety in the context of family disharmony should be understood as a subjective emotional experience rather than a uniform psychological response to family conflict. Differences among participants indicate that the psychological meaning of family disharmony depends not only on the presence of disagreements but also on how individuals interpret family interactions and see their own position within them. This perspective highlights the importance of examining the psychological meaning of family experiences rather than focusing exclusively on the frequency or visibility of parental conflict. These findings can be interpreted through the perspective of emotional security theory, which emphasizes the importance of emotional security in understanding children's and adolescents' responses to interparental conflict. From this perspective, family conflict may be perceived as a potential threat to the stability of family relationships, thereby influencing individuals' emotional responses and sense of security. When family interactions are perceived as unpredictable or threatening, individuals may experience heightened vigilance and concerns regarding the continuity of family relationships.

The findings also align with the broader understanding of family context presented by Ruiz (2022), whose systematic review identifies family communication, parent–child relationships, conflict, social support, and family functioning as key dimensions of the family environment. Similarly, Kurock et al. (2022) emphasize the relevance of family climate, particularly conflict, cohesion, adaptability, and emotional expression, in understanding adolescents' social adjustment. These perspectives suggest that family disharmony should be examined as a multidimensional relational experience rather than simply as the occurrence of arguments between family members. Furthermore, the findings extend the understanding of family-related anxiety by demonstrating that emotional insecurity may emerge from different forms of relational experiences. The absence of open arguments does not necessarily indicate emotional security, as uncertainty and limited communication may also contribute to psychological discomfort. Likewise, direct involvement in parental disagreements may create additional emotional pressure because individuals must navigate conflicting expectations within their family relationships. Therefore, understanding anxiety in disharmonious families requires attention to both explicit conflict and less visible relational tensions.

Family conflict, emotional insecurity, and the meaning of family relationships

An important insight from this study is that different forms of family disharmony may carry different psychological meanings for individuals. Open arguments, prolonged silence, and direct involvement in parental disagreements represent distinct relational circumstances that may influence how individuals perceive safety and stability within their families. The broader significance of these experiences can be understood through the relationship between family functioning and psychological adjustment. Judodihardjo

et al. (2024) demonstrated the relevance of family functioning in the relationship between overprotective parenting and adolescent anxiety. Their findings indicate that family functioning should be considered when examining anxiety-related experiences rather than focusing on individual parenting behaviours in isolation. Similarly, Syakarofath & Sudiana (2025) examined the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of parent–child relationships and internalizing and externalizing problems. Their study further supports considering the emotional quality of family relationships when understanding psychological difficulties.

In this study, uncertainty about parental relationships and experiencing parental disagreements show how family interactions can become psychologically significant beyond the immediate conflict. Individuals may interpret family disagreements as signals of possible changes in family stability, while limited communication may make it difficult to understand the actual circumstances. These experiences suggest that emotional insecurity may stem not only from what happens within the family but also from the information available to individuals and the meanings they attribute to family interactions. This interpretation also aligns with Rizkillah et al. (2023), who examined family characteristics and parenting styles in relation to adolescents' quality of life. Dewi & Purwandari (2024) similarly emphasized family harmony in understanding psychological well-being. Together, these studies provide a broader contextual basis for understanding why the quality of family relationships matters in individuals' psychological experiences. The present study contributes to this discussion by focusing more specifically on how individuals personally experience anxiety in relation to different forms of family disharmony.

Anxiety and its implications for everyday functioning

The findings also highlight that anxiety associated with family disharmony may extend beyond immediate emotional reactions and become part of individuals' everyday experiences. This observation matters because psychological distress does not necessarily stay confined to the family environment. Concerns about family relationships may occupy individuals' attention even when they are engaged in academic activities, social interactions, or personal routines. Sutomo et al. (2022), in their study of Indonesian adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic, examined psychosocial and behavioural problems associated with several contextual factors, including family-related conditions. Their findings provide relevant evidence regarding the importance of family circumstances in understanding adolescent psychosocial adjustment. Although their study examined broader psychosocial and behavioural outcomes, the present findings provide a more specific perspective on how anxiety-related experiences may be reflected in everyday activities. The relationship between family harmony and psychological well-being is also relevant to research by Pratiwi & Hertinjung (2023), who examined the roles of self-esteem and family harmony in university students' mental health. Their study highlights the relevance of family conditions in understanding the psychological well-being of individuals in higher education. The present findings complement this perspective by showing how family-related emotional concerns may manifest in academic contexts, particularly through difficulties concentrating and maintaining motivation.

