

Fatherless Phenomenon After Divorce and Its Impact on Children's Social and Academic Behavior

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Abstract

Fatherless is a term that refers to a condition when a child does not have the presence, care, or role of a father. One of the causes of fatherlessness is caused by divorce, which results in the child being separated from their father. The absence of the father's role can have a negative impact on children. One of them is in terms of academic and social skills. This study aims to determine the impact of the fatherless phenomenon after divorce on the behavior and academic abilities of children aged 5-11 years in one of the sub-districts in North Lombok Regency. This research is a type of qualitative research with the number of respondents in this study were 8 mothers. The results of the research in terms of the behavior of children who experience fatherlessness are that children do not have attachment to their fathers, children's independence is not optimal, and children's emotional control is still low. Meanwhile, in terms of academic ability, children who experience fatherlessness are children who cannot focus on learning due to negative emotions such as shame, anger, and low self-control. Children who experience fatherlessness also experience failure in subjects and have low motivation to learn. Children who feel loss and severe disappointment psychologically towards the role of the father then result in a decrease in learning achievement at school. So it is necessary to do socialization to parents to provide an understanding of the importance of the father's role in parenting.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Fatherless, Impact of Divorce, Social Behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia defines family as the smallest unit of society consisting of the head of the family and several people who are gathered and live somewhere under one roof in a state of interdependence. Family is understood as a primary group consisting of two or more people who have a network of interpersonal interactions, blood relations, marital relations, and adoption. This definition shows that the family requires marital relations, blood relations, and adoption as a binder.

An ideal and harmonious family consists of a father, mother and children, each of whom has a different role to play in realizing a harmonious family. The father is responsible for earning a living and making decisions for his family. Mothers also have a very important role, helping their husbands make decisions and carrying out all household responsibilities, including educating their children. Children have an important role in family relationships, helping their parents, studying at school, and maintaining the good name of the family. By having a

relationship with the role of each family, it is hoped that a harmonious relationship will be created in order to become an ideal family.

According to Stinnett et al. (1999), family members can rely on and support each other, share love and loyalty, and have good communication among family members. Friedman (1998) said that there are five family functions: (1) Affective function is the main family function to teach everything to prepare family members to relate to other people. This function is needed for the individual and psychosocial development of family members, (2) Socialization function is the process of development and change through which individuals produce social interactions and learn to play a role in their social environment. This function is useful for fostering socialization in children, forming norms of behavior according to the level of child development and continuing family cultural values, (3) Reproductive function is a function to maintain generations and maintain family continuity, (4) Economic function, namely the family functions to meet family needs economically and a place to develop individual abilities to increase income to meet family needs, and (5) Health care or maintenance function is to maintain the health condition of family members in order to maintain high productivity.

The family is not only a basic unit in society, but also an important place for children's physical and mental growth (Dai & Wang, 2015). The family is the first and main place for children's growth and development. If the atmosphere in the family is good and pleasant, the child will grow well. If not, then the child's growth will be hampered. GI and IW (1990) found that depressive illness and suicidal behavior are influenced by family functioning, even children who come from depressed parents are at high risk of developing psychopathology. This makes the role of parents in the family very important. Mother and father figures occupy an equally important position for the development of children within the family (Meuwissen & Englund, 2016). Children who receive warmth from both parents are seen to have more positive wellbeing (Sandler et al., 2008).

If a family is unable to carry out its functions due to problems such as divorce or due to a bad relationship between parents and children, it will have an impact on the development of a child. Rahayu (2023) states that divorce has a negative impact on children such as lack of affection, low learning achievement, low self-confidence and socialization skills, and low self-regulation. Divorce creates an imbalance in parenting roles that should involve the active role of both parents. Child custody rights in the event of divorce are regulated in Article 105 KHI explaining that child custody in divorce with children under 12 years of age is given to the mother. Divorce makes children grow and develop without the presence of a father or what is known as fatherless.

Fatherless refers to the concept of the absence of the father's role either physically or psychologically in the daily life and even the life of the child.

According to Smith (2011) a person is said to get a fatherless condition when he does not have a close relationship with his father, and loses important father roles caused by divorce or problems in the parents' marriage. Based on data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in 2023, Indonesia ranks third as a fatherless country in the world. Meanwhile, according to data from UNICEF in 2021, around 20.9% of children in Indonesia grow up without a father.

