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## Psychosocial interventions for mental health in children from broken homes: A systematic review

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### Abstract

**Background:** Family plays a crucial role in children's psychological development. A "broken home," resulting from divorce, parental death, or prolonged conflict, can disrupt emotional stability and increase the risk of mental health problems in children and adolescents.

**Purpose:** To analyse empirical evidence regarding the impact of broken homes on children's mental health and identify dominant psychological outcomes and protective factors.

**Method:** A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach following the PRISMA protocol. Articles were retrieved from Scopus, Google Scholar, and national journals using relevant keywords. Of 231 identified articles, 7 studies published between 2018–2024 met the inclusion criteria, focusing on children and adolescents.

**Results:** The findings showed that children from broken homes were more likely to experience anxiety (47%), depression (32%), and decreased academic performance (67%). Social support from extended family and peers, along with mindfulness-based psychosocial interventions, were found to effectively reduce psychological distress.

**Conclusion:** Broken home conditions significantly affect children's mental health. Strengthening social support and implementing school- and community-based mental health services are essential to promote resilience and reduce adverse outcomes.

**Keywords:** Broken Home; Children; Mental Health.

### INTRODUCTION

The family is one of the main factors that influence individual development, especially children. In the context of family, the term "broken home" refers to a situation in which the family is broken, either due to divorce, the death of a parent, or prolonged conflict. This phenomenon is increasingly common in modern society, and its impact on children deserves serious attention as it can affect the mental health of children during their growth period (Murniasih & Irvan, 2023). Broken home is a term that describes a family experiencing dysfunction or disharmony (Yandri, Kholidin, Sujadi, & Juliawati, 2024). This condition often stems from unhealthy and uncondusive dynamics in the husband-wife relationship. The severing of emotional ties between

spouses then triggers domestic conflict. Constant disagreements and differences of opinion, which often lead to arguments, are the dominant factors that cause a household to break down. Therefore, these disagreements can be identified as the starting point that strains the bonds and integrity of a family (Aldilla, 2025).

A less harmonious family environment is one of the causes of the development of oppositional mentality and behaviour in children. This shows how essential the role of the family is as the first institution that provides the foundation of life in the form of comfort, warmth, and happiness (Pati & Lorusso, 2018). Fulfilling this role is the main guarantee for achieving a person's well-being. This

Psychosocial interventions for mental health in children from broken homes:  
A systematic review

article aims to analyse the impact of broken homes on children's mental health. Research shows that children who grow up in a less harmonious family environment tend to experience various psychological problems, such as anxiety, depression, and difficulties in socializing. Academically, children from broken homes tend to experience a decline due to difficulty concentrating and excessive stress. In addition, they often face challenges in emotional and behavioural development, which can continue into adulthood. This is very likely to happen, and the impact felt by the child will leave a mark and tend to hurt themselves to the point that some may attempt suicide (Hidayat & Nashori, 2025).

To overcome the impact of broken homes, it is important to give children unconditional love (Tessy, Setiasih, & Nanik, 2022). Parents must maintain family unity and pay attention to their children's moral education. Children also need to be well cared for and motivated to remain positive and focused on their dreams and aspirations. By understanding these impacts, it is hoped that strategies can be found to support children from broken homes so that they can overcome the challenges they face and achieve optimal mental well-being. Through this study, this article also aims to highlight the importance of the role of the social environment and community support in helping these children (Rahmania, Hizbullah, Anisa, & Wahyuningsih, 2021).

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used was a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This method consists of two main stages, namely the process of systematically reviewing and identifying journals. This process refers to established guidelines and is guided by the

Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Triandini, Jayanatha, Indrawan, Putra, & Iswara, 2019). PRISMA is a flowchart-based and evidence-based guide that helps authors in conducting systematic literature reviews (Pati and Lorusso 2018). A literature study of various international and national journals was conducted using a descriptive analysis approach, in which the researchers used a systematic review design by searching for articles in the Scopus and Google Scholar databases using the keywords (broken home" OR "parental divorce" OR "family conflict") AND ("psychological impact" OR "mental health outcomes" OR "anxiety disorders") AND ("children" OR "adolescents" OR "child" OR "adolescent") The selection of source articles was done by reviewing the titles and abstracts that discussed the impact of broken homes on children's mental health. The publication years of the sources used were from 2018 to 2024. The following is the PRISMA Flowchart in Table 1 that will guide this study.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria used in this study were clearly defined to ensure the selection of relevant and high-quality articles. Articles included in this review were published between 2018 and 2024, while those published before 2018 were excluded. In terms of document type, only original research articles were included, whereas review articles, books, and website sources were excluded. The selected articles were limited to those written in Indonesian and English, and studies published in other languages were not considered. Additionally, only articles indexed in reputable databases such as SINTA and SCOPUS were included, while those not indexed in these databases were excluded from the analysis.

