

The Impact of Fatherlessness on 5-6 Year-Old Girls at Mutiara Bunda Handayani Kindergarten in Gajah Village Meranti District Asahan Regency

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Abstract

Fatherlessness is a condition of the absence of the father's role in parenting both physically and psychologically. The role of a father affects the child's cognitive development, the child's emotional development and the child's social development. With the loss of the father figure, the child may have difficulty in finding a suitable role model and lack of experience in interactions that support the development of communicative skills. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach that studies an event, situation, event or so-called social phenomenon which aims to uncover the peculiarities or uniqueness of the characteristics contained in the case being studied. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of *fatherlessness* on girls and provide recommendations for parents, teachers, and counselors in accompanying *fatherless* girls so that they can develop good and healthy interaction skills to achieve optimal *early childhood* development.

Keywords: *Fatheerless*, Girls, age 5-6 years.

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Introduction

The family is the smallest unit in a society that has a vital role in shaping children's character, morals, and development. The first foundation for the next generation, the family has a great responsibility in providing a positive environment and supporting optimal growth for children. As family members, parents have an important role in children's education, so it can be said that parents in the family are the first and foremost educators. Children who grow up in a warm, affectionate, and fulfilling environment tend to have better social-emotional development. Learn to socialize, deal with emotions, and develop empathy. The role of family and parents makes a great contribution to children's growth and development, especially the role of fathers. Fathers and mothers as parents have a role to provide good care and sufficient attention in the process of a child's growth and development, when one of the roles of parents is not present, it can result in an imbalance in the child's psychological development (Junaidin, et al., 2023). Children's problems outside the home cannot be separated from the parenting style at home. The success of children at school, both academically and non-academically, is also supported by the parenting pattern received by children in the family environment. Unfortunately, not all children have the opportunity to grow up in a complete family. Some girls have to experience the loss of a father figure due to various reasons such as divorce, death, or the emotional and physical ininvolvement of the father in parenting, this is usually called *fatherless* or *father absence*.

Fatherless is defined as the non-participation of a father both emotionally, physically and psychologically in the process of child growth and development (Nindhita and

Pringgadani 2023). The condition of a child is said *to be fatherless* when the child does not meet the father figure or does not have a relationship with his father caused by death, divorce or also problems in the household. The absence of a father figure in the family is a global problem that occurs in various countries according to Amin (In A Fajarrini and AN Uman

,2023; 24), many *fatherless* cases that occur in western countries occur due to many unmarried couples. While many *fatherless* cases in Indonesia are caused by the loss of the father's role in childcare, the father's responsibility is only as a breadwinner. The paradigm that is rooted in society also results in parenting only carried out by mothers.

Fathers tend to focus more on their role as the main breadwinner. However, internal and external factors, namely in the form of a father's background and busyness outside the home, become obstacles in communication so that he can spend time with his main family with children, as revealed by Khasanah, Berta Laili (2020). According to the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2017, the level of fathers' involvement in parenting is in the low category, only 26.7%. Quoting from Palkovitz's statement, not all fathers can be present in the growth and development phase of children. The lack of a father figure that can be understood physically and emotionally has an impact on general negative behavior in children and abusive behavior towards their friends (Kusumawati, 2024). The presence of a father also often contributes to the development of children's independence, confidence, and social skills. With the loss of a father figure, the child may have difficulty in finding appropriate role models and a lack of experience in interactions that supports the development of communicative skills.

Looking at the phenomenon that occurs in Indonesia related to childcare, most children are taken care of by their mothers, caregivers, or grandmothers, at Mutiara Bunda Handayani Kindergarten, researchers found that there are 2 girls who experience *fatherlessness* who are raised by single mothers. Characteristics of *fatherless* girls are:

1. First daughter who is about 5-6 years old reasons for *fatherlessness* Namely due to the divorce of parents and being cared for by single mothers and grandmothers.
2. The reason for fatherlessness is *that the second daughter who is about 5-6 years old is* because her father died and was taken care of by a single mother and grandmother.

As is characteristic of the two daughters who experience a *fatherless condition*, the first daughter loses the role of the father when the child is 8 months old due to parental divorce and has never communicated at all until now, and the father is not responsible in terms of the economy and it is the mother who works to provide for the basic needs in the family. The second daughter loses the role of father when she is 1 year old because the father dies.

Research on the phenomenon of *fatherlessness* is important to understand its impact on social development, especially on girls, and also the lack of research focus on girls, even though girls have distinctive social and emotional dynamics and can have different impacts. In this context, girls who experience *fatherlessness* often experience challenges in their society and often face their own challenges, especially in carrying out social relationships. Which in turn can affect them to make friends, face conflicts, and build relationships in the future and their overall well-being and development.

