


## Psychological Well-being of Early Adolescents from Divorced Families: The Role and Necessity of Family Counseling Therapy

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# Psychological Well-being of Early Adolescents from Divorced Families: The Role and Necessity of Family Counseling Therapy

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Parental divorce significantly impacts the psychological well-being of early adolescents, often leading to emotional instability and strained relationships. Despite existing research, the effects on their mental health across various dimensions remain underexplored. **Objective:** This study aims to describe the psychological well-being of early adolescents from families with a history of broken homes. **Method:** The research method used in this study is a case study, conducted in 2024. The study involved four subjects, and data were collected through interviews and observations. Data analysis followed the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, and data validation was conducted through triangulation and credibility tests in two stages. **Result:** The results showed that early adolescent individuals who experienced parental divorce in the past exhibited diverse outcomes across each dimension of psychological well-being. **Conclusion:** This study offers valuable insights into how early adolescents from broken-home families experience varying levels of psychological well-being across different dimensions. **Contribution:** This research serves as a source of knowledge about the psychological conditions of early adolescents from broken-home families, highlighting the varied effects of parental divorce on their psychological well-being.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Divorce is a significant cause of marriage breakdown, and it can result from various circumstances. A marriage may end due to a unilateral divorce initiated by the husband, or through a mutual decision between both parties to dissolve the relationship (Berta, 2023). Additionally, the death of one spouse naturally ends the marriage, marking its inevitable conclusion. Furthermore, a marriage can be legally terminated by a judge's ruling, typically in cases where irreconcilable differences or other legal grounds justify the dissolution of the marriage (Ariany, 2013). Each of these scenarios reflects different reasons for the breakdown of a marriage, with both personal and

legal factors playing key roles in the decision to end the union.

As a cornerstone of education, the family serves as an informal yet influential educational institution for children, providing the foundational learning environment that shapes their early experiences and perspectives (Iruka Et al., 2020). Within this nurturing space, the family plays a pivotal role in molding children's personalities, fostering essential qualities such as health, intelligence, cheerfulness, and nobility. These qualities are cultivated through everyday interactions, values taught, and emotional support given by family members. The family is not only responsible for a child's immediate well-being but also plays a crucial role in shaping their character, guiding

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the child's moral compass, work ethic, and social behavior (Taha, 2024). Through its continuous influence, the family determines the trajectory of a child's growth, influencing their confidence, resilience, and ability to navigate the world. The values and lessons imparted within the family form the bedrock upon which children build their identity and character, laying the groundwork for their future interactions and contributions to society (Lennon, 2017).

In general, a family is a group of people who have blood ties to each other, consisting of fathers, mothers, and their children. Birmingham & Holt-Lunstad (2018) said that families can be viewed from blood relations and social relations. The family, in the context of blood relations, is a social unit bound by the blood ties between its members. Harmony in the family will remain well-established if fellow family members understand each other's rights and obligations (Collier, 2016). The cultural foundations of economic failure: A conceptual toolkit. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 126, 5-24. Dinisman et al. (2017) also stated that the family is the primary function, which means that the family needs to maintain harmony and form a small, structured group. Almost all families strive for harmony and integrity, seeking to avoid quarrels or disputes among their members.

In a family, there is also an attitude of not respecting each other, which can result in a split within the family (a broken home). Merrill & Fivush (2016) state that family is a world of intimacy for children and parents, who are bound by inner ties, making it an important part of life. Some of the reasons for the emergence of broken home family conditions are (1) divorce that separates a wife and a husband, (2) infidelity, either the wife or the husband, (3) maternal deprivation, this can occur for example, both parents work and come home in the afternoon tired; they do not have time to joke with their children.

According to Hald et al. (2022), divorce can make many people feel hurt, sad, frustrated, depressed, and may have mental health issues due to divorce. Stress that occurs in childhood can have lasting personal effects that impact various aspects of an individual's life into adulthood (Nurius et al., 2015). Nusslock & Miller (2016) state that the psychological state will be the primary influence that causes the impact on early adulthood of broken home families. The results of research by Syed & McLean (2022) on children from broken home families stated that there are results of self-evaluation as victims and a realization that they will not achieve happiness. Therefore, children who have broken home status will feel fear, cannot socialize with the environment, always close themselves off, and lose concentration, which results in being more emotional and sensitive. This will show psychological well-being for each individual who comes from a broken home.

As a result of traumatic events, individuals will have self-evaluations that can make it bad for themselves;

therefore, things will happen that affect their psychological well-being. Even the result of the traumatic event, according to He et al. (2018), connects several factors that can affect psychological well-being, and one of them is the assessment of life experiences. This leads to each person's reaction to divorce varying, but it depends on the speed and level of adaptation to sharing resources and post-divorce circumstances (Amato, 2014).

