

## Children Resilience In Dealing With Parental Divorce Based On the Ability to Regulate Emotions And Optimism

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### Abstract

Resilience is the ability of an individual to rise from adversity or the problems faced. It is needed in dealing with various bitter events such as parental divorce. To attain resilience, children need emotional and optimistic arrangements in dealing with problems. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine children's resilience in the face of parental divorce based on the regulation of emotions and optimism. This was a case study conducted in the city of Padang. The subjects in this study were two students with the criteria of having divorced parents in less than seven months or with the provision that the divorce occurred within the study period. Data analysis techniques used were interactive models. The results showed resilience in children was different even while facing the same problem, such as parental divorce. For instance, one of the respondents, OT, had an excellent emotional arrangement while facing the parental divorce, while the other one, BT, was poor. The level of optimism in children also declined due to parental divorce.

**Keywords:** Resilience, Divorce, Parents, Regulating Emotions, Optimism.

**How to Cite:** Uruk, F.H., Ahmad, R., Bentri, A. (2020). Children Resilience In Dealing With Parental Divorce Based On the Ability to Regulate Emotions And Optimism. *International Journal of Research in Counseling and Education*, 4(1), 9-14.



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## Introduction

Individuals often face with bitter events and discouraging events in life and the ability to learn and deal with these painful experiences is essential for the overall wellbeing of a person (Albuquerque, Almeida, Cunha, Madureira, & Andrade, 2015). For instance, resilient people are able to take lessons behind the problems which occur and regain normalcy (Dawson & Pooley, 2013). These individuals also have the willingness to learn and adapt to conditions (Ifdil & Taufik, 2012) as opposed to those a low level of resilience (Mehrinejad, Tarsafi, & Rajabimoghadam, 2015). Maurović, Križanić, & Klasić (2015) describes resilience as a dynamic process which includes a positive adaptation supported by the conditions around the individual, such as family, colleagues, and the surrounding community.

Resilience help individuals to achieve different goals in their lives (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). Additionally, with the resilience of individuals might be able to maintain mental health conditions and improve their ability to walk out of the difficulties experienced (Lou, Taylor, & Folco, 2018). To recover from stressful, traumatized and risky conditions, resilience skills including skills to form relationships, problem-solving skills, abilities in self-development, and the ability to understand and design the future are necessary. Reivich & Shatte (2002) stated seven aspects of resilience, including (1) emotional regulation (emotion regulation), (2) impulse control, (3) optimism, (4) ability to analyze problems, (5) empathy, (6) self-efficacy, and (7) reaching out. This is in line with Desmita (2014) which stated that resilient adolescents have social competence and life skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, taking the initiative, awareness of goals, and positive future predictions for themselves. Moreover, they have special interests, directed goals, and motivations for achievement in school and life in general.

Family problem is one of the conditions requiring students to be resilient. In general, a family is the primary development environment since children start life and grow from the existing relationships. For instance, the links which benefit children include the interrelation between parents and children, and father, mother, and child interactions with other family members living together (Omoruyi, 2014). In the

family, the child obtains the primary education from the parents, the basis for development and life in the future. For this reason, parents play a critical role in the development of children (Aressa, Nirwana, & Bentri, 2016). Family conditions characterized by disputes compromise the role of parents in this regard (Savitri, 2016). If a conflict between parents is not addressed, it might lead to divorce. Separation of parents is more damaging to children and family relationships since the adjustment period for divorce is longer and more difficult for the child than compared to the death of the parent. Most children go through five stages in this adjustment, including rejection of divorce, anger directed at those involved in the situation, bargaining to unite parents, depression, and ultimately acceptance (Hurlock, 2011). Besides, separation caused by divorce is a severe problem since children tend to be different in peer groups.

