

The impact of divorce on the social emotional development of early children

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Abstract

Parental care is one of the factors that influences children's social emotional development. However, quite a few children do not experience complete care from both parents because of divorce. Divorce itself is a condition where the two parents have to separate and force the child to be raised only by one of the parents, father or mother, raised by relatives or even by other people. This research is a literature study by collecting various information from books and journal articles that are relevant to the problem topic under study, namely related to the impact of divorce on the social emotional development of early childhood. The research results show that divorce can have a significant impact on children, especially their social emotional development. Negatively, children who are victims of divorce are more likely to experience anxiety, stress, behavioral and emotional problems, as well as difficulties in building social relationships. However, with support from the surrounding environment, such as teachers, extended family and the community, we can minimize and overcome the negative impact caused by the divorce of parents. Apart from that, the support of parents who are not conflicted and have good relationships can provide affection, communication and maintain the stability of children during the transition period. A factor that is quite good for the social emotional development of children who are victims of divorce.

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INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest unit of a society. The existence of this family is very important because the family is a forum that can shape the personality of each of its members (Suryani et al., 2024). In the family there is a process of meaningful interaction which of course provides first care for the child. Parenting style itself has quite a big influence on a child's growth and development, regardless of the good or bad of the parenting style and education. This is as stated by Siregar & Subiyantoro (2021) which revealed that there are several factors that influence the process of child development, one of which is parenting patterns for children. One of the developments stimulated by the process of parental care and education is the child's social emotional development. As expressed by Suryani et al. (2024) which revealed that parents have a role in developing the social emotional abilities of early childhood through first education, as models and as children's friends.

Considering the importance of parental care for children's social emotional development, many parents try to provide the best care for their children. It is easier for an intact family to provide, distribute and fulfill children's needs. However, not all children can experience complete care from both parents. Divorce cases are an increasing phenomenon in various countries, including Indonesia. Divorce itself according Kusumawati (2020) is an incident where the two parents have to separate, which causes the child to have to be raised by one of the parties, either the mother or the father alone or even by relatives and in many cases the child is also cared for by someone else.

Even though the phenomenon of divorce is quite a frightening threat for a family, considering the consequences that will be experienced by the couple involved, it also has an impact on children who will of course experience changes in family structure, especially for vulnerable children aged 0-6 years. Children aged 0-6 years are very vulnerable to being affected by their parents' divorce cases because children at this age are at a critical stage of their development, including social-emotional development. Thus, changes in family structure can affect the well-being of children's social and emotional development. This can be seen from the results of research conducted by Hayati (2016) which revealed that parental divorce had a significant impact on children's social emotional development.

Various studies show that children who are victims of their parents' divorce usually have problems in their social and emotional development, both short and long term. Children who are victims of divorce usually show feelings of insecurity, being unwanted or rejected by their parents who left, sad and lonely, angry, lost, feeling guilty, blaming themselves as the cause of their parents' divorce (Ramadhani & Krisnani, 2019). Besides that Wardani et al. (2022) He also explained that children who are victims of divorce are also vulnerable to psychological disorders, hate their parents, are easily affected by bad influences from their environment, view life as a waste, are not easy to get along with and have moral problems. This effect may be stronger in early childhood because children do not yet have mature social-emotional skills, so it will be more difficult for them to adapt to understand complex divorce situations.

The situation and conditions between the two parents during, before and after divorce can worsen the condition of the child's social emotional development. When children are involved in their parents' divorce conflict, the child consciously knows this but the child cannot understand and express this, Kelly & Emery (2003) explains that exposure to ongoing parental conflict can increase the risk of emotional disorders in children, such as anxiety and aggressive behavior, which can interfere with their ability to form healthy social relationships later in life. This requires support and attention from the people around the child, including the parents themselves and the family. Bearing in mind that children who are victims of divorce who have sufficient social and emotional support from their surrounding environment can better adapt to the changes that occur in their families. This is as expressed by Pavlushkina (Maharani & Adriansyah, 2021) who stated that there is an influence between self-acceptance and social support on social adaptation in children who are victims of their parents' divorce.

