

A Systematic Review of the Psychological and Social Consequences of Parenteral Divorce on Children

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ABSTRACT

Background: Parental divorce is an increasingly common phenomenon that has the potential to cause psychological problems for children. The family is the bond and initial environment for children to receive guidance, experience, and education as well as values and norms that shape their behavior throughout life. However, in fact not all families have harmonious relationships and choose divorce as a way out to solve problems without thinking about the condition of their children. **Aims:** This study investigates how parental divorce affects children's psychological well-being.

Methods: A Systematic review from 2019 to 2024 of national and international journals from databases, such as PubMed, ResearchGate, ScienceDirectt, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar with the keywords "Divorce", "Parental Conflict", "Child Psychology", "Child Mental Health" was used. **Results:** The results of the literature review indicate a relationship between parental divorce and child psychology. Children who come from broken home families tend to experience psychosocial disorders, such as depression, low self-esteem, stress, decreased achievement, and so on.

Conclusion: Parental divorce has a significant impact on children's psychological development, especially on emotional and mental aspects. Children from divorced families often experience psychological problems. However, there are some studies that mention positive impacts, such as increased independence and resilience in dealing with life.

Keywords: Child mental health, Child psychology, divorce, parental conflict

INTRODUCTION

Family is the first bond and environment for children to get education, teaching, experience, guidance and a place to instill values and norms for behavioral development for life. Family is a small bond in society consisting of father, mother and child. The family also functions as a support system in the form of actions, attitudes and acceptance that will last a lifetime. In the family, a child can also get social support by sharing everything they experience and focusing on attention(Hadi Kurniyawan et al., 2023). Children who come from a good husband and wife will have good guidance and education so that a harmonious family is created (Ridho Mai Rizky et al., 2023). However, in reality not all families have harmonious relationships, disputes in the family are normal, but many couples choose divorce as a way out to solve problems. Divorce is the termination of a husband and wife relationship that is legally and religiously severed because there is no trust, harmony and compatibility between the two parties (Sulthoni et al., 2022).

In Indonesia, the divorce rate is quite high. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2023, the total number of divorce cases reached 40,347 throughout the country. There are five provinces with the highest divorce rates, namely West Java, East Java, Central Java, North Sumatra, and DKI Jakarta. The details of the settlement figures in these five provinces show that West Java is at the top with the number of cases reaching 91,146 positions, followed by East Java with 79,248 cases. Central Java is in third place with 68,133 divorce cases. Meanwhile, North Sumatra and DKI Jakarta also recorded a significant number of cases, 15,660 and 14,381 cases respectively. These figures illustrate the high trend of divorce in several areas with dense populations and high social complexity.

When divorce occurs, children often become the main victims, as it has a major impact on their psychological and emotional development. They experience a profound sense of loss, confusion, and drastic

changes in their social environment, leading to feelings of fear and discomfort (Hasanah, 2020). Many children struggle to adapt to these changes, which can result in a range of emotional and behavioral issues, such as anxiety, shame, stress, heightened sensitivity, low self-esteem, depression, and academic decline (Munthe et al., 2024). This phenomenon is particularly concerning in Indonesia, where divorce rates continue to rise significantly—over 447,000 cases were recorded in 2021 alone, marking a 53% increase from the previous year. Recent Indonesian studies have found that children of divorced parents commonly experience emotional instability, social withdrawal, fear of abandonment, and disrupted academic performance. A 2022–2023 review of six local studies also revealed that divorce often leads to serious disruptions in children's intellectual, emotional, and character development, with long-term consequences if not addressed early. Given the rising prevalence of divorce and its harmful effects on children's well-being, this research is urgently needed to examine how divorce and parental conflict influence the psychological and character development of children in the Indonesian context, and to identify strategies to support their resilience and healthy development.

METHOD

This article uses a method by reviewing literature from several national and international journal articles from databases, such as PubMed, ResearchGate, ScienDirect, Taylor & Francis and Google Scholar with a time span between 2019 and 2024. Articles are searched and filtered using keywords such as "Divorce", "Parental Conflict", "Child Psychology" "Children's Mental Health".