The impact of parental divorce is very diverse and complex (Cui, Fincham, & Durtschi, 2011). According to Stahl, it has a negative impact, such as making an academic failure, irregularities in eating and sleeping, suicide, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, fears of family loss, feeling guilty, angry, and depression (Aminah, Andayani, & Karyanata, 2012; Nadeak, 2014). The signs of depression in adolescents according to (Ramadhani & Retnowati, 2013) include changes in mood or loss of interest in all activities, sadness, looking unhappy, fussy, complaining, and irritable. This is in line with Brooks (2011) explaining that in case a divorce occurs, a child experiences an emotional reaction which usually happens irrespective of the age, including sadness, fear, depression, anger, and confusion. Symptoms of depression, stress, anxiety, and other psychological disorders arise since children are not in a position to manage their emotions effectively. However, in the face of parental separation, each child is expected to demonstrate the ability to regulate emotions.

Adolescents who are able to manage their emotions deal with stress in their lives, and this forms the basis of addressing challenges in the future with proper mental health (Silvers et al., 2012). Individuals who are in a position to manage their emotions well have low depression symptoms and have a higher cognitive reassessment (Rusk, Tamir, & Rothbaum, 2011). Importantly, emotional regulation is the individual's ability to control deep feelings and emotions. It is central to the correlation between behavior and emotions among adolescents. Teenagers with low emotional regulation often experience various forms of adolescent psychopathology, both from internal and external disorders. Internal conditions include depression, stress, sadness, and anxiety, while external disorders are characterized by dysregulation and anger. The excessive intensity of sadness in adolescents is closely related to depressive symptoms, while extreme anger is related to behavioral problems.

Furthermore, children from divorced families tend to experience academic difficulties, external issues, such as voicing feelings and delinquency, and internal problems, including anxiety and depression. Besides, they often show a lack of social responsibility, poor intimate relationships, dropping out of school, dealing with antisocial peers, have a low level of self-worth. According to Aziz (2015); Pratama, Syahnar, & Karneli (2016), victims of broken homes fear teachers since they are considered harmful and aggressive, violating school rules, speaking harshly, resisting/opposing, not moral or polite, lazy to go to school, like being truant, do not like learning, often make noise and seek attention, and disturb friends and teachers. Furthermore, children lose concentration during learning as a result of the separation between parents, leading to an academic failure (Rahmi, Mudjiran, & Nurfarhanah, 2014; Tumiye, Daharnis, & Alizamar, 2015). These impacts show that optimism for adolescents is low due to the lack of acceptance of divorce by their parents.

People with an optimistic outlook in dealing with problems believe failure is a temporary matter. Contrastingly, the less optimistic individual's tendency to withdraw, become passive, and give up easily in achieving their goals. The low level of optimism is caused by negative self-beliefs based on wrong thinking (Nurindah & Afiatin, 2012). Optimism is related to positive feelings which have an impact on good morals, perseverance, practical problem solving, academics, athletics, military, work, political success, popularity, better health, and being free from stress and trauma. Conversely, low optimism is a sign of depression, passivity, failure, social estrangement, and raises the possibility of illness and death.

Indisputably, optimism is crucial for individuals facing various problems, such as divorce. Children with low optimism hardly succeed in overcoming issues emanating from the separation between parents and think the problem disrupts all aspects of their lives in academics, health, psychological, and behavioral. Furthermore, they are often unhappy and lack purpose in life due to the issue of parental separation (Primasti & Wrastari, 2013). This condition, if left unchecked, causes various problems later in life.

Nevertheless, not all children with divorced parents experience the problems discussed above. Some have excellent achievements and are positive despite experiencing stress and conflict. This assertion is in line with Dewi & Hendriani (2014), which states that the ability of resilience in each teenager is different, even where they face similar problems such as parents' divorce. Children who are in a non-conducive environment have positive developments despite their unpleasant experiences. This depends on how they walk out of the problems and pressures experienced. It is essential for young ones with divorced parents to have positive abilities in responding to challenges, which is commonly referred to as resilience. According to Hadianti, Salsabila Wahyu, Nurwati, R. Nunung & Darwis (2017), resilience is necessary in case a teenager is faced with parental divorce since it minimizes the negative impacts and helps them develop positively. A counselor teacher has a vital role in developing students' resilience. The purpose of Guiding and Counseling (BK) is

increasingly crucial in schools, especially in overcoming the difficulties experienced by students, both in learning and personal issues. BK services include coaching in areas related to the development of personal, social, education, and career life. Therefore, through various BK services, emotional and optimistic arrangements which are part of personal experience are improved, especially for students in the face of parental divorce.

