

Strategies for Overcoming Cinderella Complex Syndrome in Adolescent Girls

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ABSTRACT

The Cinderella Complex syndrome is a phenomenon that affects adolescent girls in contemporary society. This study aims to explore strategies to overcome this syndrome through psychoeducation. The research method used is a qualitative approach with thematic analysis. Data were collected through interviews and observations of female millennial students. The results show that factors such as 1) having a boyfriend, 2) receiving male attention, 3) depending on and being influenced by others, 4) lack of confidence in their abilities, 5) desire to marry young, 6) having fears that can inhibit success, 7) lack of independence, 8) received parenting styles influence the Cinderella Complex syndrome in adolescent girls. The implications of this research are the need for psychological interventions, such as psychoeducation, to help adolescent girls overcome their fear of independence and develop self-confidence. Hopefully, these findings will contribute to understanding and addressing the Cinderella Complex syndrome in adolescent girls in contemporary society.

Keyword: Adolescent Girls; Cinderella Complex Syndrome; Independence; Psychological Intervention; Psychoeducation.

INTRODUCTION

Women's dependence has become a widely debated topic worldwide (Mehmood et al., 2015). From infancy, women are always expected to conform to contemporary society, and they are not prepared to be independent at birth. The notion of women's dependence has begun to create confusion and dissatisfaction among "independent" women. The fear of independence is called the Cinderella Complex (Joseph et al., 2021).

The Cinderella Complex refers to the fear of becoming independent, leading to a subconscious desire to be taken care of by others (Vashisht et al., 2022). Therefore, there is a need for preventive measures against the fear of becoming independent in adolescents to minimize the potential impacts arising from this condition. Various interventions can be undertaken, with psychoeducation being one of the options. The design of motivational interventions on the "Cinderella complex" is expected to be utilized as a form of psychoeducation to prevent the fear of independence, specifically in adolescent girls. Psychoeducational interventions formulated with discussions such as enhancing understanding of the Cinderella complex, educating about motivation in thinking and behaviour patterns, increasing self-awareness, developing independent skills, and fostering healthy relationships.

The Cinderella Complex is women's desire to always be protected by men. This desire inhibits women from utilizing their intellect and creativity and makes them less independent. Women have a stronger need for prestige than for power (Asriyanti et al., 2022; Demir et al., 2021; Hussein et al., 2020). Consequently, women living in contemporary times are vulnerable because they feel pressured to meet the demands of their inner drives (Koyama, 2020).

According to Zain (2016), the Cinderella Complex is the tendency of women to be psychologically dependent, demonstrated by a strong desire to be cared for and protected by others, especially men, and the belief that help will come from outside. Various factors, including Parenting styles, Personal maturity, and Self-concept influence the emergence of the Cinderella complex in a woman. In the gender development perspective, the Cinderella Complex in women is influenced by local cultures that perceive women as weak and unable to be independent.

Sneha and Rahmath (2018) indicates that women with high scores of the Cinderella Complex tend to demean themselves to others, lack independence, seek love, assistance, and protection, expect direction from others, exhibit external self-control, have low self-esteem, avoid challenges and competition, rely on men, and fear losing femininity (Chastine & Darmasetiawan, 2019).

According to Cheeran (2016), the serious problem is women yearning for freedom but being afraid to take it. Meanwhile, Saha and Safri (2016) states that the Cinderella complex is the attitude and fear experienced by women to fully utilize their intellect and creativity, thereby making them wait for something or someone outside their lives. Anggraini (2015) states that the Cinderella complex is often unnoticed by women, who find themselves dependent. Thus, women are not accustomed to facing fears, challenges, competition, and continuously advancing in the face of obstacles. Auliasari (2018) also states that the Cinderella complex occurring in women is solely a fear of independence.