The journal search process begins by identifying specific keywords, which allows for more targeted filtering. From the initial search process, 54,374 journals were found that were relevant to the keywords used. Then continued with filtering based on the year of publication of the journal to ensure data relevance and 24,001 journals were found that met the criteria. After that, these journals went through a further filtering stage based on more in-depth inclusion and exclusion criteria to evaluate the suitability of the content to the proposed research topic. From this stage, only 69 journals passed according to the specified inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria involved selecting studies that were peer-reviewed, published within the relevant time frame, and focused on the specified population and intervention. Only studies that reported key outcomes, and demonstrated adequate methodological quality were included. Exclusion criteria removed studies that were not peer-reviewed, lacked a control group, or focused on unrelated populations or interventions. Studies with insufficient data, high risk of bias, or duplicates were also excluded.

The next stage is further screening by considering the language of publication, methodology used, suitability of research results, and other factors considered important. After going through this detailed screening stage, 16 journals successfully passed and were assessed according to the main criteria set for further analysis. From the full-text screening, the suitability of the theme, the suitability of the population, methods, and results, 16 eligible articles were obtained. The results of the screening search are shown in the PRISMA chart below.

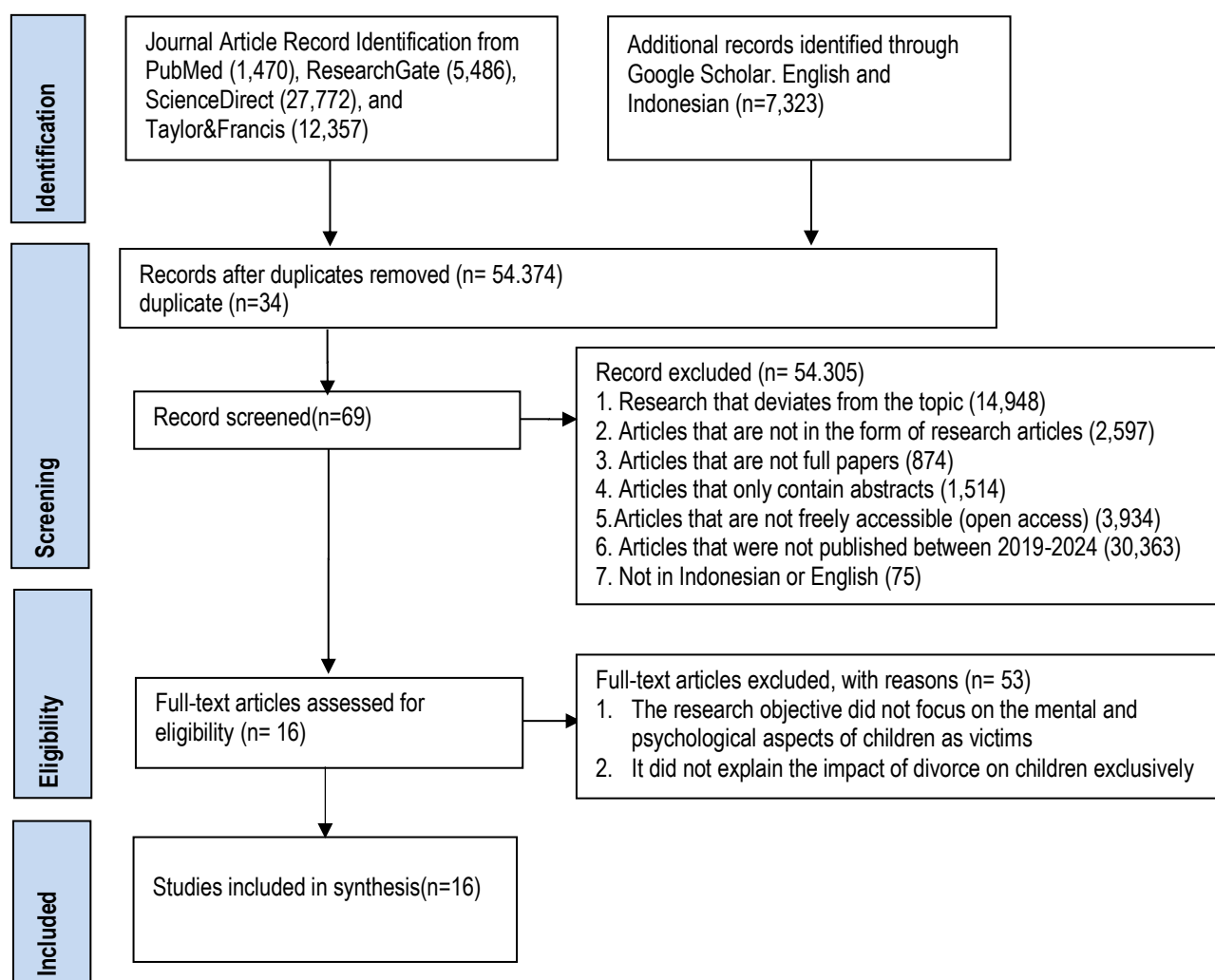