In light of the above, emotional and optimism arrangement is much needed by a child facing problems. For this reason, this study aims at analyzing children's resilience while facing parental divorce in terms of regulating emotions and optimism.

## Method

This was a case study exploring real-life situations through detailed and in-depth data collection with various sources of information (for example, observations, interviews, audiovisual materials, documents, and various reports) and reports in the description of the case (Creswell, 2015).

The study was conducted in the city of Padang and involved two students having divorced parents in less than seven months. The subject of this research is adapted to the purpose of study or specific considerations (Satori & Komariah, 2014), and the whole study took three months (November 2018 - January 2019). Retrieval of additional informants using the snowball sampling technique, the data source sampling approach.

The data collection techniques include observations by researchers without being directly involved in activities. These researchers were non-participant observers on the resilience of divorced parents. Additionally, interviews were conducted through direct communication between interviewers and the speakers (Bungin, 2015). The written interview guideline instruments containing questions to be asked to informants about the resilience of divorced parents were used (Gunawan, 2014).

To guarantee the validity of the technical data used, a credibility test was used following the provisions in the case study research, which requires what is obtained to be in line with the desired context. In with this goal, several measures were taken, including maintaining the familiarity of researcher with the subject and the informant, the perseverance of the observer, triangulating, and asking colleagues who did not take part in the research.

The data analysis technique used was an interactive model (Megawati, 2016) which consists of three activity lines including (1) data reduction, (2) data display, (3) drawing conclusions and data verification.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Regulating Emotions.

Emotional regulation is the ability to always be calm in a state filled with pressure (Reivich & Shatte, 2002). It makes it easier for individuals to solve various problems since it imparts the ability to control negative feelings (Asriandari, 2015). According to Reivich & Shatte (2002), individuals who are able to express their emotions appropriately and well are resilient.

The results of this study show OT and BT have different emotional arrangements while facing parental divorce. After the parents divorced, the child remained in his old environment and therefore did not need to adapt, and only needed to adjust to the absence of his father at home. Moreover, neighbors who still have a relationship with OT also know and understand the conditions resulting from parental divorce, and this was a source of strength. At the time the parents divorced, OT did not show his sadness and disappointment to others. During the interview, the child looked stern and tried to cover up his grief and recounts the condition of his parents' divorce openly. Based on the above information, OT understands the reason for his parent's divorce, and this helped to avoid dwelling on sadness for long, an assertion confirmed by the mother. Even so, the mother understood how sad it was, though the child behaved as usual. OT was also faced with the problem of not having a batik uniform like other friends. The batik uniform could no longer be used, and the mother did not have money to buy new clothes. Even though they don't have batik uniforms like other friends, OT doesn't feel angry with her mother.

Apart from interviews, observations were also made at OT's home. After the divorce, the economic status of the OT family declined significantly, and as a result, the mother must work hard to meet family needs. This condition makes her busy and sometimes prepares food late, a state the son understands. In an attempt to solve the problem, OT often visits the brother's house. From these conditions, it appears that OT has proper emotional regulation and understands the difficulties emanating from parental divorce, as well as the consequences it has.