The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of *fatherlessness* on girls aged 5-6 years. This research is expected to enrich insights into the impact of *fatherlessness* on emotional, social, and independent development in girls aged 5-6 years. and provide recommendations for parents, teachers, and counselors in accompanying *fatherless* girls in order to develop healthy social and emotional interaction skills to achieve optimal *early childhood* development. Thus, this research can make a significant contribution to the understanding and efforts to handle the *phenomenon of fatherlessness* in society, as well as improve the quality of life of children who experience *fatherlessness*.

Research Methodology

This research is included in the type of qualitative research with a case study approach, Qualitative Research is a research method that seeks to understand reality through an inductive thinking process (Adlini, et all, 2022).

In this study, a case study approach is used, a case study is a research method that studies an event, situation, event or called a social phenomenon that aims to reveal the peculiarities or uniqueness of characteristics contained in the case being studied (Nursapia Harahap, 2020). According to Yin, the case study research method is the right strategy to use because in research that uses the main question of how and why.

The subjects of this study are two girls aged 5 and 6 years. They do not receive parental care. The absence of the father is caused by the divorce of the parents and the father dies. Currently, these two girls are being cared for by their mother and grandmother. They are also studying at Mutiara Bunda Handayani Kindergarten. This research was carried out during AprilJuly 2025 in Gajah Village, Meranti District, Asahan Regency. The data collection techniques used were observation, interviews, and documentation. The researcher has made observations on the two main subjects, their caregivers (mothers and grandmothers), and their teachers in the school environment.

Results

Indonesia ranks third as a *fatherless* or *fatherless country*. Based on data from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2021, around 20.9% of children in Indonesia grow up without a father. On the other hand, according to SUSENAS (National Socio-Economic Survey) data in 2021, the number of early childhood children in Indonesia reached 30.83 million people. Of these, 2.67% or around 826,875 early childhood children do not live with their biological fathers and mothers. Then, 7.04% or around 2,170,702 early childhood children in Indonesia, around 2,999,577 people have lost their father figure or do not live with their father (Zainuddin Lubis, 2023).

The phenomenon of *fatherlessness* is not only caused by divorce and death, but also by the wrong cultural construction regarding the role of fathers in parenting. As a result, the impact of *fatherlessness* is not felt, as a result of which children will continue to feel the emptiness of the father's role in their souls. Like a small gap in a roof that is left unchecked, if it is not repaired immediately, a small gap will turn into a big gap so that the impact felt is also even more devastating, especially at the age of 5-6 years at this age girls are experiencing a very important period of development both socially they begin to get to know the nuclear family and also interact at school, make friends, and learn cooperation. The presence of a father figure in this phase is very important as a support for security and emotional support. When the father is absent, the child will experience obstacles in his social development, emotional and independence such as withdrawing from his environment, difficulty making friends, not being able to cooperate and very easily crying with small things and very dependent on the teacher. Observations at Mutiara Bunda Handayani Kindergarten show that the two subjects of girls who have lost their father figure show these symptoms.

This is related to Family System Theory, the family is seen as a system in which there is the ability to adapt to each other and affect each other by communicating with each other (Sukkar et al., 2017). Therefore, the relationship between father and mother as a couple affects the emotional atmosphere of children and parents (Pu& Rodruguez, 2021). Based on the Minuchin family structural theory, the absence of the father figure in girls aged 5-6 years can change the hierarchical structure in the family, weaken the father-child subsystem and cause the blurring of the boundaries between mother and child. This disturbs the child's sense of emotional security and gender identity in the early stages of development, also causes unclarity in the family structure as well as roles and responsibilities if the boundaries between father and mother are unclear, it will lead to conflict and anxiety. Meanwhile, the theory of the Bowen family system is that girls' levels of self-differentiation may decrease when the father figure is not present as an emotional model and the child may absorb the emotional anxiety of the mother or family in response to the dual role that the mother faces as the sole parent figure. Therefore, it is important for the family to maintain a balance of the structure and function of parental roles so that the family system remains adaptive, because *fatherlessness* can affect the formation of selfconcept, emotional regulation, and the ability of children to build secure attachment with others in the future (Muchaelidou & Georgiou, 2022).