Psychological well-being refers to a condition in which individuals maintain a positive attitude toward themselves and others, are capable of making their own decisions and regulating their behavior, can create and manage an environment that aligns with their needs, have clear life goals, find meaning in their lives, and actively seek self-exploration and personal growth. Given these aspects, the author focuses on examining the psychological well-being of early adult individuals from families with a broken home.

This study highlights a critical gap in the existing literature on the psychological well-being of early adolescents from divorced families, particularly in understanding the diverse impacts across various dimensions of mental health. While previous research has identified the general effects of parental divorce, such as emotional instability and strained relationships, there is limited exploration of the specific, individualized effects on adolescents' emotional health, social connections, and overall psychological development. Moreover, the role of family counseling therapy in mitigating these effects remains underexplored, despite its potential to offer crucial support. This research, through its case study approach, provides new insights into how parental divorce affects adolescents on a more granular level, emphasizing the need for targeted therapeutic interventions to address the complexities of post-divorce psychological well-being.

This study aims to describe the psychological well-being of early adolescents from broken-home families. In addition to the family's role as a refuge for children through family counseling, which helps support their development. The focus of the study is on describing the psychological well-being of early adolescents, which includes identity, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, independence, positive relationships with others, self-development, and life goals.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Research Design

In this study, qualitative methods were used. In qualitative research studies examining the conditions of natural objects, the data collection techniques are inductive, and the research results emphasize significance rather than generalization. The research method employed in this study utilizes case studies. Case studies allow the author to gain a clear and integrated understanding of the

interrelationship of various facts and dimensions of the case under study (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). The case study used in this research design employs a purposive sampling technique because these characteristics are adapted to early adulthood, where a family structure is not complete. If one of the heads of the family dies or divorces, it does not show love during the growth period from childhood to early adulthood.

## 2.2 Research Object

This research was conducted in 2024. This study involved four subjects: an MF male, 25 years old; an MFN male, 17 years old; an RV female, 23 years old; and a BPP female, 23 years old. Subject research data were collected using observation and in-depth interview methods.

## 2.3 Data Collection Method

Data collection used in this case study: researchers used several methods, namely: (1) Interviewers use interview guidelines that have been arranged wholly and systematically to collect data; (2) Observation, the researcher uses non-participant observation, where he is not directly involved in the life of the person being observed and serves as an observer separately.

## 2.4 Data Analysis

After the data is collected, it is then analyzed. In the data analysis process, the researcher uses an interactive analysis of the Miles and Huberman model. This analysis includes: (1) Data reduction, in this analysis, involves the researcher summarizing, selecting the main points, and focusing on the most important aspects; (2) Presentation of data: In this analysis, researchers present data to fa-

ilitate understanding of what is happening and to plan further work based on the insights gained. 3. Verifying and concluding data, in this analysis, the researcher makes initial conclusions that are temporary and will change if substantial evidence is not found that supports the following data collection stage.

## 2.5 Checking Data Validity

Validation of this research data is achieved through two stages, including triangulation of credibility tests, which involve checking information from different sources in various ways and at different times. For this reason, sources, data collection techniques, and time are triangulated to ensure accuracy and reliability. This research material employs source triangulation, a method that involves verifying data from multiple sources. A source check is then conducted to determine the extent to which the received information aligns with the information provided by the data provider.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Result

After conducting in-depth interviews and observations with four subjects, the data results show that psychological well-being encompasses themes from the theoretical dimensions of psychological well-being, including identity, self-acceptance, environmental control, independence, positive relationships with others, self-development, and life goals. Based on the results of the interviews, the following research results are presented in the table below:

Table 1. Results of Interview and Observation on Subject MF

| Theoretical Dimension Theme        | Result the theme of the theoretical dimension   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Identity                           | MF is the short name of the 1st subject with an early adult age of 25 years old who has a broken home family and works as a freelance sound system.   |
| Self-acceptance                    | MF is uncomfortable with the environment in the family and in the social environment, but MF considers that she has a positive attitude.  |
| Environmental mastery              | Often causing problems in the social environment due to his behavior of drinking late into the night in the community area, until his body is filled with tattoos and often also consumes drugs.  |
| Self-sufficiency                   | Hard-working since high school due to school dropout, but still unable to manage money because he often wastes money on useless purchases.  |
| Positive relationships with others | MF is not very close with her nuclear family members, especially her mother and father, but she lives with her mother's younger sister's family who took care of her from childhood and is quite close with the family at home. Likewise, in the environment where she works, she is also very good with her coworkers. |
| Self-development                   | MF feels that she does not have good enough self-development because there is no guidance from anyone and she is always carried away by bad associations, causing her to feel negative.   |
| Life purpose                       | MF has a good goal in life because she works hard to get what she wants.  |

