

## ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR AMBITION: THE ROLE OF PARENTAL DIVORCE

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### ABSTRACT

*Divorce has various negative impacts on the lives of adolescents, one of the impacts of divorce is on their educational ambitions, but evidently not all children who experience parental divorce suffer a negative impact. There is a phenomenon where children who experience parental divorce are still trying to have educational ambitions in their lives. The purpose of this study is to see an overview of educational ambitions in adolescents who experience divorce from their parents. The participants in this study were five adolescents aged 17 to 22 whose parents had divorced. Through semi-structured interviews, the youth shared their personal experiences on how the experience of their parents' divorce shaped their educational ambitions. This study uses a qualitative approach (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis). The data obtained and analyzed produced 3 themes, namely (1) Desire, (2) Self Action, (3) Planning for the Future. The results of this study are educational ambitions that are formed in adolescents who experience parental divorce because of the desire to have a higher education so that they can achieve what they want in the future. The desire for success that adolescents imagine in the future is formed because of the conditions they experience after their parents' divorce. The main impact of parental divorce that can make children have a desire to succeed is the tenuous relationship between children and parents which makes children feel neglected and ignored and the stigma about broken home children that they believe in and circulates in society so that adolescents want to prove that they can be successful even though with divorced parents.*

**Keywords:** Divorce, ambition, educational, adolescent

### 1. PREFACE

Disputes and conflicts are inevitable in the family. When problems and conflicts cannot be resolved, the decision to get a divorce is the chosen option. Divorce can be interpreted as the end of a husband-and-wife relationship which is decided by law or religion because there is no more mutual attraction, mutual trust and no compatibility with each other, causing disharmony in the household (Ramadhani & Krisnani, 2019). Divorce data shows that there is a tendency to increase the number of divorce cases. (Defianti, 2022) data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in Statistics Indonesia 2022, a total of 447,743 divorce cases occurred in 2021. This figure has increased compared to the previous year which reached 291,677 cases. Based on the data above, it can be concluded that divorce cases in Indonesia increased by 53.50% compared to 2020.

Behind the increase in divorce cases, on the other hand there has also been an increase in the number of adolescents experiencing parental divorce. Adolescent certainly really hopes for a normal life and has a complete family where his father and mother live comfortably together in one house. In other words, parental divorce becomes a situation that is not ideal for adolescent. Bastait and Mortelmans (2007) found that divorce can affect family structure, family environment and parenting style. Relocation of residence also has the potential to make adolescent feel stressed and have an impact on academics (Potter, 2010). Nilsen et al., (2020) also found the same thing where the structural changes that occur when parents divorce have an impact on adolescent education. Adolescents who experience parental divorce tend to be less prepared than their parents.

No matter how old children are when their parents divorce, they will always feel pressured. Douglas (2020) Regardless of age, children who experience parental divorce abhor the tension and hardship that comes with longstanding family celebrations, traditions, daily activities, and special times, and view these changes as a great loss. However, parental divorce still has an unfavorable impact on children's development.

Divorce has several negative effects on adolescent's adjustment. For example, in Amato and Keith's meta-analysis in (Lansford, 2009) of 92 studies conducted from 1950 to 1980, Amato and Keith reported that 70% lower subjective and psychological well-being was found in adolescent whose parents had divorced from adolescent whose parents are not divorced. Amato in (Lansford, 2009) then updated the meta-analysis using 67 studies in 1990. The results were 88% showing the same effect where the welfare of adolescent whose parents divorced was lower. The low welfare of adolescent whose parents are divorced can be resolved through research by Brand et al., (2019) found that adolescents who experience parental divorce are on average less capable to adjust well in various situations, this poor adjustment also occurs in physical health, mental health, learning achievement tends to be low and on average also has lower education level, because they tend to choose to drop out of school.

According to Garg et al., (2007), the desire to drop out of school in adolescents who have experienced divorce from their parents is due to the tendency of ambition in terms of education which tends to be low. This is based on his research on Canadian adolescents where it was found that adolescents from families consisting only of single parents or experiencing parental divorce tend to have lower educational ambitions than adolescents from intact families. From a psychological perspective, ambition is seen as a trait, while from a sociological perspective, ambition is seen as a product of the parental, social or socioeconomic environment. Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) define Ambition is the persistent and generalized striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment. Therefore, ambition is about achieving certain results rather than achievements.

