

PARENTAL DIVORCE'S EFFECTS ON STUDENT CHARACTER AT ISLAMIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study examines parental divorce's impact on elementary school children at MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak. The research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data collection techniques used in this study include interviews and observations. The subjects of this research are 10 students from MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak, one teacher, and two student guardians. The student subjects were selected from families who have experienced divorce. The age range of the research subjects is between 7 and 12 years old, corresponding to elementary school age. The results indicate that following a divorce, most children tend to live with their mothers, while only a few live with their fathers. Additionally, it is not uncommon for children after a divorce to be taken in by one of their grandmothers and enrolled in an elementary school, such as MI Hidayatul Islam, where the research was conducted. Research findings indicate that the impact of parental divorce on students' character can be observed primarily in psychological dimensions. Emotionally, children often experience feelings of loss, confusion, and even anxiety due to changes in family support, especially when they live only with their mother or other relatives, such as a grandmother. This limited parental presence may lead to a perceived lack of attention or support from their father, affecting their emotional stability. Psychologically, children may face identity crises and become more vulnerable to issues like prolonged insecurity or depression, which can have long-term effects on their character development and behavior.

Keywords: Impact of Divorce, Parents, Student Character.

INTRODUCTION

The environment is a crucial factor in a child's development and growth, encompassing everything around them that can influence their life. A child's living environment can significantly impact the formation of their character. The primary factor affecting a child's development and growth is the family environment (Härkönen et al., 2017). The family is the primary source of influence and support for a child's growth, far more than the school or community environment. Children spend more time with their families than with their teachers, making the family largely responsible for educating and instilling moral values in them. The impact of the family environment on a child's character formation is substantial (Ozer et al., 2017). However, creating a harmonious family environment is not easy. Many parents struggle to shape their

children's character due to personal issues or unhappiness in their marriage, which often leads to divorce (Setiawan et al., 2024; Setiyono et al., 2024).

Divorce in question is the termination of marriage for some reason with a judge's decision on the demands of one or both parties (Simanjuntak, 2007). At the age of children, it is necessary for parents to provide living attention to their children so that they can have a positive influence on children such as being affectionate, gentle, and caring for others. At the age of children who are still vulnerable to the environment around them, children will imitate what they often see, hear, and feel (Lansford, 2009).

A harmonious family will positively influence children as they grow into adolescence or adulthood. Conversely, if a child frequently witnesses, hears, or experiences negative impressions during childhood, it can have detrimental effects lasting into adulthood (Lindell & Campione-Barr, 2017). However, not all children from divorced families are necessarily impacted by negative aspects of their lives. Some may turn such circumstances into motivation, using them as a drive to avoid living in fear, sadness, hardship, or feeling overwhelmed by difficult situations (Pereira & Barros, 2019). It is a significant and crucial responsibility for parents to ensure that their marriage is stable, secure, and supportive of their child's character development (Schaffnit & Lawson, 2021). Children must be taught to discover their identity and be themselves, allowing them to make independent life decisions. Allowing children the freedom to make their own decisions is an essential part of the learning process, helping them grow into responsible individuals accountable to themselves and others. (Marini et al., 2019).

The formation of a child's character is crucial, which is why parents play a crucial role in shaping their child's character. In addition to parents, character education for children is also essential. According to Suyanto (Zul Nuraini, 2012), Character education is moral education with an added dimension involving aspects of knowledge (cognitive), feelings (emotional), and actions (behavioral). Previously, the character was understood as a distinctive trait all objects or individuals possessed. According to Kertajaya (Ali Mustadi, 2011, p. 3), This distinctive trait is inherent and deeply rooted in the personality of the object or individual, serving as the "engine" that drives how a person acts, behaves, speaks, and responds to situations. Character education is crucial and should be implemented starting from the early years of elementary school.

Research on the impact of parental divorce on the character of students in Islamic elementary schools offers a unique contribution to academic literature, particularly due to the limited focus on Islamic schools in prior studies. Most research on the effects of parental divorce has been conducted within general school environments, thus lacking a comprehensive perspective on the emotional and behavioral dynamics of students in institutions that integrate Islamic character education into their curricula (Guyette & Harris, 2024; Liu, 2022). In this context, the study aims to identify specific influences that may arise from parental divorce on the character development of students in Islamic elementary schools. This research is relevant in exploring the emotional and psychological effects faced by students amid family changes. It also broadens the practical view by highlighting how students in Islamic schools may internalize or respond to these challenges within the framework of the Islamic values emphasized in their education.