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart of The Literature Search

RESULTS

After reviewing various studies and articles with a total of 16 articles, all studies were found that showed a relationship between parental divorce and children's psychological impact. For more information, see Table 1 and Table 2 for the results of the following literature analysis.

Tabel 1. Characteristics Findings

| No | Author | Year | Country | Design |
|----|--------------------------------|------|-----------------|--|
| 1. | Sukmawati & Oktora | 2021 | Indonesia | Case study |
| 2. | Demir-Dagdas & Drentea | 2020 | Amerika Serikat | Survey method |
| 3. | Sulthoni., et al. | 2022 | Indonesia | Qualitative case study |
| 4. | Dianovinin, Ktut., et al. | 2023 | Indonesia | Descriptive study |
| 5. | Sary, Yessy Nur Endah., et al. | 2022 | Indonesia | Descriptive qualitative research |
| 6. | Munthe, et al. | 2024 | Indonesia | Structured interview method to collect data. |
| 7. | Bergström et al. | 2021 | Swedia | Cross sectional survey. |
| 8. | Ridho Mai Rizky et al | 2024 | Indonesia | Descriptive qualitative method. |
| 9. | van der Wal et al. | 2024 | Belanda | Cross-sectional study |

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| 10. | Iqbal., et al | 2021 | China | Survey method |
| 11. | Obeid, Sahar., et al. | 2021 | Lebanon | Cross sectional study |
| 12. | Olatunji, Olabimpe Ajoke., et al. | 2021 | South Africa | Multivariate Analysis |
| 13. | Zhao, Shou-Ying., et al. | 2023 | China | Design descriptive analysis |
| 14. | O'Hara et al. | 2021 | USA | Experiment method |
| 15. | Wang, et al. | 2021 | China | A cross sectional survey. |
| 16. | Garriga & Pennoni | 2020 | USA | Survey method |