This absence can have a negative impact on children. One of them is in terms of academics and social skills. Children who have intact parents are also found to have superior school performance compared to single parents (Downey, 1994). In a study conducted by Marshall et al., (2021) found the influence of the presence and quality of father interaction on children's behavior in the family. Children who have a father figure in the family have lower levels of aggression and depression compared to children who do not have a father figure in the family. In addition, Sakardi et al. (2008) also found that father involvement can reduce behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in girls, improve cognition, and reduce delinquency in children.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with a phenomenological strategy approach. The phenomenological approach is an approach that aims to understand individual experiences in depth. This approach focuses on the phenomena experienced by individuals and seeks to reveal the meaning contained in it. The informants in this study were 8 mothers with the criteria of having children in the age range of five to eleven years, having experienced divorce and living with children. The location of this research is in one of the sub-districts in North Lombok Regency, NTB. Interviews were conducted with mothers of children for 60 minutes each without any interference from other parties. Analysis was conducted by the researcher to identify themes presented by informants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thematic analysis consists of: 1) Familiarization, which is transcribing audio data from interview recordings into verbatim form and reading all data obtained during interviews; 2) Coding, at this stage directed coding and semantic exploration of data to find out information explicitly; 3) Generating themes, is the stage of categorizing themes from data that has been coded; 4) Defining and naming themes, at this stage the axial coding process is carried out to make conclusions; and 5) Writing, which is writing conclusions focused on answering research questions related to the impact of the fatherless phenomenon on children's behavior and academic abilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Families do play an important role in meeting the needs of their family members (Geldard & Geldard., 2011). Fulfilling these needs is a form of responsibility that is realized by providing a suitable environment for reproduction and care for children. This is because children cannot take care of themselves and fulfill all their needs without the help of their family. Like a family, the general needs that must be met include a sense of security, comfort, clothing and food. In this case, the family can provide opportunities for children to interact and build wider communication with the surrounding community.

Family is one of the most important influences on children (Belsky et al., 1984). For almost three decades, Anderson (2014) evaluated the impact of family structure on children's health and well-being. The results show that children who live with biological parents consistently have better physical, emotional and academic well-being. In addition, according to Alesina & Giuliano (2014) strong family ties can also improve children's well-being and relieve stress. A good family structure will result in healthy children.

Fatherless Phenomenon After Divorce

Elida (2006) explains that the function of a father figure in a family is a leader, has the responsibility of providing protection for their wives and children, and can provide material and psychological support in the form of love and create happiness. Fatherless families, or families without fathers, not only experience social marginalization, but are also considered at risk of developing deviance because there is no strong male figure that boys get. Because in essence, all children want to have complete parents. Meeting the physical, spiritual and social needs of family members is the primary responsibility of the family. This includes care, maintenance, guidance, personality growth, and fulfillment of the emotional and spiritual side of family members. If the family is dysfunctional, there can be tension, slowness, and difficulty in personality adjustment, which can interfere with their functioning as individuals or socially.

Parents play an important role in a child's growth and development as they are the first person to come into direct contact with the child and provide the first model for the child. On the other hand, fathers, as family members, play an important role in fostering children's physical and psychological growth. However, in reality, they are often faced with a wide variety of social problems.

The absence of the father's role here is the physical and psychological absence in the child's life, known as fatherlessness, father absence, father loss or father hunger. The physical absence of the father's role can be caused by death, leading to the designation of orphans. Lamb (2010) revealed that the father's role is divided into three components, paternal engagement, accessibility or availability, and responsibility. The role of fathers in paternal engagement is to interact directly with children in parenting, playing, and relaxing. This role will

cause children to have a role model from their father in dealing with life (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015) and communicating with others.

The void of a father figure felt by a child is not immediately recognized. The feeling of loss is initially in the form of a question about the existence of a father in the mind of a child. If he does not get an answer that satisfies his longing or loss, then he will keep it in his heart and continue searching. The confusion will remain in the child's mind until he gets the answer he wants, despite the best efforts of his mother or extended family to fill the void. A child's soul will feel alienated when it sees the idealized picture of a family consisting of a father, mother and child together physically and psychologically.

According to J. Verkuyl in Elia (2000) the role of a father in the first year of a child's life is to help the mother provide care, only then does the father become the authoritative head of the family and maintain and protect family life. The function of a father is to live and work on the border between family and society. Fathers must be able to introduce and guide their children to navigate the outside world or social life. Quoted in Fitroh (2014) that Richard C. Halverson argues that fathers are responsible for three main tasks. First, fathers must teach their children about God and educate their children in God's teachings and advice; Second, a father must take a leadership role in his family. Thirdly, the father should be responsible for discipline. Thus the father will become an authority figure.