From a psychological perspective, persistent concerns about family circumstances may compete with the attentional resources required for everyday tasks. When individuals remain preoccupied with unresolved family problems, they may struggle to direct their attention toward academic responsibilities or other activities.

Similarly, emotional discomfort may interfere with relaxation and sleep, potentially affecting daily functioning. However, interpret this study's findings as participants' reported experiences rather than evidence of clinically established functional impairment. These findings also highlight the importance of distinguishing between emotional experiences and clinical conditions. Difficulties concentrating, sadness, sleep disturbances, and social withdrawal may occur in various psychological and situational contexts. Therefore, although these experiences are relevant to understanding anxiety, they cannot independently establish the presence of an anxiety disorder. This study contributes by describing how participants perceive these experiences and connect them to family circumstances.

Coping strategies as individual responses to family-related anxiety

Another important contribution of this study concerns the diversity of coping strategies used by individuals experiencing family-related anxiety. The findings indicate that coping is not a standardized process but rather a personal response shaped by emotional needs, available resources, and the nature of family difficulties. Individuals may seek temporary emotional distance, engage in meaningful activities, express feelings privately, or obtain support from trusted people. The findings can be interpreted through the transactional perspective of stress and coping, which views coping as a dynamic process involving cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage situations perceived as stressful. Within this perspective, coping strategies may be oriented toward regulating emotional responses or addressing the circumstances associated with distress. In the context of family disharmony, however, individuals may have limited control over conflicts between parents. Consequently, their coping efforts may focus more on managing their own emotional responses than on resolving the underlying family disagreements.

This interpretation is consistent with Rahman & Paryontri (2023), who examined stress-coping strategies among adolescents from disharmonious families in Sidoarjo. Their research offers relevant insights into how individuals manage stress related to family circumstances. Similarly, Sophia & Andriany (2025) explored stress-coping strategies among adolescents experiencing family disharmony, highlighting the relevance of individual coping responses in managing family-related difficulties. These studies provide a useful comparative foundation for understanding the diversity of coping strategies identified in the present research. The findings can also be discussed in relation to Syamsiah et al. (2022), who examined adolescent coping styles, parental involvement, and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although their research focused on a different situational context, it demonstrates the relevance of coping resources and parental involvement in understanding individual adjustment. In the present study, seeking support from trusted individuals illustrates how emotional resources outside the immediate conflict may become meaningful in managing family-related distress.

Nevertheless, coping strategies should not automatically be classified as effective or ineffective based solely on their form. Spending time alone, listening to music, or redirecting attention toward academic activities may provide temporary emotional relief. However, their longer-term usefulness depends on whether these strategies help individuals process their experiences and maintain psychological well-being. Similarly, seeking social support may provide opportunities for emotional expression and reassurance, although its benefits may depend on the availability and quality of the support received. An important implication is that coping should be understood in

relation to individual circumstances rather than evaluated through a universal standard. People facing similar family difficulties may need different forms of emotional support. Some may benefit from opportunities for private reflection, while others may need supportive relationships or help establishing emotional boundaries. Therefore, understanding personal coping preferences is important when considering appropriate psychological support for individuals living in disharmonious family environments.

