

Date Received : June 2025
Date Revised : June 2025
Date Accepted : June 2025
Date Published : July 2025

EXPLORING PARENTLESS CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES IN ISLAMIC CHARACTER BUILDING AT THE 'DIAMOND' POLICE STATION

Asyfa Annur Safitri

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia (asyifa.annur.fai22@mail.umy.ac.id)

Naufal Ahmad Rijalul Alam

Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia (naufal.ahmad@umy.ac.id)

Kata Kunci:

kehilangan peran orang tua; perkembangan karakter; pendidikan moral; anak rentan; dukungan psikososial

ABSTRACT

Kehilangan peran orang tua baik karena kematian, perceraian, pemenjaraan, maupun pengabaian emosional menimbulkan tantangan serius bagi perkembangan karakter anak. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi dampak moral dan emosional dari kehilangan tersebut pada anak-anak yang terlibat dalam kasus hukum di bawah yurisdiksi Kepolisian Sektor Diamond serta mengidentifikasi faktor dukungan yang membentuk ketahanan mereka. Dengan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif, empat anak yang mengalami kehilangan salah satu atau kedua orang tuanya diwawancarai. Analisis tematik berbasis teori perkembangan moral menunjukkan dampak negatif terhadap pengetahuan moral, emosi, dan tindakan, termasuk pengabaian emosional, kebingungan identitas, dan rendahnya harga diri. Namun, dukungan eksternal dari sekolah, institusi keagamaan, kelompok sebaya, dan sistem komunitas turut berkontribusi dalam pengendalian diri dan pertumbuhan moral. Studi ini menekankan perlunya intervensi psikososial yang terpadu dan pentingnya lingkungan yang inklusif. Sebagai respons terhadap kondisi ini, Polsek Diamond berfungsi sebagai contoh inovatif dalam pengelolaan lembaga pendidikan Islam yang memberikan bimbingan moral dan dukungan psikososial dalam konteks non-formal. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa lembaga berbasis komunitas dapat berperan penting dalam membentuk ketahanan dan perkembangan moral anak-anak tanpa orang tua.

Keywords:	ABSTRACTS
Parental role loss; character development; moral education; vulnerable children; psychosocial support	<i>The loss of parental roles whether due to death, divorce, incarceration, or emotional neglect poses serious challenges to children's character development. This study explores the moral and emotional impacts of such loss on children involved in legal cases under the jurisdiction of the Diamond Police Station, and identifies the support factors that contribute to their resilience. Using a qualitative case study approach, four children who had experienced the absence of one or both parents were interviewed. Thematic analysis based on moral development theory revealed negative effects on moral knowledge, emotions, and actions, including emotional neglect, identity confusion, and low self-esteem. However, external support from schools, religious institutions, peer groups, and community systems contributed to self-regulation and moral growth. This study highlights the need for integrated psychosocial interventions and the importance of inclusive environments. As a response to these conditions, the Diamond Police Station serves as an innovative example of Islamic educational institution management, providing moral guidance and psychosocial support in a non-formal context. This demonstrates that community based institutions can play a vital role in fostering resilience and moral development among children who have lost parental support.</i>

A. INTRODUCTION

The family is the smallest social unit that plays a vital role in shaping a child's personality and character. It is within the family that children are first introduced to values, norms, and ethics through direct interaction with their parents. Parents are not only providers of physical needs but also serve as moral role models who shape their children's attitudes and behaviors. Through communication, habituation, and exemplary conduct, parents instill fundamental values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and discipline. When these interactions function optimally, children develop a strong moral foundation that enables them to engage in healthy social life. This foundation is not only important in the context of immediate family interactions but also serves as a preparatory framework for the child's future social engagement in wider community settings.

The role of parents in character development is irreplaceable. A consistent presence, whether emotional or physical, helps a child to regulate their emotions, form secure attachments, and build a moral compass. The early years of a child's life are particularly crucial, as cognitive, emotional, and moral frameworks begin to take shape during this period. Parental involvement during these years provides children with the necessary tools to distinguish right from wrong, to manage social expectations, and to act with integrity. The values learned at home often become internalized and carried forward into adulthood, shaping behavior in school, work, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, when parental involvement is absent or inconsistent, the developmental process may be disrupted.

However, under various social and economic conditions, many children grow up without the active involvement of their parents in the caregiving process. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as a parentless condition, occurs when a child experiences the loss of one or both parental roles due to factors such as death, divorce, neglect, or emotional absence related to work commitments. In some instances,

although both parents are physically present, their emotional unavailability can result in a similar psychological impact on the child. The absence of parents, either physically or psychologically, significantly affects the character formation process. Character education consists of three essential components: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The optimal development of these components depends greatly on the presence and active involvement of parents. Without parental support, children may struggle to internalize core moral values, resulting in developmental imbalances. According to Lickona (1991).