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## RESEARCH RESULTS

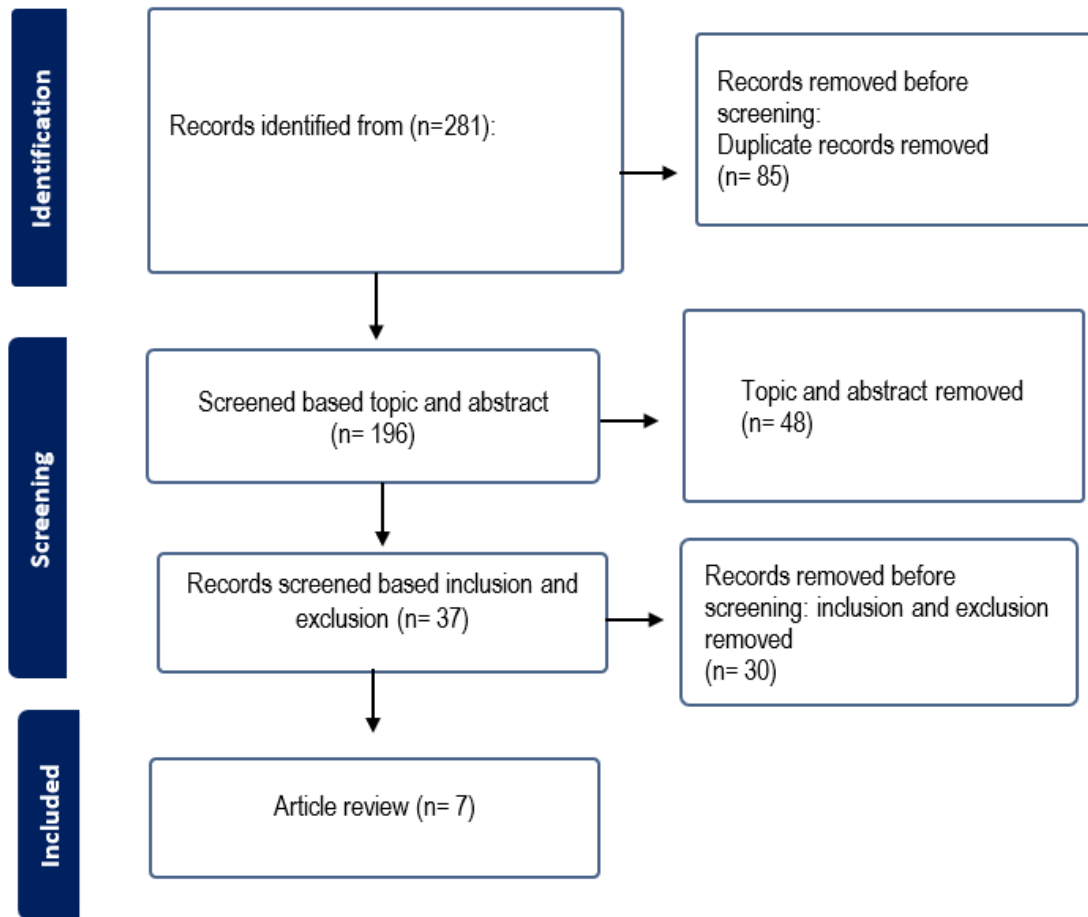


Figure. Diagram Prisma Flow

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**Table 1. Summary of Literature**