The role of emotional support and family relationships in psychological adjustment

The findings further emphasize the importance of emotional support in understanding how individuals navigate family-related anxiety. When the family environment becomes a source of tension or uncertainty, supportive relationships outside the immediate family may provide alternative spaces for emotional expression and reassurance. Such relationships may help individuals feel acknowledged without requiring them to become directly involved in resolving parental disagreements. This interpretation is consistent with the broader discussion of family functioning and psychological adjustment in Dewi & Purwandari (2024). Their research positions family harmony as a relevant dimension of psychological well-being. In addition, Hasanah et al. (2023) examined parental communication, self-control, and stress in the context of problematic internet use, highlighting the role of communication in parent–adolescent relationships in shaping psychological experiences.

The importance of relational support can also be understood through the work of Nurcintame et al. (2025), who examined parent–adolescent attachment, parental romantic relationships, and adolescents' emotion regulation difficulties. Their findings provide a relevant perspective on how the quality of emotional relationships within families may be associated with adolescents' capacity to regulate emotions. In the present study, the importance of trusted individuals and emotional boundaries suggests that supportive relationships may constitute valuable resources when family interactions are experienced as distressing. However, the findings do not imply that support from friends or other trusted individuals can replace the need for a healthy family environment. Rather, external support may provide additional emotional resources when individuals experience difficulties within their families. This distinction matters because children or other family members should not have to resolve parental conflict. Consequently, psychological support for individuals experiencing family disharmony should consider not only the presence of anxiety but also the quality of their interpersonal relationships, their perceived emotional safety, and their available coping resources. This approach may help professionals understand individuals' needs more fully and avoid interpreting emotional responses without considering the family circumstances in which they emerge.

Theoretical and practical implications of the findings

The findings contribute to the understanding of anxiety in the context of family disharmony by illustrating that emotional experiences are closely connected to individuals' interpretations of family relationships. The three participants demonstrated different forms of emotional insecurity, suggesting that the psychological meaning of family conflict cannot be fully understood through the presence or absence of arguments alone. Communication patterns, uncertainty, and individuals' positions within family disagreements also deserve attention. From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the relevance of emotional security, family functioning, and coping perspectives in understanding anxiety experiences. It provides a qualitative illustration

of how family-related concerns may be experienced through immediate emotional reactions, anticipatory worries, and concerns about personal involvement in family conflict. The findings also highlight the importance of understanding coping as an individualized process that may involve emotional regulation, personal boundaries, and social support.

From a practical perspective, the findings may inform psychologists, counselors, educators, and other professionals who work with individuals experiencing family-related distress. Assessment and counseling should give individuals opportunities to express their experiences without judgment, identify situations that cause emotional discomfort, and recognize available sources of support. In particular, professionals should pay attention to individuals who feel pressured to take sides in parental disagreements, as these circumstances may create additional emotional burdens. Family-based support may also benefit from greater attention to open communication, emotional availability, and constructive conflict resolution. Parents should recognize that adult disagreements can affect other family members, even when children or other relatives are not directly involved. Creating an environment where individuals feel safe expressing their concerns may support healthier family relationships and psychological adjustment.

Conclusions

This study explored anxiety experiences among three individuals living with family disharmony and identified four main aspects: emotional manifestations, family situations associated with anxiety, impacts on everyday life, and coping strategies. The findings revealed that anxiety was experienced differently by each participant. Participant 1 primarily experienced fear and restlessness during parental arguments; Participant 2 experienced persistent worry about possible parental separation; and Participant 3 experienced emotional insecurity during parental conflicts. These experiences were associated with difficulties in academic concentration, emotional well-being, sleep, daily motivation, and social interactions. The participants also used different coping strategies, including spending time alone, listening to music, writing down their feelings, engaging in enjoyable activities, limiting involvement in family conflicts, and seeking support from trusted individuals. Overall, the findings indicate that anxiety in the context of family disharmony is a subjective and multidimensional experience shaped by individuals' perceptions of family relationships, emotional security, and personal circumstances.