**Table 2.** Results of Interview and Observation on Subject MFN

| Theoretical Dimension Theme        | Result the theme of the theoretical dimension   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Identity                           | MFN is the short name of the 2nd subject with an early adult age of 21 years old who has a broken home family from her childhood.   |
| Self-acceptance                    | Able to accept himself that he turned out to be from a broken home family, but he did not even cover himself from his family environment and the surrounding environment. |
| Environmental mastery              | Responsible for what he does as one of the students who is serious about learning and achieving the goals he has.   |
| Self-sufficiency                   | MFN has always been taught by her parents to be independent and responsible for what she does.  |
| Positive relationships with others | MFN has a large and good circle of friends because she is able to adapt to new people.  |
| Self-development                   | MFN considers that life is a learning process so that she can survive well and deserve to be happy.   |
| Life purpose                       | MFN has very high aspirations to be able to raise the status of her extended family and especially her father.  |

**Table 3.** Results of Interview and Observation on Subject RV

| Theoretical Dimension Theme        | Result the theme of the theoretical dimension  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Identity                           | RV is the abbreviated name of the 3rd subject with an early adult age who has a broken home family. RV is the 2nd of 3 children. The separation of his parents was experienced during 6th grade elementary school. RV's daily activities are in the business of selling food online.                   |
| Self-acceptance                    | RV, who is old enough to know the separation of her parents, is strengthened by her brother who is 5 years apart and always accompanies RV and her younger brother who is in 3rd grade. RV and her brother and sister also strengthen each other. RV always tries to be positive in every way she does |
| Environmental mastery              | Can adjust in the environment. RV says that whatever she is doing, she will accept the consequences. Can see opportunities that can make him enthusiastic in doing business.   |
| Self-sufficiency                   | A fighter in earning money to be able to buy his needs and be able to make his family proud.   |
| Positive relationships with others | RV still has a very good relationship with her parents. Because the divorce of her parents did not   |
| Self-development                   | RV considers life as something that must be pursued because by pursuing a hope will be achieved.   |
| Life purpose                       | He has very high aspirations to be able to make his business grow and add businesses in other fields.  |

**Table 4.** Results of Interview and Observation on Subject BPP

| Theoretical Dimension Theme        | Result the theme of the theoretical dimension   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Identity                           | BPP is the abbreviated name of the 4th subject with an early adult age who has a broken home family from his second grade junior high school. His daily activities are a final semester student at a private campus. BPP after learning of his parents' divorce chose to live with his mother and stepfather. But often he cannot accept the behavior of his father who likes to prioritize the needs of his biological children rather than his stepchildren. Therefore, BPP often stays at his biological father's family home. |
| Self-acceptance                    | When she learned of her parents' divorce, she reflected a lot. So that when she is down and feels that no one loves her, she always looks for friends to be able to tell because she doesn't know who else to tell besides her parents because she is an only child. That way he is greatly helped by having a story friend, namely his friend.   |
| Environmental mastery              | After learning that his parents were divorced, BPP was still able to adjust himself in the surrounding environment. BPP utilizes all his time with positive things on his campus as vice chairman of the organization   |
| Self-sufficiency                   | BPP is an independent person because he is directed by his parents and also shaped by the organizations he always participates in.  |
| Positive relationships with others | Although BPP likes to be jealous of his stepfather's biological children and often stays at his biological father's house does not deny that their communication is bad, the fact is that they have a good relationship with their mother and stepfather, and the biological father still communicates well with BPP and other siblings who live with his mother.   |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Self-development | BPP is very fond of trying things in the field of organization during school at the time of junior high school until now in order to bring benefits to him in the future. |
| Life purpose     | BPP has very high aspirations in order to be able to make himself, his parents and the social environment happy which can benefit many people.                            |

**Description of Subject MF.** Subject MF is 25 years old and a freelance sound system worker. The first interview session, conducted on November 19, 2022, took place at MF's workplace from 14:30 to 15:10. The second session was conducted at a coffee shop on December 3 from 18:00 to 19:40. It can be concluded from the results of the interview that the condition of psychological well-being in the subject MF is significantly less positive because it often disturbs the surrounding environment with his behavior, which often drinks late into the night with his friends, a body full of tattoos to consume drugs. MF's expected life goals are impressive because he has consistently demonstrated diligence, having dropped out of high school to support himself financially.