| <b>(Author, Year)<br/>(Country)</b>    | <b>Purpose</b>                                                                                                                                              | <b>Method</b>                                        | <b>Results</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Amhar et al., 2023)<br>(Indonesia)    | To examine the relationship between social support and mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, loneliness) among adolescents from broken home families | Quantitative approach                                | Adolescents with access to emotional and instrumental support (e.g., from friends or teachers) showed lower levels of depression and anxiety. Support from extended family (e.g., grandparents) or parental figures (such as mentors) helped fill the void of parental support. Close friend support (peer support) was most significant in reducing feelings of loneliness and social rejection.                                                                                              |
| (Mamuly & Paunno, 2024)<br>(Indonesia) | To explore psychological and social impacts of broken home conditions on children                                                                           | Descriptive qualitative research                     | The findings revealed that children from dysfunctional families experienced significant mental health problems. Psychological impacts included feelings of frustration manifested through aggressive behaviour and social withdrawal. Additionally, some children demonstrated defence mechanisms, such as compensation, as a way to cope with emotional distress and unmet needs. Socially, family dysfunction also affected children's interactions and adjustment within their environment. |
| (Indari et al., 2022)<br>(Indonesia)   | To identify and reduce mental health problems in adolescents from broken home families through intervention                                                 | Quantitative approach (pre-post intervention design) | Mental health screening using the SRQ-29 identified that out of 21 adolescents, 13 experienced anxiety, 7 experienced PTSD symptoms, and 1 was involved in drug use. The intervention included mental health education and the implementation of Mindfulness Sharia Islam (MSI) conducted via Zoom. After the intervention, participants showed increased understanding of mental health issues and a reduction in psychological symptoms.                                                     |

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Psychosocial interventions for mental health in children from broken homes:  
A systematic review

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|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Mistiani, 2018)<br>(Indonesia)        | To analyze psychological impacts of broken home conditions on children                                                             | Qualitative study     | The findings indicated that broken home conditions have a significant impact on children's psychological development. Children experienced emotional distress, insecurity, sadness, and behavioural changes as a result of family disruption. Interviews with parents and psychologists further revealed that unresolved family conflict and lack of emotional support contributed to these psychological difficulties.                                                                                                                    |
| (Sigiro et al., 2022)<br>(Indonesia)   | To explore emotional experiences of children from broken home families                                                             | Qualitative study     | The findings showed that broken home conditions negatively affect children's mental and emotional health. Children reported experiencing emotional distress, sadness, feelings of insecurity, and difficulties in emotional regulation. Family conflict and parental separation were identified as significant factors contributing to these psychological challenges.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| (Santoso & Huwae, 2023)<br>(Indonesia) | To analyze the relationship between resilience and meaningfulness of life in broken home adolescents (linked to mental well-being) | Quantitative approach | The findings indicated a significant relationship between resilience and the meaningfulness of life among adolescents from broken homes. Adolescents with higher levels of resilience tended to report a stronger sense of life meaning. The study also highlighted that optimal development in broken home adolescents can be achieved when they have access to social support (friends, teachers, extended family), opportunities to explore personal goals and spirituality, and skills in emotional regulation and positive reframing. |

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Psychosocial interventions for mental health in children from broken homes:  
A systematic review

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|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Lestari & Huwae, 2023)<br>(Indonesia) | To examine the relationship between forgiveness and resilience in adolescents from divorced families (as protective mental health factors) | Quantitative approach | The study found a highly significant positive correlation between forgiveness and resilience ( $r = 0.72$ ; $p < 0.001$ ). This indicates that adolescents who demonstrate higher levels of forgiveness toward their divorced parents tend to have higher levels of resilience. |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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## DISCUSSION

Broken homes due to divorce and prolonged conflict are significant risk factors for mental health disorders in children. Studies show that family instability triggers problems such as anxiety, depression, and difficulty concentrating, and that excessive stress correlates with lower academic performance. In addition, broken homes also trigger mental health problems in children. Based on stress theory parental conflict creates chronic stress in children that can trigger depression, mental health problems, and decreased academic performance. Children become unstable in controlling their emotions, so they rebel more often in their daily lives or even become quiet, unwilling to socialize, and tend to withdraw (Amato, 2020).

Social support is a key determinant of mental health in adolescents from broken homes. The findings emphasize the importance of an ecosystem approach (involving schools, friends, and communities) to build psychological resilience in adolescents. However, broader efforts are needed to integrate these findings into public policy and evidence-based mental health services (Azari, Fadilla, Amelia, Nurfianti, Aurelia, Dahut, & Permata, 2023). One of the most visible impacts is on children's academic achievement. Children from broken homes often experience difficulty concentrating and excessive stress, which ultimately has a negative impact on their performance in school. In addition, they are also more prone to emotional and behavioural problems, such as aggression or withdrawal from social interaction. Some children even use defence mechanisms, such as compensation, to cope with the pressure they experience (Mamuly & Paunno, 2024). In some cases, these emotional effects can continue into adulthood, making early intervention crucial to prevent more serious problems later in life (Mistiani, 2018).