Referring to the various impacts of the problems of children who are victims of divorce, especially the impact on children's social emotional development, researchers are interested in conducting an in-depth study related to this case, where this research aims to describe the impact of parental divorce on children's social emotional

development. By understanding children's social emotional development which is influenced by various factors in the context of divorce, it is hoped that this research can provide a useful contribution to readers, including parents.

METHOD

The research method in writing this article is to use literature study. According to Marzali (2017), literature study itself is a search and research of the literature by reading various books, journals and other publications related to the research topic, to produce a piece of writing regarding a particular topic or issue. Furthermore, according to Danial & Wasriah (2009), literary studies are research carried out by researchers by collecting a number of books and magazines related to the problem and research objectives. In this research, the researcher conducted an in-depth study by collecting various information from published books and journal articles which of course has relevance to the problem topic under study, namely related to the impact of divorce on the social emotional development of early childhood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The impact of divorce on early childhood development

The impact of parental divorce on social-emotional development is very significant, this is because young children are at a developmental stage. Divorce causes various impacts on children, both negative and positive impacts. Children who are victims of negative parental divorce usually experience anxiety, stress, behavioral and emotional problems, and difficulty in building social relationships. This is because at a very young age they are not yet able to accept the separation of their parents. Khairunnisa et al. (2021) which states that children who are victims of their parents' divorce easily show higher levels of anxiety and depression, this is because these children feel confused and are afraid of losing the attention and affection of one of their parents. Moreover, early childhood children have strong egocentric characteristics which of course increasingly influence their social-emotional development. Research by Wang et al. (2021) stated that divorce has a negative impact on young children who more easily experience stress which affects their emotional health.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Greenaway and Clark (2017) on young children who were victims of divorce revealed that young children who were victims of divorce experienced depression, were less able to adapt and did not have self-confidence when they had to be in a new place. Lansford (2019) explains that children who are victims of divorce show aggressive and impulsive behavior more easily than those in intact families. Losing an important figure in a child's life makes children sensitive and irritable (Wardani et al., 2022). So, children who are victims of divorce have difficulty building positive relationships with their surrounding environment due to a decline in social skills (Sun and Li, 2018), which may be caused by trauma, something similar was expressed by Brand et al. (2019) which informs that children with divorced parents experience mental health problems, namely depression and trauma when they meet new people they don't know. A study by Lee & McLanahan (2015) found that children from divorced families showed greater challenges in managing emotions, which can have long-term impacts on their mental health. Apart from that, research conducted by Fitri et al. (2022) show that divorce has a very big influence on the development of children's attitudes, including causing children to be quiet and have low self-esteem, be excessively naughty, have low learning achievement and feel lost. This could be caused by factors that influence the occurrence of emotions in young children who are victims of divorce, namely emotional mental disorders (Sary, 2022).

The role of divorced parents' parenting style on children's social emotional development

The role of parenting for children with divorced parents is in fact very important, especially in supporting children's social emotional development. Consistency in the parenting style provided by parents is one of the supporters. This is because consistent parenting and emotional support from both parents even though they are divorced can help reduce the negative impact on the child's social and emotional well-being. The importance of consistent parenting applied by parents emphasizes that even though the child's parents must be separated and not live together, cooperative support and parenting can reduce the negative impact on children and help them grow in a socially and emotionally healthy environment and reduce the negative impact of their parents' divorce (Van Dijk et al., 2020; Sandler et al., 2008; Zhu et al., 2024). Consistency in parenting between divorced parents, even though they are no longer together, helps children be more controlled and reduces feelings of anxiety about the absence of one of the parties, they still feel safe even though one of their parents is not present and does not live together. In addition, with cooperative parenting, parents work together to provide support for children's social emotional development so that children can more easily overcome social and emotional challenges after the divorce of their parents (Widiastuti, 2015).

Based on the research and explanation above, it is known that consistent and cooperative parenting is very important for the social development of early childhood after the divorce of their parents. However, it cannot be avoided that parental divorce often leads to prolonged conflict, and this becomes an obstacle in maintaining children's emotional stability. Therefore, it is important for parents to maintain post-divorce relationships with their partners and manage conflicts for the benefit and good of their children's social emotional development. The influence of conflict on children's social emotional development as stated by McCoy et al. (2009) which states that conflict parental divorce and marriage have an influence on children's emotions and behavior.