Tabel 2. Results Findings

| No | Author | Title | Objective | Subjective | Result |
|----|--------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| 1. | (Sukmawati & Oktora, 2021) | The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Psychology | The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of parental divorce on children's psychology in Lampung, Metro Regency, North Metro District, 28 Purwasari. | 3 children aged 8 years who live in Lampung, Metro Regency, North Metro District, 28 Purwasari. 1 of them comes from broken home families and the other 2 are not from broken home families. | The results showed that 1 child from a broken home had difficulty accepting lessons at school, while 2 children from non-broken home families were quick in grasping lessons. Psychologically, parental divorce affects the psychological, emotional, and educational development of children. |
| 2. | (Demir-Dagdas & Drentea, 2020) | Early Parental Divorce Across The Life Course: Parent-Child Relationship, Women's Drinking, and Mental Health | The purpose of this study is to analyze the effects of parental divorce when children are young on various aspects of the parent-child relationship (such as emotional support, distress, and frequency of interaction), as well as the association with alcohol consumption and depressive symptoms in children when they become adults. | Noninstitutionalized adults aged 24 to 90 living in the United States. The subjects were divided into two groups, with the main group being individuals who experienced parental divorce when they were under the age of 16 (220 people) and the comparison group being individuals who had both parents still together (1840 people). | The results suggest that children who experience parental divorce as children may be at greater risk of developing alcohol addiction and depression, particularly in females. In addition, parental divorce has a significant impact on a child's behavior and mental health, especially if the relationship with the mother is strained and there were difficulties in childhood. |
| 3. | (Sulthoni et al., 2022) | The Impact of Parental Divorce on Children's Psychology (Case Study In Wonorejo Village, Banyuputih Sub-District, Situbondo District) | This research aims to understand the effect of parental divorce on children's psychological condition. | A 10 year old child with two key informants living in Wonorejo Village, Banyuputih Sub-District, Situbondo District. | This research shows that parental divorce has a psychological effect on both parents. In Wonorejo Village, Banyuputih Sub-District, Situbondo District, children experience negative impacts such as shame and sadness due to an incomplete family. However, there are also positive impacts, such as increased independence and the ability to face life's challenges. |
| 4. | (Dianovinina et al., 2023) | Stressful life events among depressed adolescents after parental divorce | This study aims to explore how stressful life after divorce parent can changes the feeling, thought, and behaviors by adolescents. | The sample in this study is adolescents of divorced parents aged 13-19 years (N=30, 83,3 % were female) and experienced of depression (minimum CDI score of 19). | The results of this study are, that there are five things that cause stress that occurs in children after parental divorce, namely reduced or lost support from parents, academic problems, lack of cohesive family relationships, remarriage of parents after divorce, and economic problems. These problems often cause negative changes, so that children need the support of the extended family to deal with post-divorce stress. |

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|-----|--------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| 5. | (Sary, 2022) | Mental Emotional Health of Divorce Victims in Early Childhood in Orphanages | This study aims to describe the impact of divorce experiences in children by early childhood. | The sample in this study is 16 child with divorce parents in orphanages. | The results of this study show that early childhood children will become victims and experience mental and emotional health disorders as a result of parental divorce and in the end the children will be neglected and most will live in orphanages. |
| 6. | (Munthe et al., 2024) | The Impact of Parental Divorce on the Psychology of an 11-Year-old Child. | The purpose of this study was to explore the emotional and psychological developmental impact of parental divorce on children and recommend appropriate interventions. | This research is about an 11-year-old girl who experienced her parents' divorce Through interviews. | The results show that children feel loneliness, insecurity, and sadness because of their parents' divorce. The child also feels the need for religious support to cope with her feelings, although sometimes she still feels lazy in worship. |
| 7. | (Bergström et al., 2021) | Importance of Living Arrangements and Coparenting Quality for Young Children's Mental Health After Parental Divorce: A Cross-Sectional Parental Survey. | The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between children's living arrangements after parental divorce and coparenting quality on preschool-age children's mental health. | The study sample was taken from 19,294 children living in Stockholm County. These children were invited to make routine visits for 3 years to the regional Preventive Child Healthcare (PCHC) service, which took place from December 2015 to May 2018. | The research found that children in Joint Physical Custody (JPC) have similar mental health to children from intact families. Children who live only or mostly with one parent have more mental health problems. After accounting for quality. |
| 8. | (Ridho Mai Rizky et al., 2023) | Character Building by Influencing Psychology in Children from the Impact of Parental Divorce. | This study seeks to reveal character building by influencing psychology in children from the impact of parental divorce. | The sample for this study were adolescents/teenage children affected by parental divorce. | Quality of relationship between parents and children after divorce & the role of parent. |
| 9. | (van der Wal et al., 2024) | Exploring Associations Between Children's Forgiveness Following Parental Divorce and Psychological Well-Being | The purpose of this study is to better understand the different reactions and experiences of children to parental divorce by exploring variations in children's forgiveness following such divorce and its impact on their psychological well-being. | A total of 1,547 children from grades 4 to 6 in 28 primary schools in the Netherlands, with 205 children (13%) having divorced parents. The age range of children was 9-13 years (M: 10.25, SD = 0.95), and 107 of them were girls (52.2%). | This study concluded that mutual forgiveness after divorce is directly proportional to psychological well-being, especially in adolescents and young adults who show higher well-being, despite parental conflict. Forgiveness towards the mother was more significant than towards the father, possibly because the children lived and interacted more with the mother after the divorce. |
| 10. | (Iqbal et al., 2021) | Parental Divorce: Impact on Socio-Psychological Behavior and Academic Performance of Students in Teacher's Perception | This study aims to determine the relationship between parental divorce and children's academic performance, social behavior, psychology, and academic achievement of children from divorced families based on the perceptions of elementary school teachers. | A total 60 teachers who had experience teaching children from divorced families participated in the study. They came from 15 primary and secondary schools in Dera Ghazi Khan, consisting of both male and female teachers. | The analysis shows that divorce has a significant impact on children, both psychologically and socially. Children whose parents divorce tend to experience reduced academic performance, aggressive behavior, and low self-esteem. These findings suggest that they are more vulnerable in socializing and have lower mental health. |
| 11 | (Obeid et al., 2021) | Association between parental divorce | This study aims to determine the relationship between divorce and | This study used a sample of 1,810 adolescents aged 14 to | The results of this study concluded that the range of values of adolescents experiencing social fear, avoidance, |