When a child does not receive the appropriate emotional and moral guidance, there is a tendency to develop maladaptive behaviors and an underdeveloped sense of empathy or accountability. The deficiency of affection, attention, and consistent moral reinforcement can manifest in the form of rebellious attitudes, disengagement from school, and difficulty forming healthy peer relationships. This underscores the urgency of addressing parental absence not merely as a private family issue but as a public concern that has far-reaching implications for child welfare and social stability.

The issue of parental role loss has become increasingly prevalent within the Indonesian context. UNICEF data from 2021 revealed that 20.9 percent of Indonesian children live in fatherless conditions. These circumstances stem from diverse causes, including divorce, death, and a lack of emotional presence due to occupational responsibilities. In 2022, the same organization reported that globally, over 153 million adolescents live without one or both parents due to death. Furthermore, Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) indicated that only 37.17 percent of children aged 0–5 years receive full parental care from both mother and father. This condition highlights the pressing need for public policies and community-based efforts to mitigate the long-term consequences of parental disengagement. The figures suggest that a considerable number of children are navigating critical stages of their development without adequate parental guidance or emotional security (Elya & Widyatno, 2022).

This situation illustrates that parental absence is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a widespread social condition that calls for strategic and collaborative intervention. Addressing this issue requires multi-sectoral cooperation involving families, schools, community organizations, and government institutions. Social programs aimed at strengthening family units, promoting father involvement, and providing support services to single parents can contribute to minimizing the adverse impact of parental role loss. Moreover, educational institutions must be equipped not only to teach academic knowledge but also to play a supplemental role in character development, particularly for students who lack strong family support.

In response to this concern, Wihaji, the Minister of Population and Family Development, underscored the need for shared parental responsibility in raising children. He emphasized that child-rearing should not be perceived as the sole duty of mothers. Despite this, societal perceptions often relegate fathers to the role of breadwinners, minimizing their emotional engagement in the upbringing process. Consequently, many children grow up lacking emotional support from their fathers, which is crucial for the development of self-confidence, emotional attachment, and

mental stability. Wihaji also stressed the importance of open communication between parents and children as a vital foundation for building trust and preventing harmful behaviors among youth. A nurturing home environment where both parents are actively involved in a child's life serves as a protective factor against external risks such as peer pressure, school disengagement, and exposure to violence.

The psychological implications of losing parental roles are well documented in developmental theory. Attachment theory highlights the central role of emotional bonds between children and their caregivers in forming a secure base for emotional regulation and self-confidence Bowlby's (1969). A secure attachment enables children to explore the world with confidence, knowing they can return to a place of safety. The absence of parental figures, particularly during early developmental stages, can lead to emotional disturbances such as anxiety, behavioral aggression, and poor impulse control (Zhou & Wang, 2020). Such children may experience feelings of abandonment, fear of rejection, or identity confusion. Moreover, from a sociological perspective, children deprived of parental guidance are more susceptible to adverse environmental influences, including deviant behavior, drug abuse, and involvement in delinquency. These outcomes often arise when the need for guidance, supervision, and emotional validation is not met within the family structure (Jokhio & Soomro, 2022).

Nevertheless, despite these risks, the literature also identifies the potential of external environments to serve as compensatory spaces for moral and emotional development. Provides a framework for understanding how various interconnected systems ranging from the family to educational institutions and cultural norms affect child development. The theory suggests that human development is influenced by the interaction between an individual and their environment across multiple levels: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. When the family system weakens or breaks down, other systems, such as schools, religious communities, or peer groups, may act as protective buffers. These environments offer continuity, social structure, and moral frameworks that can partially compensate for familial deficiencies. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1979).

Protective factors such as teachers, coaches, and social mentors play a vital role in promoting resilience among children living under dysfunctional family conditions. These actors help reinforce positive values, provide emotional safety, and foster healthy social interactions. The involvement of these non-parental adults is essential for maintaining a sense of normalcy and hope in the lives of vulnerable children. Their presence can mitigate feelings of neglect and abandonment by offering consistent support and positive reinforcement. In this way, the broader social environment becomes a crucial agent in character education, particularly for children affected by the loss of parental roles. Masten and Reed (2002).

Empirical findings support this theoretical framework. Discovered that children who experience the loss of parental roles but remain actively engaged in community-based activities such as religious gatherings and school organizations tend to develop higher resilience levels than their peers in similar situations without such support. These children often demonstrate stronger coping skills and moral reasoning abilities.