Based on the explanations above, the tendency of the Cinderella complex can be understood. When the tendency is known as an individual's inclination or unconscious desire towards certain characteristics or types of behaviour, the Cinderella complex is interpreted as the fear of independence that occurs unconsciously in women. It can be concluded

that the Cinderella complex's tendency is women's unconscious inclination or desire to fear independence, which creates a desire to be rescued.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a qualitative approach with thematic analysis. The qualitative approach is employed to gain a deep understanding of the experiences and perceptions of female students regarding the Cinderella Complex. Data is collected through interviews and observations to unearth comprehensive information. Additionally, thematic analysis is utilized to identify thematic patterns emerging from the collected data, aiding in understanding the primary issues faced by female students concerning the Cinderella Complex. Furthermore, this research also involves psychological interventions, such as psychoeducation, to assist female students in overcoming the fear of independence and developing self-confidence.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interview results, several factors influencing the Cinderella Complex syndrome in millennial students were identified, namely: 1) having a boyfriend, 2) receiving male attention, 3) depending on and being influenced by others, 4) lack of confidence in their abilities, 5) desire to marry young, 6) having fears that can hinder success, 7) lack of independence, 8) parenting styles received.

1. Having A Boyfriend

The informant mentioned having a boyfriend for over one year, and their relationship is a Long Distance Relationship (LDR).

"It has been four years in an LDR, not in the same place." (B, 20 years old)

Female students who tend to have dominant or controlling boyfriends may be more vulnerable to the Cinderella Complex. They may feel that their existence or acceptance depends on their relationship with their partners, which can diminish their self-esteem and independence. Moreover, female students who are highly attached to their relationships with their boyfriends may sacrifice personal desires and needs to maintain the relationship, even if it means sacrificing opportunities to develop themselves or pursue their dreams. This aligns with the Cinderella motif of self-restraint and prioritizing others' needs over their own.

2. Receiving Male Attention

When the informant faced difficulties, her boyfriend showed his attention in the form of support and motivation to encourage her not to give up easily and became her support system.

"Often helped with arranging the thesis, if now, it is tough again because sometimes there are feelings of insecurity, feelings like, can I do it?" (B, 20 years old)

The informant also received attention from other men while undergoing LDR and responded happily. Her male friend's attention included sending GoFood meals, accompanying her on outings, and providing transportation.

"Okay, but still understanding that this is just a friend, we should appreciate our partner more, like sending GoFood meals, bringing things here and there; because my boyfriend is far away, it is difficult to do things alone, so let's just do it, let's accompany him, sometimes asking for help too, especially when going far alone, women need friends, so sometimes asking for help, let's accompany him, let's go here, let's go there" (B, 20 years old)

Female students who receive excessive attention from men may tend to develop emotional dependence on them. They may feel that their happiness or life success heavily relies on the recognition and attention of these men. Excessive attention from men can also affect female students' perceptions of self-worth. If they feel that their worth is primarily determined by how much attention they receive from men, it can diminish their self-esteem if they don't receive much attention.

3. Dependent and Influenced by Others

The informant also admits to being dependent on her ex-boyfriend, as evidenced by feeling lost when there is one thing her ex-boyfriend doesn't do.

"I find it difficult not to depend on him, that's why I often meet him. We can meet three times a week even though we live far apart. Because I already feel very comfortable with him. Then, if there's one thing he doesn't do for me, I feel lost, there's this strange feeling." (D, 20 years old)

4. Doesn't Believe In Her Abilities

The informant expressed a lack of confidence in her abilities and seeks assistance from others to improve or receive feedback on tasks she's working on.

"I still lack confidence like that. When I'm doing something, I'm not sure about what I'm doing. I have to ask for feedback from others, for example, when I'm working on an assignment, I finish it but I'm like, 'okay', sometimes I ask others for advice, like 'please read it first', like that." (R, 20 years old)

Female students who lack confidence in their abilities may tend to seek validation or support from external sources, including men in their lives. They may feel that they are unable to achieve happiness or success without the help or support of men, which aligns with the Cinderella Complex mindset.

5. Desire to Marry Young

The informant desires to marry young if someone intends to seek approval from her parents.

"If someone wants to propose marriage, then get married, but they have to ask for permission from parents first, that's for sure." (D, 20 years old)

Female students who strongly desire to marry young may tend to rely on romantic relationships as the primary source of happiness and life success. They may feel that their existence or acceptance in society depends on their ability to attract a life partner, similar to the Cinderella mindset that relies on a prince for her happiness.

6. Having Fears that Can Hinder Success

The informant has fears that could hinder her future success, such as a lack of confidence in her abilities and the need for constant, intense communication with others.