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| | | and mental health outcomes among Lebanese adolescents: results of a national study | mental health in children, especially depression and anxiety that lead to suicidal ideation among Lebanese adolescents. | 17 years which was conducted from January to May 2019. | depression and suicidal ideation was higher whose parents were separated than those who lived together, namely social fear (Standardized Beta (SB=0.270) avoidance (SB=0.188), higher depression (SB=0.045), and higher suicidal ideation (SB=0.370). |
| 12 | (Olatunji & Idemudia, 2021) | The multidimensionality of inter-parental conflict on aggression and mental health among adolescents | This study aims to research to reveal that multidimensionality of interparental conflict is a risk factor to poor mental health and aggression in adolescents. | This sample in this study is 394 adolescents (227 males; mean age = 15.6, SD = 17,4). | The results of this study concluded that there is a relationship between the dimensions of parental conflict and mental health, while resolution, coping efficacy, and the potential for self-blame in children are independently related to adolescent mental health. |
| 13 | (Zhao et al., 2023) | A mediated moderation model of negative life events, self-esteem, rumination and parental divorce on depression among Chinese juvenile delinquents | This study aims to find out and examine the unique mediating and moderating effects of negative events, such as parental divorce, on depression in delinquent children in China. | This sample in this study is 236 juvenile delinquents with age between 12-17 years old. | The results of this study indicate that negative life is one of the consequences of parental divorce, the prevalence of these naughty children can be reduced by modifying their thinking through reflection, increasing self-esteem and greater attention must be given to naughty teenagers who experience parental divorce. |
| 14 | (O'Hara et al., 2021) | Longitudinal Effects of Postdivorce Interparental Conflict on Children's Mental Health Problems through Fear of Abandonment: Does Parenting Quality Play a Buffering Role? | This study aims to determine the relationship between post-divorce interparental conflict (IPC) and mental health problems, as well as the quality of the relationship between parents and children. | The sample in this study consisted of 559 children (ages 9–18). | Results The findings from this study highlight the need to optimize parenting programs and improve parenting programs after divorce to reduce Interparental conflict (IPC). |
| 15 | (Wang et al., 2021) | Impact of Parental Divorce Versus Separation due to Migration on Mental Health and Self-injury of Chinese Children: a Cross Sectional Survey. | This study aims to determine whether parental divorce and parental migration will have an impact on children's mental health problems and whether it causes thoughts and self-harming thoughts and behavior (SITB), by paying attention to several positive factors, such as communication between parents and children and psychological resilience. | The sample used in this study included participants from grades 5 to 8 from 18 schools in two counties in Anhui Province. | The results of this study emphasize that communication quality and mental resilience play an important role in the psychological well-being of children from divorced families. |
| 16 | (Garriga & Pennoni, 2022) | The Causal Effects of Parental Divorce and Parental Temporary Separation on Children's Cognitive Abilities and Psychological Well-being According to Parental | This study aims to determine whether parental divorce and temporary separation will have an impact on children's psychological well-being and cognitive abilities by paying attention to the quality of | This sample used in Variables related to school readiness were measured when children were 5 years old, in the third wave of the UK Millennium Cohort Study. | Parental divorce generally has negative impact on children's psychological wellbeing, especially in areas such as conduct problems and hyperactivity, parental temporary separation also shows negative effects on children's behavior, with increased conduct and hyperactivity issues compared to those from stable families. |