Ambition is also found in adolescent's academic processes, according to Garg et al., (2007) this is important because academic ambition affects an adolescent's performance at school. Quaglia and Cobb (1996) conceive educational ambition as a student's ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work towards those goals. Ambition is considered important because it can affect the main choice, and results such as academic achievement (Goodman & Gregg, 2010). Students who choose to set difficult goals for themselves tend to become task-oriented, with a sense of purpose for their lives (Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). Differences in ambition according to Hetherington in (Zeratsion, 2014) may depend on individual, family and social factors. Children with positive characteristics, for example having good power, emotional regulation and social competence, are found to be more resilient after experiencing the experience of parental divorce, in other words, the positive characteristics that exist in children determine how resilient they are in dealing with divorce and their attitudes after the divorce occurs. Referring to Garg et al (2007) that low educational ambition is related to the choice to drop out of school in children who experience parental divorce, it is undeniable that there is the opposite phenomenon where on the other hand there are also children who experience parental divorce but still try to have special achievements. in education.

Tamelia (2018) reports statements from one of the participants who has experienced parental divorce and have educational ambition to have academic achievements as follows:

*"I'm studying computer, so I can get a job in the office even though I haven't continued my study. I could get a good job with a good salary as a guarantee to have a good life."*

*"I have big ambitions, for example, for this reason, I must get this, no matter how I do it. So, I want my future to be different from from my family, from my mother's family from my father's family to be different from all of them, whether from any job that can make me different from them."*

In 2022, researchers contacted the participant to find out how the participant is now. Following are the results of a short interview with the participant:

*"When I graduated from school, I continued taking computer lessons for a year and then I got a job. Previously, my intention was to work to collect money for me to go to college. I wanted to study psychology like you and my cousin, but 2 years later my father died, so I am now focused on work because I'm just the two of us now, me and my little brother. I live alone with my brother, no one helps at all. I must pay for everything. My mom doesn't want to know at all. So, what's important now is that my little brother is going to school because he's already in secondary school, and he's starting to need a lot of money. I'll continue my studies when my younger sibling has graduated from high school."*

The ambition of the adolescent who is experiencing a divorce makes the adolescent have the desire to achieve the success he dreams of even during a difficult situation due to his parents' divorce. This is supported by the findings of Kaye (Zeratsion, 2014) that the scores achieved by students who have experienced parental divorce have no significant difference from the scores of those who have not had that experience.

Previous studies (Zeratsion, 2014; Garg et al., 2007) used a quantitative approach through regression analysis which aims to prove that parental divorce has an impact on educational ambition. Adolescent who experiences divorce are predicted to have low educational ambitions, but there is no explanation regarding how the educational ambitions of an adolescent who has experienced parental divorce has been described. Zeratsion (2014) in the journal of children and family study also states that there is no description of the educational ambitions of an adolescent who has experienced parental divorce as a limitation of his research that cannot yet be explained. Therefore, this research was conducted qualitatively with a phenomenological approach to complement Zeratsion's research (2014) which was aimed at getting an overview of the educational ambitions of adolescents who experienced parental divorce.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

The research approach used in this study is a qualitative research design for this study using a phenomenological design. This phenomenological study specifically applies Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which is a phenomenological approach in examining in detail personal life experiences from practical engagement with the world and in uncovering how participants understand their experiences.

The participants selection technique used in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling refers to the method of selecting participants because they have certain features or characteristics that will allow a detailed exploration of the phenomenon being studied because the

main concern of this research is with a detailed description of the experiences of the individual participants. The participants taken in this study were adolescents with high educational ambitions aged 17–22 years who experienced parental divorce because it was hoped that each participant could describe the high educational ambitions of adolescents who experienced parental divorce according to the characteristics of the research participants. In addition, the researchers also recruited 5 supporting participants as significant other from the 5 participants. Each participant filled out informed consent and had the right to withdraw.

Researchers prepared a google form to create a preliminary study using the 5-item ambition scale measuring tool from Hirschi, A., & Spurk, D. (2021). Researchers asked prospective participants to fill out questions in the Google form first before conducting interviews. After that, the researchers contacted potential participants who were willing to be interviewed. The researchers contacted the participants to explain the purpose of the research. Then, the researchers contacted the participants to arrange a meeting schedule. At the beginning of the meeting, the researchers first made a rapport so that the participants did not experience tension between the participants and the researchers. Then the researchers explained a little about the purpose of the interview to the participants. Then the interview was carried out based on the guidelines that had been prepared by the researchers. After the participants answered all the questions, the interview was completed.