"There are two things that I feel are wrong, and what it is, if continued, will hinder me, consciously but it's difficult to eliminate it like that. The first thing is I don't feel confident with what I'm doing, you know, and then I can't be alone; I'm alone like this; I hold my phone, and if my phone doesn't have any notifications within 4 hours, it's like, 'what's wrong? Is there no one looking for me?'" (B, 20 years old)

The informant is afraid to initiate conversations with others and has difficulty getting acquainted with new people.

"It's like when we first meet, we can't immediately get close, even when I first met R, I was the one who introduced R, not R introducing me in the dorm too, if it wasn't for me, if we didn't talk to each other, they would not ask questions." (S, 20 years old)

7. Not yet Independent

The informant stated that women need to be independent and not rely on others, yet the informant herself admitted that she is not yet able to be independent.

"In my opinion, it's necessary because nowadays, if we rely too much on them, it's not good. It's like if we depend on something and it breaks, we fall apart. But if we don't rely on others, we also can't walk alone like that. We try to be independent women, but for now, we are not too independent yet." (B, 20 years old)

8. Parenting Received

Another difference experienced by the informant is the demand to clean the house every day, unlike her younger brother, who does not do so.

"I have to hang out the clothes every day, clean up the house, if it's not cleaned, there will be scolding, but my brother never does anything, he's a boy." (D, 20 years old)

The informant was raised with love and not encouraged to do household chores; she tends to be spoiled by her parents. This parenting style is referred to as permissive parenting.

"It's just not regular, only when needed, it's done if asked to. You and your siblings are pampered by your parents, well, you can say it like that." (B, 20 years old)

The informant received a different upbringing than her older brother. She was taught to help out, such as cleaning the house and assisting her mother.

"The difference is, my mother teaches daughters to take care of themselves, like sweeping and helping her, but for sons, my mother teaches them to be more responsible, at least in terms of helping, they are never asked to sweep and mop." (R, 20 years old)

Discussion

Female students, despite being classified as millennials, actually have various fears in social relationships such as making decisions independently, having their own mindset, and being able to live independently (Miller & Mills, 2019). This is consistent with the experiences of the three informants, who find it difficult to make decisions, require assistance from others, and lack confidence in their appearance, leading to frequent feelings of insecurity and even overthinking throughout the night. Lack of confidence in their abilities is also shown by the three informants who believe that luck factor plays a bigger role in one's success than ability.

Based on the interview findings, several common problems were identified among students experiencing the Cinderella Complex syndrome. Firstly, excessive dependence is one of the recurring issues. Students with this syndrome tend to rely on others' assistance, whether it be friends, family, or professors. They may feel incapable of completing tasks or making decisions without external help, thus hindering their ability to develop independently.

Furthermore, low self-confidence poses a significant problem. Students with the Cinderella Complex tend to feel inadequate or unworthy of achieving academic success. This lack of confidence can impact their motivation to study and develop their potential, thus impeding their academic progress.

Additionally, fear of taking risks is also a challenge for students with this syndrome. They may be reluctant to try new things or take risks for fear of failure. Instead, they prefer to stay within their comfort zone and rely on others' assistance, which can inhibit personal exploration and growth.

Difficulty in setting personal goals is also a common issue. Students with the Cinderella Complex may struggle to establish long-term goals or have a clear vision of their future because they feel unable to achieve them without external assistance. This can hinder their career development and personal achievements.

Furthermore, the Cinderella Complex syndrome can also affect students' interpersonal relationships. They may rely on others to take the initiative in social interactions, leading to complex relationships with classmates, professors, or colleagues.

Lastly, self-management skills are also problematic. Students with the Cinderella Complex may struggle with time management, overcoming academic challenges, and dealing with stress because they feel unable to overcome these obstacles on their own. Therefore, it is important to recognize and address these issues so that students can develop personally and academically more effectively

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that female millennial students experience the Cinderella Complex syndrome, manifested by their social behaviours, such as enjoying attention from multiple men, having a tendency to depend on and be influenced by others, displaying non-assertive communication, lacking confidence in their abilities, and relying on luck to determine success factors. The factors causing the Cinderella Complex syndrome in this study generally share similarities and differences among the three informants in the factors contributing to the development of the Cinderella Complex syndrome. The primary factor in this research is personal maturity, which is judged by others. The second factor is self-concept. Other factors include parenting styles, with these parenting styles leading to gender discrimination within their families.

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