Resolving conflicts between separated parents must be carried out by parents in the interests of their children. When parents can reconcile and accept separation, parents can work together in raising children together even though they no longer live together. Grych & Fincham (2001) Foster et al (2017) Kelly & Emery (2003) explain that resolving conflict between divorced parents contributes to reducing the negative impact on children's social emotional and psychosocial development. Apart from that, providing confidence to children regarding the fact that there will be no changes even though the parents are separated is also very important for parents to provide a sense of calm to the child, and parents must also explain that the separation of the parents was not caused by the child, this is as stated explained by Hayati, (2016) explains that several psychologists stated that the most important help that divorced parents can provide is to try to reassure and convince the child that they are not at fault. Apart from that, support from parents in the form of smooth communication, giving unchanging love and maintaining the child's stability is really needed by children to help children adapt to accepting their parents' separation (Wolchik, 2013). How children react to their parents' divorce is greatly influenced by the way their parents behave before, during and after the divorce.

Supporting Factors

Of course, social support is really needed by children who are victims of divorce. Support from teachers, family and society will help children to adapt and overcome emotional stress.

Teachers are substitute parents at school who are very helpful in handling emotional stress in children before and after their parents divorce. Most children will tell their teachers at school when their parents are having problems, this is followed by a change in the child's attitude which usually makes the teacher feel strange about his behavior. A good teacher is a teacher who is sensitive to changes in behavior that occur in children, this will of course provide support for the child, so that he still feels cared for by his environment because most children who are victims of divorce feel they do not get enough attention from the environment, especially their parents. Providing this attention has quite a good effect on children's emotional regulation. This, as expressed by Jensen and Gunter (2020), shows that teachers who are sensitive to students' emotional needs can help them overcome stress and develop emotional resilience.

The next factor is the extended family, where the extended family is actually able to provide emotional support. The presence of extended family such as grandparents, uncles and aunts and other relatives provides additional support for children who are victims of divorce because the children feel that they are not alone so that gradually these children who are victims of divorce can accept their situation. Research shows that children who have a strong family support network tend to be better able to adapt to change and deal with emotional difficulties (Nicolai & Rauschenbach, 2022).

Through strong and solid social support, children who are victims of divorce have a better chance of managing their emotions in dealing with problems arising from their parents' divorce. This, as stated by Lindsey and Baird (2021), shows that when schools and families work together, children have a greater opportunity to develop the social and emotional skills needed to cope with stress. Furthermore, Brunner and Sieverding (2017) revealed that social support from peers, family and teachers contributes to children's emotional adjustment in a community context. Foster and Gifford (2019) emphasize that initiatives involving various stakeholders, including schools, non-profit organizations, and government, can increase social support for children. Apart from that, social support is also very important for children from broken homes, because it can help them overcome the trauma and psychological difficulties they may have experienced. Social support can take the form of emotional, appreciative, instrumental and informational support provided by people around the individual who needs it (Matondang et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

In fact, parental divorce has a quite significant and complex impact on children's development. Moreover, early childhood is a child who is in a period of fairly rapid development. One of the impacts that appears quite significant can be seen from the social emotional development of children. The impacts that arise can be negative or positive.

Referring to the negative impact that arises from children's social emotional development, they often show high levels of anxiety and emotional instability, irritability and aggression, as well as decreased social skills. This happens because they feel the loss of one of their parents or even because they cannot accept the situation of their parents having to separate, especially because of poor support from the environment such as disputes or unresolved conflicts between their parents.

Although the negative impact of parental divorce cannot be avoided, this impact can be minimized and avoided with proper management. Because children who are victims of divorce can also manage their social emotional development as well as children from other families, this will depend on how both parents handle the divorce problem that occurs and the extent to which the parents can provide and give attention to the child. smooth communication and maintaining children's stability during the transition period of their parents' divorce. Apart from support from both divorced parents, support from the environment is no less important for children, with emotional support from those around the child, such as from teachers, family and the community. This will minimize the negative impacts that will be experienced by children. They will not feel deprived of love. love and they will easily accept the separation of their parents.

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