This study contributes to the understanding of family-related anxiety by providing qualitative insights into how individuals experience, interpret, and manage emotional distress within disharmonious family environments. Rather than focusing solely on the relationship between family conditions and psychological outcomes, the study highlights the importance of understanding individual experiences, particularly perceived threats, relational uncertainty, and emotional insecurity. Practically, these findings may inform psychologists, counselors, educators, and other professionals in developing more sensitive psychological support approaches that consider individuals' emotional needs, family circumstances, and coping resources. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The involvement of only three participants restricts the diversity of experiences represented. At the same time, the reliance on self-reported accounts may be influenced by individual interpretations and willingness to disclose personal experiences. Furthermore, the study did not employ standardized psychological

instruments to assess anxiety severity and cannot establish causal relationships between family disharmony and anxiety.

Future research is recommended to involve a larger and more diverse group of participants from different age groups, educational backgrounds, and family circumstances to obtain a broader understanding of anxiety experiences associated with family disharmony. Researchers may also consider exploring differences in anxiety experiences across various forms of family conflict, including parental arguments, emotional distance, communication difficulties, and direct involvement in family disagreements. Furthermore, longitudinal qualitative research could provide deeper insights into how anxiety experiences and coping strategies change over time. Combining qualitative approaches with standardized psychological assessments may also help researchers examine the relationship between subjective anxiety experiences and measurable psychological indicators more comprehensively. Future studies should additionally investigate the role of social support, emotional regulation, and family functioning in shaping individuals' responses to family-related distress. Such investigations are expected to expand the existing literature and provide a stronger foundation for developing context-sensitive psychological interventions and family support programs.

References

Addai, M. (2026). Using Family Systems Theory to Address Emotional Distance and Conflict in Ghanaian Marriages. *The Family Journal*, *34*(4), 816–824. https://doi.org/10.1177/10664807261457920

Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., M. Ameen, B. M., & Khdhir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, *6*, 100198. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198

Ali, S. I., Begum, N., Badawy, W., & Shaban, M. (2026). "Through their eyes": Narratives of resilience among adolescents exposed to intimate partner violence in early childhood. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *181*, 108298. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2026.108298

Arshad, A., Jabeen, D. S., & Zafar, A. (2026). Silent sufferers: Unspoken psycho-social struggles of adults in conflict-ridden households. *Social Sciences Spectrum*, *5*(1), 351–364. https://doi.org/10.71085/sss.05.01.497

Atay, E., & Bayraktaroglu, S. (2026). Refugees, Family Dynamics, and Resilience: Integrating Systemic Disruptions and Individual Coping Mechanisms. *Journal of Family Issues*, *47*(8), 1135–1157. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X251414614

Azhar, S., Saleem, Z., & Iftikhar, S. Z. (2025). The Impact of Poverty and Financial Stress on Family Stability and Child Welfare. *Social Science Review Archives*, *3*(2), 681–691. https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i2.657

Aziz, S. (2025). A Family Education Model Based on Affection to Improve Children's Psychological Well-Being. *International Journal of Education and Learning*, *1*(2), 134–151. https://doi.org/10.64084/ijel.v1i2.133

Azzara, R. C., Simanjuntak, M., & Puspitawati, H. (2022). The Influence Of Religiosity, Economic Pressure, Financial Management, And Stress Levels Towards Family Quality Of Life During Covid-19 Pandemic In Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *15*(1), 27–38. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2022.15.1.27

Chen, Z., & Chen, Y. (2025). Which educational environment is better for college students' social-emotional competency development, public or private? An

investigation of 100 Chinese universities. *Acta Psychologica*, *256*, 105058. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.105058

Chikobola, M. M., & Mwanza, B. G. M. (2026). Hermeneutic phenomenology as methodological practice: Interpreting lived experience in qualitative research. *African Quarterly Social Science Review*, *3*(1), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.51867/AQSSR.3.1.10

Demir, N. (2026). Challenge of existence: social anxiety in Finding Audrey. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/08893675.2026.2612722

Dewi, A. D., & Purwandari, E. (2024). Keharmonisan Keluarga, Integrasi Sosial, Lokus Kendali, Dan Kesejahteraan Psikologis Anak Yang Berhadapan Dengan Hukum. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *17*(1), 90–102. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2024.17.1.90