The reason the author is interested in researching "**The Impact of Parental Divorce on the Character of Students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak**" is due to the fact that several children at MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak come from families with a background of divorce conflicts. Their negative behavior has drawn the author's attention to investigate the effects of parental separation on their children. The author aims to understand how this situation impacts the lives of the children involved.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method with a case study approach. The aim of this qualitative research is to explore the impact of parental divorce on the character development of elementary school-aged children at MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak. The research subjects consist of 10 MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak students from divorced families, 1 teacher, and 2 student guardians. The subjects' ages range from 7 to 12 years old. This approach allows the researcher to delve into the informants' understanding, experiences, and perceptions to identify the impact of parental divorce on the character development of students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Islam.

The location of this research is Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Islam, situated within the Hidayatul Islam boarding school environment in Probolinggo Regency. This location was chosen because Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Hidayatul Islam has a strong religious

and educational environment, providing a unique context to examine how parental divorce affects the character of students raised in a religious setting. The school also has a background of students from divorced families, and the school's location is easily accessible. Additionally, good cooperation with the school facilitates the data collection process and direct observation.

The data collection techniques in this research were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to see the impact on students' character at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah when their parents are divorced. These observations will record students' behaviors, actions, and interactions in various situations, both inside and outside the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted with the class teacher and guardians of the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah students regarding their perceptions of the student's character when their parents are divorced. These interviews were semi-structured, with flexible questions allowing subjects to freely share their experiences and viewpoints. Triangulation was performed by comparing data from various sources (observations, interviews, and documentation) to ensure the consistency and validity of the information obtained.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cases like divorce illustrate a reality where the relationship between husband and wife is no longer imbued with love, undermined by the foundations of their marriage that were built together but have now become fragile and unable to support harmonious family life. Consequently, the relationship between husband and wife becomes increasingly strained, with each party, or one of them, creating a distance that leads to a complete breakdown in communication. This relationship reflects a growing situation of alienation and separation, as they drift further into their worlds. As a result, there is a shift in meaning and function, leading each individual to feel estranged without any intimate connection, or even indifferent to one another. This can escalate to a point where they may even seek to undermine each other. However, according to Islamic teachings, Allah disapproves of divorce within the family. As previously mentioned, the family, particularly the father and mother, is the closest environment for children. When children grow up in a harmonious family, they tend to develop characters filled with love and affection. Conversely, if a family experiences conflict or a breakdown in

relationships, parental roles may not function effectively, resulting in children receiving less attention than they need.

In the process of educating children, parents play a crucial role in shaping their behavior and mindset. First, parents should provide their children with an understanding of right and wrong to comprehend the risks of their actions and distinguish between what is permissible and what is not. Second, implementing a strict parenting style can instill discipline in children but may also create discomfort. Third, children tend to mimic their parents' habits, so parents must serve as good examples in terms of communication, demonstrating empathy, honesty, and other positive behaviors. Fourth, as children enter their teenage years and have more friends, parents should continue to monitor and remind them about negative social environments without prohibiting them from socializing. Parents need to provide guidance in a constructive manner. Fifth, children have the right to receive love from their parents. In any situation, parents should consistently offer support and affection when their children succeed and face failure. When children experience setbacks, parental support, and encouragement are vital to ensure that they feel loved and valued (Ali et al., 2019; Li & Meier, 2017).

Elementary school student character

The development of students' abilities in school is influenced by the learning processes they undergo. The learning process is shaped by the teacher's views and understanding of student characteristics and the nature of learning. Student characteristics refer to the traits and qualities that differentiate one student from another. This includes aspects such as learning styles, academic abilities, interests, motivation, intelligence, special needs, and other factors that affect students' learning and development. Understanding student characteristics helps educators design appropriate teaching approaches that support the individual development of each student.

Character reflects an individual's nature, disposition, morals, or personality, shaped through the internalization of various virtues that underlie that person's views, thoughts, attitudes, and actions. These virtues encompass a range of values, morals, and norms, such as honesty, courage, trust, and respect for others. (Kemendiknas, 2010). Warsono (2010) defines character as the attitudes and habits of an individual that enable and facilitate their actions. Good character arises from good morals reflected in daily attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, character education is considered crucial and

strategic for national development. Character education is an effort to develop students' character so that they embody and apply values and character in their daily lives as members of society and as religious, nationalistic, productive, and creative citizens. (Kemendiknas, 2010). Character education plays a vital role in shaping an individual's moral quality, as good morals are directly proportional to good character, which is reflected in daily attitudes and behaviors (Faliyandra, 2019; White & Shin, 2017). Therefore, instilling good character is essential, especially in primary education, where teachers play a role in transferring knowledge and shaping students' character (Dewi, n.d.).