The process of data analysis using IPA was carried out after the interview process between researchers and participants took place. The results of the interviews conducted will be converted into transcription to facilitate researchers in conducting analysis. Frost (2011) The steps in IPA are then applied. The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis stages are carried out as follows: first, the results of the conversation between the researchers and the research participants are then converted into a transcription. After that, read through the entire transcript several times to become completely familiar with the data. Second, after reading the transcripts repeatedly, the researchers changed the initial notes on the transcripts to become the themes that emerged. Giving this note can also be referred to as the coding stage. Third, at this stage, the researchers examine the emerging themes and groups them according to conceptual similarities in the sub-themes. Fourth, this stage, researchers will make up. The table shows that it will lead us to a sub-theme which if we interpret it will lead us to a big theme. Fifth, after one of the results of the interview in the form of an interview transcript, the analysis stage is carried out, then the activity will continue with the next participant transcript. When all the transcripts of the interviews with the participants have been analyzed, the researchers enter the stage of looking for patterns between cases.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Theme 1: Desire**

Desire is a feeling that exists in adolescents to have or get things they want to achieve in the future. The desires that arise are: (1) desires that come from other people, (2) desires that come from themselves. Parents' divorce and its impact do not discourage adolescents in pursuing their goals. Adolescents who experience parental divorce have a high sense of responsibility so that a desire arises to help ease the burden on their family, they don't want to disappoint their family and they want to elevate their parents. The second desire is to prove to their parents and those around them that they can be successful without their parents. Adolescents have a desire to be seen as someone who is great and successful even with divorced parents.

Participant RW: I was there thinking I am the only man in the house, so I must study harder, be more active to get achievements, because of that, the motivation is to make my parents and my younger siblings happy.

Participant RN: Maybe living independently. yes, because I am still described as being lived by the shadow of my father who pays for my life. So, I want to be free from that, I want to pay for my own mother and brother by studying, pursuing the competencies that the school has.

Participant VA: First it's because of my father. My father isn't a businessman anymore. He's retired. So automatically I as the last child must take care of him, provide food, get him cigarettes, all sorts of things.

Participant AD: It's like convincing my self, for the purpose of wanting to make my self happy, to elevate my parents' dignity. My little sister, i don't want my little sister to be like me. I want her to continue study without obstacles. She doesn't have to work like me.

Participant DA: For now, it's not hated but more a sense of revenge, like I don't want to be like them, I want revenge if I can do it, I can be successful without all of you, usually succes children comes from a happy family. iI can be successful without my parents.

I'm afraid that if i get married my parents-in-law will look down on me or whatever, that's why I must have an education so that people can't underestimate me like even though she's a broken home kid, but she is a professor, but she published books, but she has achievements, so that's what motivated me to pursue education.

## **Theme 2: Self Action**

Self-action is a form of behavior from the desire of a adolescent to achieve what they want to achieve. Self-action consists of: (1) Focusing on the task at hand, (2) Doing various activities that can support the future, (3) Self Competence (4) Planning for the future. Even though every adolescent has various pressures that come from parental divorce, adolescents are still looking for ways to keep trying to focus on learning in pursuit of education, adolescents must develop themselves from organizational activities at school to expand their network of friends, develop their competence and add knowledge, adolescents must know their competences, their strengths and weaknesses in order to be able to help youth to know the needs needed in order to be able to improve themselves and determine what they want to achieve in the future but still explore and see other opportunities does not rule out the possibility for them to change their minds because most adolescents are still at the stage of self-exploration and considering other opportunities.

Participant RW: I take lessons to gain knowledge, experience and connections from these events, so every time there is an event given by the campus, I actively participate in the event.

Participant RN: Besides school, i also joined English. I also sometimes teach my friends in English Club to replace my english club teacher. i got paid for each meeting is 100 thousand rupiah for 1 hour.

Participant VA: Starting to focus on my studies now, continuing to focus on being smart, achieving, and looking for money to help my father and my brother and sister. Within a week, I'm going to college in the evening and i'm doing an internship in the morning at an advocate law office.

Participant AD: "I also think that if you're not smart, at least you're diligent and diligent, when the teacher explains, you listen, if you're told to be precise, your precis. I'm one of those people who

can be patient, then I'm a person who can intervene, like I understand situations, conditions, so I can understand, being smart like that means positioning myself. I also feel like I'm willing to do everything,

Participant DA: I wrote in my book, so basically, I'm 19 years old right now. Later when I'm 23 years old, I'm supposed to have graduated from college, right? i will have a permanent job. so, i intend to work first a year and then to continue my masters. My intention is like that, so work first for a year, provide what my grandmother needs. After that, i intend to do a master's degree while i am working and after that I want to continue my doctoral degree.

