

*Editorial*

## Fatherless in Indonesia

**Casman**<sup>1\*</sup>

1. Editorial board of Jurnal Kesehatan, Indonesia
2. Department of Pediatric Nursing, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, Indonesia

\*Correspondence: Casman | Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University | [casman@untirta.ac.id](mailto:casman@untirta.ac.id)

Father's Day is celebrated every November 12th. UNICEF conducted a survey in 74 countries as part of the Father's Day celebrations. The results showed that 55% of children aged 3-4 years (around 40 million children) have fathers who are not involved or do not play with their children (UNICEF, 2017). This condition is a sign of the prevalence of fatherless among children worldwide. The national fatherless rate in Indonesia in 2025 was 25.8%. In 45.45% of Indonesia's 33 provinces, the fatherless rate exceeded the national average, with the Papua Pegunungan province having the highest rate, reaching 50.2% (Content Writer Jawa Tengah, 2025).

Fatherless originated from the terms "father absence," "father loss," or "father hunger." In 2011, Edward Elmer Smith coined the term fatherless, which refers to a condition where a child is left without a father or has lost contact with their father due to their parents' divorce (Ashari, 2017). Some consider Smith as the founder of the fatherless theory, in fact Smith did not specifically discuss fatherless. The Fatherless theory was not initiated by one person, several figures started the theory about the role of fathers. John Bowlby in the mid-20th century initiated the attachment theory, this theory initially emphasized that the child's early emotional relationship with the caregiver is very important, the caregiver here is defined as the mother, then developed that the father figure is important in the child's emotional security. Michael E. Lamb initiated a broader theory about father involvement, father involvement is not only limited to being a breadwinner, but also includes direct interaction, emotional warmth, and responsibility in parenting (Bowlby, 1969; Lamb, 1976).

David Popenoe also played a role in popularizing the concept of a fatherless society through a sociological approach, the declining role of fathers in modern families has the potential to cause various social problems, such as increased juvenile delinquency, low academic achievement, and behavioral disorders (Popenoe, 1996). 4.4 million children live in families without fathers. Even 11.5 million children, even though they live with their fathers, work more than 60 hours per week. This means that 15.9 million children are at risk of growing up fatherless (Ramadhian & Anna, 2025). Referring to prevalence, this means that 1 in 4 children in Indonesia has experienced fatherless. Children, as individuals aged 0-18, should have their well-being guaranteed holistically, encompassing physical (biological), emotional (psychological), social, economic, cultural, and spiritual aspects. This situation is not ideal for child development.

Children are aggregated into neonates aged 0-2 months, babies/infants aged 0-1 year, toddlers aged >1 year to less than 3 years, pre-schoolers aged 3 years to under 6 years, school age 6-12 years and adolescents over 12 years (Casman et al., 2025). Children's developmental conditions differ at each age, so their needs also vary. Fatherless certainly poses a threat to development at every age group. The negative impact of fatherless on child development is very real. However, the definition and assessment instruments should be tailored to the child's circumstances. An orphaned child is one without a mother and father due to the death of one parent. Children in single-mother families may have a deceased father or divorced mother and father. In intact families, the father may be physically present but financially or otherwise affected by other non-physical factors.

UNICEF predicts fatherless from the active role fathers play with their children aged 3-4 years. The Kompas survey focused on the number of hours fathers spend with their children. This confirms that existing instruments are still unable to fully measure fatherless qualitatively, remaining crudely quantitative. What about fathers who work outside the city or even abroad? For example, a father who works in Jakarta

but lives in Bogor inevitably spends his time traveling for work. What about families who choose to send their children to Islamic boarding schools? This means that fathers' time with their children is indeed limited. A father's role in children should begin when a husband and wife plan for the mother's pregnancy, because a child's growth and development begins even in the womb. Meanwhile, Indonesian policy is not yet in favor; there is no leave for fathers whose wives are pregnant or giving birth. Local culture also needs to be considered; fathers in families with a patriarchal system are mostly misguided. Fathers believe that household, child, and kitchen matters are solely the responsibility of their wives, and they are unwilling to help with household chores, such as washing dishes, changing diapers, cooking, and so on.

The author defines fatherless as the absence of a father figure, a condition where a child grows up without the presence, active role, or involvement of a father in his or her life, whether physically, emotionally, or socially. However, this definition must be adapted to the child's circumstances; a father does not always mean a biological father. Single mothers who choose not to remarry can still have the opportunity to provide a father figure for their children. Stepfathers or guardians whom the child trusts can certainly have the opportunity to become father figures who meet the child's needs. Parents whose children are cared for by others, because they work, can still provide a father figure for their children. This depends on the individual caring (babysitter) for the child in providing a father figure or figures during the child's upbringing.

## REFERENCE

- Ashari, Y. (2017). Fatherless in Indonesia and its impact on children's psychological development. *Psikoislamika*, 15(September), 35–40. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18860/psi.v15i1.6661>
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. Basic Books.
- Casman, C., Hastuti, D., Erlena, Amelia, L., Marni, Hakim, N., Mariyam, & Ringo, L. S. (2025). *Buku Ajar Keperawatan Anak I*. MCU.
- Content Writer Jawa Tengah. (2025). *Rilis Data Fatherless Indonesia*. <https://jateng.kemendukbangga.go.id/posts/a5256988-5ba7-4309-92a0-93148a507448-rilis-data-fatherless-indonesia>
- Lamb, M. E. (1976). *The role of the father in child development*. Wiley.
- Popenoe, D. (1996). *Life Without Father*. Free Press.
- Ramadhian, N., & Anna, L. K. (2025). *Fenomena Fatherless, Ketika Ibu Harus Membesarkan Anak Sendirian*. <https://lifestyle.kompas.com/read/2025/10/25/190500120/fenomena-fatherless-ketika-ibu-harus-membesarkan-anak-sendirian->
- UNICEF. (2017). *More than half of young children deprived of play and early learning activities with their fathers*. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/press-releases/half-children-deprived-play-fathers>