Elementary school children between 6 and 12 years old exhibit robust physical abilities, distinctive individual traits, a high level of activity, and a degree of independence. They naturally enjoy play, movement, group activities, and direct experiences, aligning with their developmental stage (Gunarsa, 2006). Given these characteristics, structured steps are necessary for fostering character in elementary students. First, defining the character involves establishing the desired traits, like discipline and responsibility, that match students' playful and active disposition. Next, character building must be integrated into the learning process by reviewing Competency Standards (SK) and Basic Competencies (KD) to identify relevant character traits, develop indicators for them, and incorporate them into syllabi and lesson plans. Finally, establishing character habits is crucial; consistent practice solidifies character traits in students, as exemplified by the development of discipline through repeated disciplined behavior, signaling successful character development.

Parental Role

Parents, specifically the father and mother, have the primary responsibility for the education and all aspects of their child's life from childhood to adulthood (Ruli, 2020). They are the ones responsible for determining their children's future. However, given the limitations and challenges, parents often need external assistance in the process of educating their children. One of the key contributors to education is the teacher at school. Even though children attend school, parents still play a crucial role in supporting their children's educational success. Parents' responsibilities include actively facilitating the learning process at home in alignment with the curriculum taught at school.

The role of parents in education can be realized in various ways, such as guiding children in studying at home. This includes supervising and helping them with school assignments and providing the necessary facilities and support for their learning process (Afni & Jumahir, 2020). Thus, parents play a key role in supporting their children's education, even after the children are in a school environment. The understanding of parents cannot be separated from the overall concept of family. Parents are an integral part of the extended family, which in many cases is now more often understood as the nuclear family, consisting of the father, mother, and children. This nuclear family replaces the broader extended family structure and plays a central role in children's daily lives.

The duties and roles of parents are the primary unit and the first institution in society, where the relationships within it are mostly direct. Here, individual development begins, and the initial stages of development are formed. In the family, parents play a significant role because children spend most of their time in the family environment, especially when they are still under parental care or in elementary school, with the role of a mother being particularly important. Thus, the family or parents become crucial in educating their children from religious, social, and individual perspectives. Therefore, it is clear that parents have an important role in their significant duties and responsibilities toward all family members.

The relationship between children and parents significantly impacts a child's development. Children who experience warmth in their interactions with their parents, such as feeling loved, protected, and treated well, tend to adopt and follow their parents' habits more easily and experience more positive development (Afni & Jumahir, 2020).

The impact of parental divorce

A harmonious relationship between parents and children greatly influences the growth and development of a child's mind and education. A harmonious relationship filled with understanding and affection will shape the child's personality. Given that the household is the first place where children recognize education, parents must understand the goals of education for their children (M. Yusuf, 2014).

This writing is descriptive, utilizing data from MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak to illustrate the importance of family integrity and the role of parents in children's education. According to Article 1 of Law No. 1 of 1974, the purpose of marriage is to

form a happy and eternal family based on the One Supreme God. Parents' moral responsibility in children's education and development is crucial, both after divorce and in intact families, as children trust God and need to be well cared for (Rahayu, 2023). This study shows that after a divorce, most children typically live with their mothers, while only a small percentage live with their fathers. Additionally, children who experience divorce are often cared for by one of their grandmothers and then enrolled in elementary schools such as MI Hidayatul Islam, where the author conducted the research. These findings highlight the importance of the role of parents and family in supporting children's education despite changes in family structure.

According to the research findings, after a divorce, most children more frequently live with their mothers. This may be due to various reasons, including legal decisions or parental preferences. Only a small number of children live with their fathers, indicating that in many cases, mothers become the primary caregivers after a divorce. Furthermore, children who do not live with both parents are often cared for by their grandmothers or other family members. For instance, the children studied at MI Hidayatul Islam are often under the care of their grandmothers and continue their education at that school. These findings indicate that despite significant changes in family structure due to divorce, support from parents and family members remains crucial in children's educational process. The presence and involvement of family, even in different forms, play a significant role in supporting children's academic and emotional development.