Don, U., Enabulele, B. H., & Igudia, E. (2026). A Qualitative Approach to the Impact of Familial Discord and Social Environment on the Psychological Well-Being of Young Adults. *NIU Journal of Social Sciences*, *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.58709/niujss.v12i2.2564

Fikry, Z., Fajarwati, A., Putri, N. A. S., & Rizal, G. L. (2025). Keharmonisan Keluarga Sebagai Prediktor Self-Esteem Remaja Akhir Di Indonesia: Studi Korelasional Pada Mahasiswa Peserta Pertukaran Mahasiswa (PMM) Tahun 2024. *Jurnal Riset Psikologi*, *8*(1), 72–81. https://jrp.ppj.unp.ac.id/index.php/jrp/article/view/24

Hapsari, D. R. M., Matulessy, A., & Pratitis, N. (2024). Keharmonisan keluarga dengan perilaku agresif pada remaja awal. *SUKMA: Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi*, *5*(1), 125–132. https://doi.org/10.30996/sukma.v5i1.11613

Hasanah, R. 'Ainun, Latifah, M., & Krisnatuti, D. (2023). Problematic Internet Use: Examining Parents-Adolescent Communication And Self-Control With Stress Level As Mediator. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *16*(1), 61–71. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2023.16.1.61

Hikmatullah, H., & Subrata, T. (2025). Harmonious Family: Dynamics and Problems According to the Qur'an. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Research*, *2*(4), 42–52. https://doi.org/10.61132/ijier.v2i4.429

Hu, Y., Zhao, L., Sui, W., & Gao, Y. (2025). Research on the mechanism of the impact of physical activity on negative emotions of middle school students, and the chain mediating role of social competence and interpersonal relationships. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *16*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1577987

Judodihardjo, E., Satiadarma, M. P., & Naomi. (2024). Peran Keberfungsian Keluarga Sebagai Moderator Dalam Hubungan Antara Pola Asuh Overprotektif Dan Tingkat Kecemasan Pada Remaja. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *17*(3), 276–290. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2024.17.3.276

Khalefa, E. Y., & Selian, S. N. (2021). Non-Random Samples as a Data Collection Tool in Qualitative Art-Related Studies. *International Journal of Creative and Arts Studies*, *8*(1), 35–49. https://doi.org/10.24821/ijcas.v8i1.5184

Kurock, R., Gruchel, N., Bonanati, S., & Buhl, H. M. (2022). Family Climate and Social Adaptation of Adolescents in Community Samples: A Systematic Review. *Adolescent Research Review*, *7*(4), 551–563. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40894-022-00189-2

Li, G., & Lin, Z. (2025). The Emotional Work of Heritage Language Maintenance: Insights from a Longitudinal Study of Chinese–Canadian Bilingual Parenting. *Education Sciences*, *15*(7), 816. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15070816

Li, X., Luo, S., Lin, L., Li, C., Li, J., Cao, W., Chen, W., Ren, Y., Zhang, M., Zhang, C., & Guo, V. Y.

(2025). Association between family disharmony, maternal negative emotional states, and behavioral problems among Chinese children attending preschools. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *377*, 217–224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2025.02.057

Nurcintame, N. P., Suyasa, P. T. Y. S., & Dewi, F. I. R. (2025). Peran Mediasi Kelekatan Remaja Dan Orang Tua Pada Hubungan Romantis Orang Tua Dan Kesulitan Regulasi Emosi Remaja. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *18*(2), 162–176. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2025.18.2.162

Pratiwi, I. A., & Hertinjung, W. S. (2023). Peran Self-esteem dan Keharmonisan Keluarga Bagi Kesehatan Mental Mahasiswa Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. *Jurnal Psikologi*, *19*(1), 14. https://doi.org/10.24014/jp.v19i1.18760