However, this article also highlights that social support and psychological intervention can play a key role in helping children from broken homes. Support from parents, peers, and the social environment can reduce the negative impact experienced by children. Interventions such as moral

education, psychological support programs, and participation in extracurricular activities have been proven effective in improving the mental health of these children. For example, in one of the studies reviewed, a Mindfulness Sharia Islam (MSI)-based intervention via Zoom successfully reduced symptoms of anxiety and PTSD in adolescents from broken homes (Lestari & Huwae, 2023).

The role of family and social environment is also very important in helping children develop mental resilience. A harmonious family can provide the happiness, comfort, and warmth necessary for healthy emotional and mental growth. Conversely, disharmony in the family can cause children to feel insecure and unloved, which ultimately affects their mental health. Support from peers, teachers, and the community can also help children develop positive coping mechanisms and improve their mental resilience (Sigiro, Alexander, & Al-Ghifari, 2022). This article also emphasizes the importance of public policies that support the mental health of children from broken homes. Adequate resources, such as counselling services and psychological support programs, need to be provided to help these children overcome the challenges they face. In addition, it is important for parents, educators, and the community to understand the impact of broken homes on children's mental health. With a better understanding, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to support these children (Pratama, Suryati, & Murni, 2022).

Descriptive analysis reveals that mental health issues among adolescents from broken homes are complex problems that touch on various psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. The main theme that emerges from various studies is the negative impact of family disharmony on the emotional and mental condition of children and adolescents. They tend to experience disorders such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and even aggressive or withdrawn behaviour. The absence of a stable parental figure and conflict within the family are the main triggers of these disorders (Anjani, Anjani, Giovana, Apriliani, & Farisandy, 2024).

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Psychosocial interventions for mental health in children from broken homes:  
A systematic review

In this context, social support emerges as an important theme that acts as a buffer against the adverse effects of broken homes. Support from peers, teachers, mentors, and extended family members such as grandparents has been shown to have a positive effect in reducing feelings of loneliness, social rejection, and emotional distress. This support is not only emotional, but also instrumental, such as providing advice, attention, and a sense of security. Research shows that adolescents who have access to adequate social support tend to have more stable mental health compared to those who do not receive it (Santoso & Huwae, 2023).

The importance of building resilience and meaning in life for adolescents from broken homes. Several studies highlight that the ability to forgive divorced parents and explore life goals through spirituality and self-reflection can increase mental resilience. Adolescents who are equipped with emotional regulation skills and the ability to view life experiences positively are better able to cope with stress and develop optimally (Shabrina, Kusristanti, & Listiyandini, 2020).

In addition, psychosocial interventions are an effective approach in addressing mental health issues in this group. Programs such as mental screening, education, and mindfulness training based on spiritual values show promising results in reducing symptoms of mental disorders and improving self-understanding. This approach emphasizes the importance of involving various parties, including psychologists, teachers, parents, and the community, in creating an environment that supports the recovery and growth of adolescents (Ariyanto, 2023).

Overall, the reviewed literature shows that mental health problems in adolescents from broken homes cannot be solved with a single approach. A comprehensive and sustainable strategy is needed, which includes social support, resilience building, and psychosocial interventions that are appropriate to their needs and cultural context (Suhartini, Siahaan, Kinanti, & Amelia 2024).

## CONCLUSIONS

Families experiencing separation, whether due to divorce, the death of a parent, or prolonged conflict, can cause various psychological problems in children. Research shows that children who grow up in broken families tend to experience anxiety, depression, and difficulty socializing, which affects their academic performance. Children from broken homes often face greater psychological pressure, which can manifest itself in aggressive behaviour and withdrawal from social interaction. They also experience a decline in academic achievement due to difficulty concentrating and excessive stress. Therefore, psychological intervention and social support are very important to help these children overcome the challenges they face. Support from parents and the social environment can reduce the negative impact experienced by children. Interventions such as moral education and psychological support programs have been proven effective in improving the mental health of these children. In addition, resilience elements such as peer support and participation in extracurricular activities can help children develop positive coping mechanisms.

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A systematic review

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Psychosocial interventions for mental health in children from broken homes:  
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