After his parents divorced and the sister moved to the maternal grandmother's place, BT was forced to adapt to the new environment. This situation led to depression due to separation from the father and friends. Upon learning of the parental divorce, BT cried bitterly and stayed locked in the room. The child never liked the separation and would wish parents to reunite. This desire was seen from the sadness while talking to the researchers about the divorce. The mother confirmed the devastation caused by the divorce,

a condition which led to anxiousness in the family. In the end, BT was permitted to visit the father every school holiday. Following the divorce, the child became moody, not as cheerful as before. Additionally, the child became less enthusiastic about learning, and this affected the academic performance. This condition indicates that it has a poor emotional arrangement. The response to the divorce was negative, and this could be seen as the child tried to express to narrate the experience. At the time of the study, he was still not into terms with what had happened.

The problem of emotional regulation, especially in the case of parental divorce, affects the lives of children in the future. Therefore, there is a need for collaboration between people around to give attention and understanding for children to have good emotional response while facing difficulties.

## 2. Optimism.

Individuals with good resilience are optimistic and believe things change for the better (Roellyana & Listiyandini, 2016). Optimism is an aspect of strength, and according to Slamet (2014), it is an attitude of individuals characterized by strong hopes for everything, even while confronted with difficulties.

Based on the results, OT and BT lack optimism in planning the future. For instance, OT aspires to be a soldier, but with financial status declining following the divorce, there are doubts about achieving this dream. According to the child, the father never provided money to make ends meet, and therefore, the mother had to work alone. With these conditions, the aspirations to be a soldier in the future would not be achieved, and does not want to burden his mother with such endeavors. Evidently, the child is no longer optimistic about achieving his dream due to the deterioration of the family's financial status. Furthermore, OT is also not optimistic about completing school assignments. From the results of the interviews and observations, OT often fails to do assignments and prefers to cheat due to failure to understand the tasks given. This assertion was confirmed by his mother, who no longer supervises the child due to a busy working schedule. For this reason, it was established that OT had reduced optimism after his parents divorced. If this condition is left unchecked, it is likely to affect even more in the future.

Similarly, BT has low optimism when it comes to achieving his goals and lacked future aspirations as a result of parental divorce. This condition also affected the urge to complete school assignments. The child confessed to cheating on friends' assignments at school not only due to lack of understanding but also laziness. Besides, BT lived in an overcrowded, making it challenging to study at home. According to his mother, he was rarely seen studying and doing assignments at home but often play. Even though the mother attempts to encourage them to study, there is no evidence of change. His mother attributes these changes to the divorce. Undeniably, parental divorce affected the boy's optimism significantly.

The experiences of OT and BT indicate the role of counselors as professional staff in schools is increasingly essential. Counselors need to pay attention to students, especially those who experience parental divorce problems. Through guiding and counseling services, students are expected to have proper emotional and optimistic arrangements to overcome various challenges, including the difficulties brought about by parental divorce.

## Conclusion

Children have different resilience abilities in dealing with parental divorce. Resilience, in this context, is the ability possessed by children to rise from adversity caused by parental divorce. Resilience has several aspects, including regulating emotions and optimism. Proper emotional regulation reduces excessive stress in children while facing social and emotional problems. With an optimistic attitude, the child has the confidence to walk out of the problem and attain career goals.

Resilience based on emotional regulation and optimism involves relating to emotional regulation due to divorced parents, and children express it differently. For instance, OT just kept quiet and tried to stay strong due to the environmental. After the parents divorced, the child remained in the same place. Also, neighbors maintained a good relationship and understood the effects of divorce. This condition gave OT strength until to be in terms with the divorce. Contrastingly, BT had to move immediately the parents divorced, and therefore, he had to adapt to the new environment. He was affected by the divorce negatively and kept wishing that the parents reunite.

Furthermore, the optimism of children after their parents divorced decreased. For instance, OT was less optimistic about his dream of becoming a soldier, primarily due to the deterioration of his family's financial condition after the divorce. Additionally, he was also less optimistic in completing school assignments and preferred cheating. Similarly, BT did not have enthusiasm for attaining future goals; as a result, parents' divorce. Also, there was low optimism in completing school assignments, preferring to cheat.

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