Children's Social Behavior

The absence of a father's role in parenting has several negative impacts (Freeks, 2022). Children who are raised without the role of the father have an impact on the absence of attachment between the father and his child. Whereas the attachment between parents and children is important because it affects the inner behavior model and shapes the behavior expected by children (Wolfers, et al., 2020). There is no attachment between father and child. In addition, the impact of fatherlessness is that children's independence is not optimal. Children aged 5 years should be independent in life skills such as wearing socks, shoes, clothes, eating and drinking. However, based on the results of this interview, it was found that in daily life skills they still have to be assisted by the mother. This finding is in line with the study of Maisyarah et al., (2017), that father's care plays a role in teaching independence. Not optimal children's independence is supported verbatim from interviews with mothers.

Another negative impact in this study as a result of father absence relates to children's ability to control their behavior. This study showed that children's emotional control is still low. Children often get angry and cry when asking for something. This study is in line with the research of Asy'ari et al., (2019), that the absence of the father's role affects behavioral and cognitive control. A child's self-control ability is strongly influenced by his parents, as mentioned by Mayangsari et al., (2014) that the nuclear family is the main factor in influencing the

development of self-control. In adapting to a new environment, children find it difficult, these children take longer to adapt to their friends at school, because they feel insecure and comfortable if they are away from their mothers. In addition, in expressing their wishes, they have not dared to express directly and ask their mother to convey it. These children tend to throw tantrums when their wishes are not met.

Families do play an important role in meeting the needs of their family members (Geldard & Geldard., 2011). Fulfilling these needs is a form of responsibility that is realized by providing a suitable environment for reproduction and care for children. This is because children cannot take care of themselves and fulfill all their needs without the help of their family. Like a family, the general needs that must be met include a sense of security, comfort, clothing and food. In this case, the family can provide opportunities for children to interact and build wider communication with the surrounding community (Rahayu, et al., 2024).

Children's Academic Achievement

The family environment is one of the factors that has a significant influence on learning achievement. When parents experience divorce which results in the absence of the role and father figure in a child's life both physically and psychologically, it will have a negative impact on the child himself. Ideally the child expects to feel the warmth of attention from a father, instead what he gets is only an intangible expectation. Children still need their father's presence to fulfill their developmental tasks until they reach adulthood. The child's need for a complete father's role in his life for his physical and psychological growth and development will have a major influence on the child when he reaches school age.

Children who experience fatherlessness will clearly have an impact on their psychology, starting from the child will feel lonely and jealousy (Lerner, 2011), low self-esteem, feelings of anger, where emotions are difficult to control, shame because they are different from other children who can experience togetherness with a father (Lerner, 2011), and low self-control (Asy'ari et al., 2019), and the inability to solve problems makes him often rebel (Fry & Grover, 1982). The many impacts received by children make them unable to focus when learning both at school and at home. This is in accordance with the basic concept and nature of learning which is a psychological process, so when the child's psychology is disturbed, it will directly impact the learning process which will experience imperfection.

Failure in subjects is one of the impacts of father absence in children's lives. Based on the results of research conducted by Whitney, et al., (2017) found that children who live with their fathers have a lower risk of failing in subjects compared to children who do not live with their fathers. In addition, the lack of motivation provided from the parties that children expect, in this case is the significant other. The position of the father who is physically unable to provide

himself with a sense of enthusiasm, passion and pleasure in learning makes children feel lazy and unchallenged to get achievements. The lack of motivation from the father makes the child think that no one cares about him when he succeeds. So that children will consider it futile if they want to excel or succeed in school.

Fatherlessness also has an impact on learning achievement, when children feel psychologically lost and severely disappointed in the role of the father, it results in a decrease in learning achievement at school. Research from The University of New Jersey found that students who interact enough with their father will tend to have a higher IQ than students who interact little with their father. However, it will be different when the child already feels that he has a replacement father figure who suits him from his fatherless problem, the child will remain motivated to improve his learning achievement at school.

CONCLUSIONS

The results show that the role of fathers in childcare is very important. Children do not get their rights to get optimal care from both parents because of the absence of fathers in their growth and development. In this case, it shows that the father has no role in caring for the child, there is no time with the child due to the separation of residence, and childcare is only carried out entirely by the mother. As a result, there is no attachment between the child and the father, the child's independence is not optimal, and there is a lack of control over the child's behavior.

The loss of the father figure due to divorce results in the loss of the father's opportunity to interact with the child. For this reason, whatever causes the absence of the father's role to occur must be anticipated by parents so that it does not have a major impact on children. Because we can know that the absence of the father's role has a major influence on children's psychology, which can cause children to become often moody, difficult to concentrate, which in turn decreases learning achievement. Support and interaction from a father can provide a good stimulus for children so that it has an impact on good achievement as well. In terms of support and attention such as paying attention and reminding children to study diligently is a form of affection and care that children really expect.

From this case, it is necessary to conduct socialization to parents to provide an understanding of the importance of the father's role in parenting. Recommendations for other studies are to examine the phenomenon and impact of fatherlessness from various parental backgrounds.

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