Although in the early days of the divorce had an impact on the adolescent's life. In the end, the negative impacts of divorce felt by each adolescents becomes the reason why adolescents have high ambitions. The researchers found that the adolescents were able to rise to face the difficulties that occurred because of their parents' divorce, which meant that the participants had good resilience. According to Grotberg (2003) resilience is the human ability to face, overcome, to be strong when facing obstacles and obstacles in life that are unavoidable.

The results of this study found that the ambitions that emerged in the adolescents represented the basic desire to achieve future achievements, the behavioral actions carried out by the adolescents in the present to support future achievements and the adolescents's ability to make plans. This research is in line with the research of Quaglia and Cobb (1996) understanding educational ambition as a student's ability to identify and set goals for the future, while being inspired in the present to work towards those goals.

The adolescents have high ambitions because they have a strong desire because they feel they have a sense of responsibility to their families. There is a sense of having a desire to make one of the parents who live with them happy and the desire to live independently from one of the parents who supports them financially and the desire to elevate their parent dignity. Some adolescents also had a desire for revenge and to prove to their parents that they could be successful without the support and appreciation of their parents. Most of the adolescents have a desire to be seen as great and successful as a child from a broken home. The researchers found that the reasons mentioned above made the adolescents feel that they had to have a higher education to achieve this success. The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by Judge & Mueller (2012) where there are positive life outcomes from ambition where individuals who are more ambitious have higher levels of achievement in both the educational and work domains.

To support the wishes of all adolescents in order to realize their goals in the future. This study found that the participants must take self-action in the present which consists of focusing on learning, doing various activities and knowing their own competences which are also validated by others. The first self-action is to focus on learning despite the pressure that comes from parental divorce. This is because they have a strong foundation of desire. One of the participants stated that she had to study and make maximum use of the facilities at school in order to continue to get general rankings and get a scholarship to ease her mother's burden. The Adolescents also focused on learning various skills that they thought could support them in achieving their goals in the future. Examples of activities carried out by the adolescents are learning to develop themselves through various school organizations and studying the special interests they need from various sources. The results of this study are in line with the research of Ampofo & Owusu (2015) which states that children who are ambitious in education are more likely to devote much of their time to learning rather than doing other activities.

The third self-action found in this study is the adolescents' self-competence where they know their own competences and are validated by those around them in their educational journey to achieve their goals. The adolescents must understand and know their own competences so that they can maximize the steps in making future. Adolescents who know the location of their strengths and weaknesses can help adolescents to know their needs in order to improve their ability to achieve their goals. Harter in (Soetikno & Arimurti, 2019) Self-concept is formed based on cognitive aspects, namely individual knowledge about his own condition, an individual's image of himself in the form of attitudes, ways of thinking and superiors. Other studies also state that students' self-concept has a direct, strong, and significant effect on Youth's ambitions and achievements (1998).

On the way to achieving goals, it is important for the participants to think about making decisions and making strategies to prepare for the future. The researchers found that the adolescents had thought about continuing their master's degree and had thought of a high career path in their planning. These results are in line with research by Ashby & Schoon (2010) Teenage career aspirations, ambition values and educational performance at age 16 were all positively related. It appears that adolescents learn early on that if they want to be successful, it is not enough just to become a professional; they also need to "aim high" once they get there.

From the results of the study, the researchers found that the adolescents had set their goals and made plans for how they would achieve them, but the adolescents were still exploring themselves and trying other opportunities that might have better benefits in the future. One of the adolescents stated that initially he wanted to be a cook but seeing better opportunities in terms of time and salary, the participants preferred to become an assessor. This research is in line with Levinson's research (in Shek, 2020) which states that the transition from adolescence to early adulthood occurs between the ages of 17 and 22 years where the main task of this transition is to assess one's superior role patterns, membership, interests, and lifestyle. To live, and to explore the possibility of change in oneself and the world.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Educational Ambition that is formed in adolescents who experience parental divorce because of the desire to have a higher education so that they can achieve what they want in the future. The achievements they want to achieve is everything that can lead them to success. The desire for success that adolescents imagine in the future is formed because of the conditions they experience after their parents' divorce. The main impact of parental divorce that can make children have a desire to succeed is the tenuous relationship between children and parents which makes children feel neglected and ignored and the stigma about broken home children that they believe in and circulates in society so that adolescents want to prove that they can be successful even though with divorced parents.

The limitations of this research are: (1) Out of five participants there was only one male participant. Future research should look for the same number of participants so that they might be able to find new findings such as gender differences in research, (2) the age of the participants when the parents divorced was adolescence, future research should carry out different explorations from the age of the participants when the parents divorced, (3) do further research on educational ambition because there is still a lack of research on this topic.

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