**Description of Subject MFN.** Subject MFN is 21 years old with the status of a student at one of the private campuses. The first interview session, conducted on November 18, 2024, took place at a coffee shop from 6:30 p.m. to 7:10 p.m. The second interview session, held on December 2, took place at MFN from 4:00 p.m. to 5:40 p.m. It can be concluded from the results of the interview that the condition of psychological well-being in the MFN subject is very positive because it has a real-life goal, so from the self-acceptance factor, MFN really accepts himself well. After all, MFN does not cover himself and can relate positively to others well, too.

**Description of Subject RV.** Subject RV is 23 years old, and his employment status is in the food delivery industry. The first interview session, conducted on November 19, 2022, took place at RV's house from 11:30 to 12:10. The second session, conducted on December 4, retook place at RV's house from 14:00 to 15:20. It can be concluded from the results of the interview that the condition of psychological well-being in the subject RV is quite very positive because RV can be identified as being able to accept the reality that makes him work harder so that in the surrounding environment and family is very positive, RV has a positive goal to be more independent and able to make something very profitable for RV.

**Description of Subject BPP.** Subject BPP is 23 years old with a status as a student at one of the private campuses. The first interview session, conducted on November 20, 2024, took place at BPP's house from 15:30 to 16:10. The second interview session, held on December 4, was also conducted at BPP's house, from 19:00 to 20:00. It can be concluded from the results of the interview that the condition of psychological well-being in BPP participants is very positive because BPP can be identified that they can socialize and occupy themselves in a positive environment, BPP has very positive goals, are independent and able to relate well with anyone.

### 3.2. Discussion

Early adults who experienced parental divorce in the past experienced psychological changes due to the divorce of both parents. However, changes in a person are different, but a person needs to take some time to adjust and accept the conditions of their parents' divorce. The meaning of different experiences includes undergoing a critical period after the divorce of his parents. This different experience is evident in the subject's condition as soon as they realize that their parents have separated, and their ability to adjust to these conditions.

How to respond to one subject is different from another subject, but not only that, they both pursue pleasure and avoid pain, leading to a hedonic perspective. Hedonic well-being is the ultimate goal of life, aiming to experience maximum pleasure and happiness while avoiding pain (Kusier & Folker, 2019). From the hedonistic perspective, well-being is more about wanting happiness by avoiding painful or unpleasant feelings (Zuo et al., 2017).

Of the four subjects, three consistently strive to avoid pain by seeking happiness. However, in contrast to the first subject, they exhibit negative behaviors such as drinking, excessive tattooing on the whole body, and often taking drugs. That way, the enjoyment will cause temporary well-being and develop into a habit that will eliminate the essence as a meaningful thing (Dwoskin & Levenson, 2020).

According to Ye & Lin (2015), several factors can influence a person's psychological well-being, including demographic factors, social support, evaluation of life experiences, and locus of control. Therefore, the psychological well-being condition of the second, third, and fourth subjects is influenced by social support factors, evaluation of life experiences, and locus of control. External support greatly supports the psychological well-being of individuals with a history of divorce (Sbarra, 2015).

Of the three subjects, including the second, third, and fourth subjects, have been able to successfully go through a critical period after the divorce of their parents, so in such a long process, both of them have struggled. According to Shinde (2017), happiness is not always defined by the fulfillment of all individual needs. From the study's results, the three subjects expressed satisfaction with their current situation.

Psychological well-being is defined as a concept that encompasses a person's psychological functions that fulfill positive psychological needs (Gaggioli et al., 2017). According to Ryff, these functions can be observed in the fulfillment of the aspects necessary for psychological well-being (Shinde, 2017). These aspects include self-accept-

tance, positive relationships with others, independence, environmental control, life purpose, and self-development (Mualifah et al., 2019).

To fulfill the self-acceptance aspect, an individual must demonstrate the ability to accept their current and past circumstances (Bingol & Batik, 2019). Have a positive self-assessment and understand and accept their strengths and weaknesses (Fraundorf et al., 2023). Able to have a positive attitude toward the life he lives. Each aspect will have a relationship with other aspects; these aspects support one another and are interdependent (Suomalainen et al., 2015). Independent individuals tend to have the ability to adapt to their environment (Sternberg et al., 2014). A person with high independence will still be able to survive without the support of others; in other words, they are not easily influenced by their environment (Stephens et al., 2012). A person can fulfill the aspect of environmental mastery if they meet the criteria for being able to regulate their environment, take advantage of opportunities, create and control the environment according to their needs and values, and manage their activities within the environment (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 2014).