A fifth-grade student from a divorced family stated, 'I lived with my grandmother after my parents divorced. Sometimes I feel sad because I don't live with my mom or dad. But my grandmother always supports me and helps me with my homework. The school is also very helpful. My friends at school make me feel better and help me when I'm having difficulties. I know that even though my parents are no longer together, my family is still working hard to make me feel comfortable and able to learn well.'

This opinion reflects how family support, despite being different from the previous condition, plays a key role in helping children adapt and succeed in school after a divorce. Parental divorce certainly has a negative impact on the educational process and emotional development of children, especially for those who are still of elementary school age. Children at this age greatly need love and attention from both parents (Cholid, 2021). The impact of parental divorce will be discussed further in the following

section, which will explain how divorce directly affects children. Divorce is a serious issue for children, especially those who are still in elementary school, as they still require a great deal of attention and love from both parents.

The family environment plays a crucial role in the development and education of elementary school-aged children. When the household atmosphere is not harmonious or chaotic, it can hinder a child's ability to learn effectively and negatively impact their emotional development. Children's childhood experiences, whether joyful or sorrowful, will influence their personal development (Putra et al., 2022).

A stable and loving household situation is crucial for children, especially at this vulnerable age. When divorce occurs, children may experience disruptions in their concentration and learning processes. Additionally, the emotional instability caused by divorce can affect a child's mental and emotional well-being, influencing how they interact with others and how they perceive the world around them.

The discomfort that children experience in a chaotic home environment often impacts their personality development. During this growth phase, children are highly influenced by their experiences. Therefore, it is important to address divorce issues with an approach that considers the child's well-being to minimize the negative effects. Every aspect of children's experiences during their early years can shape their personality and development in the future, making emotional stability and a supportive environment essential for their health and well-being.

In comparison, the behavior of children from intact families tends to be more cheerful and active, as they receive a proper education and have a space to share what they have learned at school. The integrity of the family has a significant impact on a child's development. This is reinforced by the testimony of a classroom teacher who explains that many students exhibiting naughty, rebellious, lazy behavior, and having low academic achievement come from disharmonious families. The discord in these families is often caused by frequent arguments, with one of the main factors being the father's job instability and jealousy toward his wife, who sells at the market. Such conditions greatly affect a child's development.

Disharmony in the family, such as frequent conflicts and economic instability, can create a less supportive environment for children. Children who grow up in such situations often experience stress and insecurity, which negatively impacts their behavior

in school as well as their academic performance. The inability of parents to provide emotional and material stability can exacerbate the situation, leading children to exhibit less productive attitudes and experience a decline in their learning achievements. In this context, the well-being and harmony of the family are crucial for supporting positive child development. Instability within the family can significantly hinder children's achievements and behavior.

According to a classroom teacher, "When children come from families that are not harmonious or face economic problems, this is often reflected in how they interact at school. Such children may show a lack of motivation, difficulties in concentrating, or behavioral issues. They can experience a decline in academic performance and struggle to adapt to the school environment. As a teacher, I find it important to pay attention to student's family background and provide additional support if needed. However, I also realize that support from the school alone is not enough. Emotional well-being and stability at home significantly determine children's academic success and social development. Therefore, collaboration between schools and families is essential to help these children reach their potential."

CONCLUSION

Based on the research on parental divorce's impact on the character of students at MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak, it can be concluded that families or parents play a significant role in shaping children's mindsets and behaviors during their development. The negative effects experienced by children at MI Hidayatul Islam whose parents have separated include several aspects: 1) Children tend to exhibit aggressive behavior, 2) Children lose respect for others, and 3) Children tend to become withdrawn. On the other hand, the positive effects that emerge are: 1) Children become more mature for their age, 2) Children value their time together more, 3) Children's mental condition becomes stronger, and 4) Children become more independent.

A comfortable and harmonious family environment greatly influences a child's desire to learn. Some children at MI Hidayatul Islam Clarak feel lonely and neglected due to their parent's divorce. They feel that their parents only inquire about basic matters without providing guidance or more attention, often leaving them feeling isolated and living with their grandmother because their parents are busy working and too focused on

themselves. Divorce significantly impacts children's mental development and education, especially for elementary school-aged children and teenagers. It can lead to children becoming quiet and feeling inferior, displaying excessive misbehavior, achieving low academic performance, and experiencing deep feelings of loss. Although not all cases experience the same negative effects, most indicate adverse impacts on children's mental development and educational process. Emotional instability resulting from divorce often affects how children behave and perform in school, adding challenges to their learning experience.

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