The study's findings underline the importance of a supportive social environment in shaping character and compensating for parental absence. It becomes evident that a child's moral and emotional growth is not solely determined by family structure but also by the quality of social interactions in other spheres of life. Such environments serve not only as spaces for socialization but also as arenas for the cultivation of personal values, responsibility, and empathy. Yasmansyah et al. (2024).

In light of these considerations, this study explores the experiences of children and adolescents under the jurisdiction of the Bantul Police Department who have experienced the loss of one or both parental roles due to death, divorce, or emotional absence. Using a qualitative research approach, this study aims to capture the subjective experiences of these individuals and to evaluate how external social environments contribute to or hinder their character development. Specifically, it investigates how the components of character moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action are formed and challenged in the context of parental role loss. The study also seeks to understand how children navigate their personal identities and decision-making processes in the absence of parental influence, and what social actors or environments fill the resulting gaps.

Through in-depth case studies and narrative analysis, this research intends to shed light on the complex interactions between individual experience, familial absence, and social support systems. The findings are expected to contribute to the broader discourse on moral education, child development, and social resilience. Moreover, they offer practical implications for educators, community leaders, policymakers, and law enforcement institutions working with vulnerable youth populations. By understanding how character development unfolds in children who have lost parental roles, we can better design supportive interventions that nurture their growth and potential within society. Ultimately, the study aspires to inform not only academic discussions but also community-based practices and national policies aimed at safeguarding the moral development of future generations. (1) How does the loss of parental roles affect children's character development? (2) To what extent can social environments outside the family act as protective factors in this developmental process?

B. METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach to explore the impact of parental role loss on the character development of children. The study was conducted within the jurisdiction of the Diamond Police Department and specifically focused on children who were involved in legal cases due to deviant behavior and who had experienced the absence or loss of one or both parental figures. The objective of this research is to gain an in-depth understanding of how the loss of parental roles, whether due to death, divorce, neglect, or abandonment, contributes to changes in emotional responses and character development in children.

The research was carried out over approximately three months to ensure sufficient time for comprehensive data collection, building trust with informants, and conducting multiple interview sessions if necessary. This duration allowed the researcher to not only gather rich narratives but also to verify and cross-check the consistency of the information obtained from each participant. The research setting

within the Diamond Police Department was chosen purposively because it provided access to children whose experiences had been formally documented through case reports, ensuring data credibility and relevance to the study objectives.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with selected informants. The informants consisted of four children coded as SI, SA, RA, and TO who met the selection criteria of having experienced the loss of parental figures and were officially registered in child-related case files at the Diamond Police Department. These children were selected using a purposive sampling technique, which means that the selection was based on specific characteristics relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. The chosen cases were expected to provide rich, meaningful insights into how parental role loss impacts emotional wellbeing and character development.

To maintain a focused and systematic approach, the researcher developed interview guidelines in advance. These guidelines consisted of open-ended questions centered around several key themes: the participants' family dynamics before and after the loss, emotional and behavioral reactions to the loss, experiences of adaptation and resilience, and the role of external influences such as schools, peers, and community environments in shaping their character. The interview process was conducted with sensitivity and ethical considerations, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the psychological safety of all informants.

In addition to the interviews, secondary data were gathered from existing case files and archival records made available by the Diamond Police Department. These documents provided additional context about the legal and social background of each case, which helped the researcher to triangulate findings and validate the information provided by the children during interviews. For instance, discrepancies or alignments between personal narratives and formal reports were critically analyzed to enhance the depth and trustworthiness of the findings.

Data collection procedures followed established qualitative research protocols. After obtaining informed consent and ethical clearance, the researcher conducted interviews in a private and comfortable setting to facilitate openness and minimize external pressure. Interviews were recorded (with permission), transcribed verbatim, and translated when necessary. This process ensured that the children's voices were authentically captured and preserved in the analysis stage.

Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the qualitative data. This method involved several stages: first, the researcher conducted data reduction by carefully reading through all interview transcripts and archival materials, identifying significant statements and initial codes. These codes were then categorized into broader themes that aligned with the study's objectives, such as emotional responses to loss, shifts in self-concept, behavioral adaptation, and the influence of support systems. Patterns and variations across the four cases were noted and analyzed to uncover both unique and shared experiences.

The next stage of the analysis involved organizing the data into a coherent narrative structure. The researcher constructed descriptive summaries for each case, incorporating direct quotes to illustrate the emotional tone and developmental trajectory of each child. This narrative presentation helps readers to grasp the real-life complexities of the participants' experiences and highlights how the absence of parental roles manifests in everyday challenges, emotional struggles, and coping mechanisms.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, triangulation was applied by comparing and cross-referencing data from multiple sources: interview responses, official records, and observational notes taken during the research process. Any inconsistencies were examined and contextualized, rather than disregarded, to maintain a nuanced understanding of each case. Peer debriefing and member checking were also considered to enhance the credibility of the interpretations.