Mental health is characterized by the belief that life is purposeful and meaningful. Individuals who function positively have clear, purposeful life goals that make their lives meaningful. Individuals are also able to understand that past events have meaning. The two subjects share the same life goal: to avoid repeating what happened to their parents. This makes both of them very careful in choosing a partner. Experiences that occurred in the past they considered valuable lessons so that they are not repeated. Moreover, it can also serve as a lesson that they can share with others, so they do not experience what they did.

## 4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

### 4.1 Research Implications

The implications of this study highlight that the experience of parental divorce has diverse impacts on the psychological well-being of early adolescents, which requires greater attention in the context of psychological interventions, notably through family counseling therapy. The findings highlight the significance of social support and the impact of life experiences on the psychological well-being of individuals who have experienced divorce. Therefore, it is essential to develop counseling programs that not only support emotional aspects but also offer a more personalized approach based on the needs of each individual. This study contributes to identifying the psychological dimensions that need more focus in addressing cases of children from broken-home families and opens up opportunities for further research on the effectiveness of

various interventions in improving their psychological well-being.

### 4.1 Research Contributions

The contribution of this study lies in providing a deeper understanding of the impact of parental divorce on the psychological well-being of early adolescents, focusing on the diverse outcomes across different psychological dimensions. This research provides insights into the significance of social support and the role of life experiences in shaping the psychological well-being of individuals who have experienced divorce. Additionally, the study emphasizes the need for a more personalized approach in family counseling therapy. It opens the door for the development of more effective interventions to support adolescents from broken-home families. Therefore, this study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on the psychological well-being of adolescents facing parental divorce and provides a foundation for future research and improved intervention practices.

## 5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

### 5.1 Research Limitations

The case study method employed by the researchers has several limitations in data collection. Firstly, the data obtained may not fully meet the research needs, as it was collected by parties other than the researchers. Secondly, researchers face challenges in assessing the accuracy of the data presented, which can impact the reliability of the findings. Lastly, the data may not be relevant to the current situation, as it may not reflect recent developments or changes in the context being studied.

### 5.1 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on expanding the sample size to include a more diverse group of adolescents from broken-home families, as well as incorporating longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of parental divorce on psychological well-being. Additionally, using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. It would also be beneficial to explore the role of therapeutic interventions, such as family counseling, in improving emotional stability and relationships. Furthermore, examining the impact of cultural, socioeconomic, and gender differences on the psychological outcomes of adolescents in divorced families could offer valuable insights into the diverse experiences and needs of this population.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that early adult individuals who experienced parental divorce showed diverse psycholo-

gical well-being outcomes across different dimensions. While the four subjects managed to navigate the critical period following their parents' divorce and achieved a positive psychological condition, subject MF faced challenges in specific areas, such as environmental mastery. These findings suggest that the effects of parental divorce on psychological well-being can vary widely depending on individual circumstances and coping mechanisms. Social support and the ability to evaluate and reflect on life experiences emerged as crucial factors in shaping the psychological outcomes of these individuals.

The psychological well-being of early adolescents is a significant concern, as social support plays a vital role in helping them cope with the emotional challenges they face. Adolescents rely on social support to cope with various life challenges, and it helps foster a sense of motivation and enthusiasm to pursue their personal goals. The findings from this study underscore the importance of providing adolescents with the necessary emotional and social support to enable them to overcome difficulties and achieve their aspirations despite the challenges posed by parental divorce.

The study highlights the impact of economic status on adolescents' psychological well-being. Economic support, particularly from the family, can act as an enabler by ensuring that teenagers have access to education and opportunities for personal growth. However, economic difficulties can also present challenges that inhibit progress. For adolescents from orphaned or divorced families, acceptance of their situation is essential for psychological growth. The ability to accept both their current circumstances and past experiences allows them to move forward without regret and develop resilience, ultimately fostering a healthier and more positive psychological state.

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## CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

All the data described by the researcher in this study on early adolescents from broken home families are the results of the researcher's own work; therefore, the researcher assumes full responsibility.

## Declaration of GenAI in Scientific Writing

The author declare that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools were used to identify relevant academic literature to understand the arguments presented in the sources and to create an outline/research framework. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the IJCP

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## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Ethical Approval Statement

The authors declare that this study was conducted with due regard for research ethics, including obtaining approval from the institution. This includes respecting the autonomy of participants, maintaining confidentiality of data, and ensuring their safety and well-being, in accordance with applicable research ethics guidelines.

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