Relationship
Quality.

the relationship with
parents.

DISCUSSION

Parental divorce has a major impact on family life, and this will have a very negative impact on the lives of their children. Children are the most sensitive and vulnerable members of the family, so they will experience various emotional stresses that affect their mental and psychological development. A child will tend to feel confused and shaken by changes in the family structure, so the child will feel lonely and insecure. Based on the results of the systematic review, it was found that parental divorce will have a negative impact on children's psychological development, such as depression, low self-esteem, stress, and can reduce children's achievement and can reduce children's quality of life. The results of the systematic review that has been conducted, found that there are 3 out of 16 studies that support the impact of parental divorce on reducing children's academic performance at school. One of them is evidenced by research conducted by Sukmawati & Oktora (2021), which shows that children have difficulty receiving lessons at school. In addition, the results of other studies also show that the impact of parental divorce can cause children to experience depression. This is supported by 3 studies, one of which is by Obeid, Sahar, et al. (2021), which explains that children whose parents are separated have higher levels of depression.

After parental divorce, a child will feel very sensitive, causing instability in the child's emotional development. This is in line with Sukmawati & Oktora's research (2021) which reveals that parental divorce affects children's emotional development. This is also supported by the results of research by Sary, Yessy Nur Endah, et al. (2022), showing that the results of the study were that early childhood victims of parental divorce experienced mental and emotional health problems.

Meanwhile, parental divorce can also create considerable challenges in shaping children's lifestyles, both in terms of their interpersonal relationships, mental health, and behavioral habits. Research conducted by Demir-Dagdas & Drentea (2020), showed that children who experienced parental divorce as children may have a greater risk of alcohol addiction and depression, especially in women. In addition, parental divorce has a significant impact on children's behavior and mental health, especially if the relationship with the mother is full of tension and there are childhood difficulties. This will widen, resulting in children feeling less confident. This is in line with the results of research by Iqbal et al. (2021), which shows that divorce has a significant impact on children, especially on their low self-confidence. According to the results of research conducted by Bergström et al., (2021) in their article explains that children who live with single parents after divorce will have more mental health problems, after deducting their socio-demographic problems.

Based on the results of the literature review that has been conducted, the results of the majority of journal articles support that the phenomenon of parental divorce has a very negative impact on children because it tends to reduce the quality of life of children in the future. However, one journal article states that there is a positive impact of this phenomenon, namely the results of research conducted by Sulthoni, et al. (2022), explaining that the impact of parental divorce also has a positive impact on children, such as increasing children's independence and ability to face life's challenges.

CONCLUSION

Parental divorce has a significant impact on children's psychological development, especially in the emotional and mental aspects. Children from divorced families often experience psychological problems such as depression, low self-esteem, stress, and decreased academic performance. Research shows that these children face challenges in maintaining their mental and social health, with symptoms such as difficulty concentrating, emotional instability, and lack of socialization skills. However, there are some studies that cite positive impacts, such as increased independence and resilience in dealing with life. Overall, the impact of divorce tends to lead to psychological vulnerability in children, with some exceptions related to increased ability to face life's challenges.

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