Rahman, R. A., & Paryontri, R. A. (2023). Stress Coping in Adolescents Who Have Disharmonious Families in Sidoarjo. *Indonesian Journal of Education Methods Development*, *21*(4). https://doi.org/10.21070/ijemd.v21i4.795

Rizkillah, R., Hastuti, D., & Defina, D. (2023). Pengaruh Karakteristik Remaja Dan Keluarga, Serta Gaya Pengasuhan Orang Tua Terhadap Kualitas Hidup Remaja Di Wilayah Pesisir. *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *16*(1), 37–49. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2023.16.1.37

Rizkiyani, F., & Selian, S. N. (2025). Paradigma Teoretis dalam Psikologi: Landasan Filsafati, Peluang, dan Limitasi dalam Penelitian dan Praktik Psikologi. *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia*, *8*(1), 15–24. https://doi.org/10.23887/jfi.v8i1.81304

Ruiz, N. F. O. (2022). Assessment of the Family Context in Adolescence: A Systematic Review. *Adolescents*, *2*(1), 53–72. https://doi.org/10.3390/adolescents2010007

Saadah, M., Prasetiyo, Y. C., & Rahmayati, G. T. (2022). Strategi Dalam Menjaga Keabsahan Data Pada Penelitian Kualitatif. *Al-'Adad: Jurnal Tadris Matematika*, *1*(2), 54–64. https://doi.org/10.24260/add.v1i2.1113

Sitasari, N. W. (2022). Mengenal Analisa Konten Dan Analisa Tematik Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif. *Forum Ilmiah Indonusa*, *19*(1), 77–84. https://ejurnal.esaunggul.ac.id/index.php/Formil/article/view/5082

Sophia, F., & Andriany, A. R. (2025). Gambaran Penggunaan Strategi Coping Stres dalam Menghadapi Disharmoni Keluarga pada Remaja di SMPN 180 Jakarta. *Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Ilmu Sosial*, *6*(3), 2174–2179. https://dinastirev.org/JMPIS/article/view/4273

Susanto, D., Risnita, R., & Jailani, M. S. (2023). Teknik Pemeriksaan Keabsahan Data Dalam Penelitian Ilmiah. *Jurnal QOSIM Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial & Humaniora*, *1*(1), 53–61. https://doi.org/10.61104/jq.v1i1.60

Sutomo, R., Ramadhani, F. P. R., & Hanifa, I. N. (2022). Prevalence and associated factors of psychosocial and behavioral problems in Indonesian adolescent students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, *10*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2022.908384

Syakarofath, N. A., & Sudiana, A. R. (2025). Apakah Persepsi Hubungan Dengan Orang Tua Berkaitan Dengan Masalah Internalizing Dan Externalizing Pada Remaja? *Jurnal Ilmu Keluarga Dan Konsumen*, *18*(3), 220–232. https://doi.org/10.24156/jikk.2025.18.3.220

Syamsiah, R. I., Lestari, R., & Yuliatun, L. (2022). Hubungan Gaya Koping Remaja dan Keterlibatan Orang Tua dengan Resiliensi pada Remaja Selama Pandemi COVID-19. *Jurnal Kesehatan Vokasional*, *7*(1), 32. https://doi.org/10.22146/jkesvo.67065

Vitale, F. (2025). Attachment To Dysfunctional Family Situations: A Psychological And

Sociological Analysis. *ShodhSamajik: Journal of Social Studies*, *2*(1), 8–16. https://doi.org/10.29121/ShodhSamajik.v2.i1.2025.12

Zahra, F., Wilodati, W., & Wahyuni, S. (2023). Disharmonisasi Keluarga : Pemicu Timbulnya Perilaku Lesbian Dalam Diri Remaja. *SOCIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial*, *20*(1), 7–19. https://doi.org/10.21831/socia.v20i1.60768

Zairul, M. (2025). Mastering Thematic Analysis: A Step-by-step Guide for Beginners With Tips for Systematic Analysis Using ATLAS.ti 25. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *24*. https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069251384401