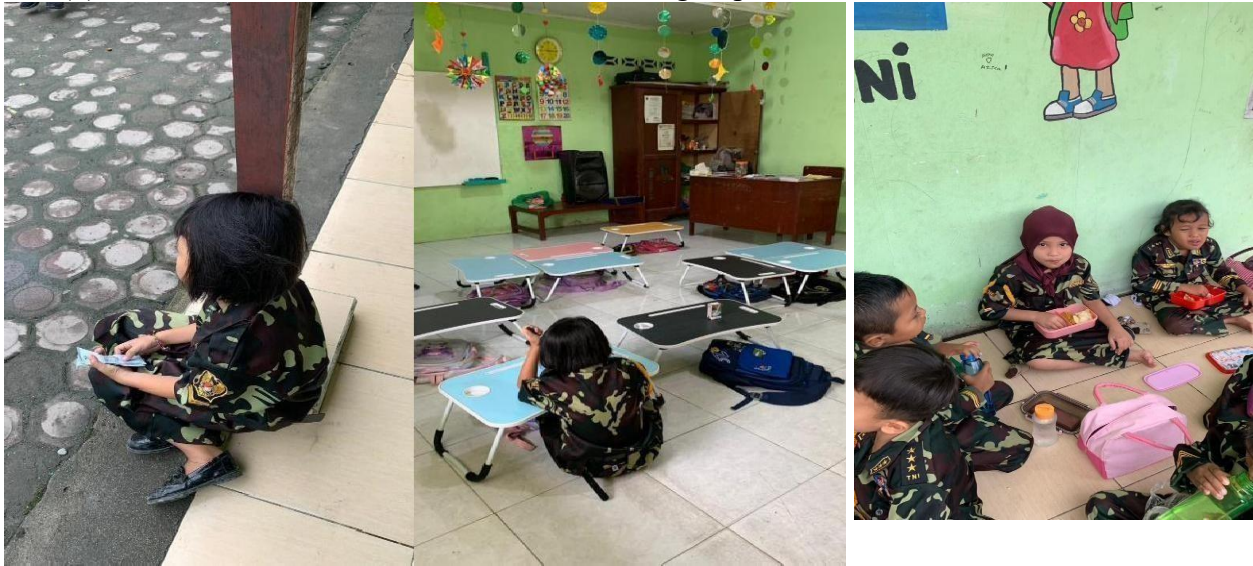
The results of the study showed that the absence of a *fatherless* figure had a significant impact on girls aged 5-6 years based on the results of observations at Mutiara Bunda Handayani Kindergarten there were 2 girls who experienced a *fatherless condition*. These two children showed development that was not optimal. From the results of interviews with teachers and parents, 3 main themes were identified that showed the impact of father's absence, namely: a. Observation Results on a Sample of *Fatherless* Girls with Divorced Parents

1. Social Aspect: The results of the observation of the child sometimes withdrawing from the environment and prefer to play with extreme play activities, and the results obtained from the teacher's interview said that the child tends to play alone and more often refuses his friend's invitation to play, sometimes when playing he is also uncooperative and wants to win alone, the mother of the child also said that the child often plays alone even if he wants to be together only wants to play with his brother.
2. Emotional Aspect: The results of the observation of the child are very easily angry with small things, and the results obtained from the teacher's interview stated that the child finds it difficult to calm down when anger explodes. The mother of the child also mentioned that the child is also very easily angry and crying.

3. Independence Aspect: The results of the observation of the child are not confident to appear in front of the class and also often ask for help for simple tasks and show a high level of dependence on the teacher, and the results obtained from the teacher's interview say that the child very often seeks attention from the teacher and is also still very spoiled depending on the teacher. The mother of the child also said that the child is very dependent for small things on other people such as grandmother and people around them.
- b. Observation Results on Samples of *Fatherless Girls* Whose Fatherless Father Died
 1. Social Aspect: The results of the observation of the child are more silent and also in playing he can't wait in line and is a little rude to win on his own, and the results obtained from the teacher's interview stated that the child also sometimes closes himself from his environment. The mother of the child also said that the child spends more time in the room playing gadgets and rarely plays outside the house.
 2. Emotional Aspect: The results of the observation of the child having emotional instability The child often cries with small things, and the results obtained from the teacher's interview said that the child is very sensitive and very easy to cry. The mother of the child also said that the child cries very often, especially when seeing other friends with his father.
 3. Independence Aspect: The results of the observation of the child are very shy and also very dependent on the teacher, and the results obtained from the teacher's interview stated that the child is very dependent like it takes longer than other friends to do their own tasks. The mother of the child also said that the child asks for help for small things too much and is also very unconfident.

Here are two *fatherless* girls who show withdrawal from their circle of friends, more alone and not interacting with their friends

Girls (1) show aloof behavior and withdraw from the group.



Girl (2) who previously did not want to eat with her friends now seems to be showing social involvement in the group even though she does not talk much.

These results confirm that *fatherless* conditions have a real and profound impact on girls at an early age. It can be concluded that children who have a high-quality relationship with their fathers tend to show low levels of externalized behavior problems. Conversely, parental behavior in general can be associated with an increased risk of externalized behavior in children, even in different age groups.

Therefore, positive involvement and healthy relationships with a more systematic approach in accompanying children with this condition, namely with both parents, are key in reducing the risk of children's behavioral problems. To overcome this impact, it is important for *fatherless* children to receive adequate emotional support from other caregivers such as grandfathers, uncles, or male teachers to fill the gap in the role of fathers and also a supportive school approach to *fatherless* children by guiding and paying more attention to them to overcome the challenges they face, as well as conducting family counseling, especially for single mothers to manage dual roles and emotional burdens.

Conclusion

This study shows that *fatherlessness* has a significant impact on girls aged 5-6 years including emotional difficulties, withdrawn behaviors, and lack of independence. Therefore, there needs to be family-based interventions such as counseling, parenting training for single mothers, and the presence of positive male surrogate figures (such as grandfathers, uncles, or male teachers).

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