Ultimately, the results of this research are presented descriptively, highlighting key excerpts from interviews and explaining their relevance to the themes identified. The goal is to portray not only what the children experienced, but also how these experiences shaped their values, behavior, and identity over time. By combining qualitative rigor with empathetic inquiry, this study aims to provide meaningful insights into the psychological and social dimensions of parental role loss, especially in children who are already vulnerable due to their involvement in legal or social intervention systems.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Emotional Neglect and Attachment Disruption (Case of SI)

SI experienced significant emotional instability due to being raised in a high-pressure family environment. She stated that she never felt she had a safe place at home, often witnessing her father being angry and physically or verbally abusive. At the same time, her mother remained passive, failing to intervene or offer emotional protection. This pattern of domestic dysfunction resulted in SI feeling both emotionally abandoned and psychologically unsafe in her own household. She shared;

“I never felt loved by my family. But with my friend, I felt appreciated.” (Interview with SI, Desember 27, 2024).

This statement reflects a desperate search for affection and recognition basic emotional needs that were unmet within the family context. SI's experience highlights a classic case of emotional neglect. Unlike physical neglect, which may be observable through unmet material needs, emotional neglect is more subtle and insidious. It involves the persistent failure of parents to respond to a child's emotional needs, which is essential for the formation of secure attachments. Secure attachment is foundational to healthy psychological development, and the absence of this can lead to long-term disruptions in emotional regulation, self-esteem, and relationship-building skills. In SI's case, the loss of this secure attachment figure either the father or mother prompted her to seek emotional safety elsewhere, leading to a compensatory attachment with her female friend (Water (2020).

Reinforce this by stating that adolescents who do not receive emotional validation from their parents are likely to form intense and exclusive emotional bonds with peers or mentors. These compensatory relationships often serve as substitutes for the missing familial attachment, but they may come with unintended risks, including identity confusion or emotional dependency. In SI's situation, the closeness she developed with her female friend transitioned from emotional reliance into romantic affection. While this provided temporary relief from her emotional deprivation, it also raised concerns about whether her choices were driven by authentic identity or by unresolved trauma. Zhang et al. (2022).

Moreover, the relational dynamic between SI and her friend illustrates what Bowlby would describe as a reactive attachment pattern wherein children or adolescents form strong but unstable emotional bonds with others due to deprivation in early relationships. SI's attraction toward her friend must be viewed through this lens: not as a question of sexual identity per se, but rather as a coping mechanism in the absence of secure parental love. This is also consistent with who argue that chaotic family relationships often produce identity disorientation during adolescence. Muttaqin et al. (2022).

In addition to this, SI's case reflects how prolonged emotional deprivation not only affects one's capacity to form secure attachments but also reshapes the trajectory of identity formation. Adolescents rely heavily on external feedback from caregivers to form a coherent sense of self. When such feedback is absent or inconsistent, the adolescent may experience internal conflict, confusion, or develop maladaptive coping behaviors, such as excessive dependence on non-familial relationships.

SI's psychological development appears to have been guided more by survival and adaptation than by nurture and guidance. In this context, her behaviors including running away from home and forming a highly dependent friendship can be seen not as acts of rebellion, but as attempts to regain control, safety, and emotional affirmation. It is important to note that children in such circumstances often struggle with guilt, shame, or self-blame, especially if their attempts to find connection deviate from societal norms. This further complicates their emotional healing process. Moreover, in analyzing SI's emotional expression, one finds recurring themes of displacement and longing. Her own words reflect a profound emotional void:

"I never felt loved." (Interview with SI, December 27, 2024).

This absence of basic affection is not only harmful during adolescence but can persist into adulthood in the form of intimacy issues, emotional dysregulation, and even mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression. SI's case also raises important implications for educators, counselors, and policymakers. Schools often serve as the only structured environment outside the family where children can experience emotional stability. Therefore, identifying early signs of emotional neglect and offering school-based interventions (such as counseling, peer mentoring, and socio-emotional learning programs) is critical. If SI had access to a trusted adult in her school environment, perhaps her emotional needs could have been addressed in a safer and more guided manner.

In summary, SI's experience illustrates the deep and lasting effects of emotional neglect. The failure of both parents to act as secure emotional anchors forced SI into premature emotional independence and created vulnerabilities in her identity development. The case strongly supports Waters' assertion that emotional security is foundational for children's psychological growth. Who warn that the lack of familial validation can lead to emotionally risky dependencies. Ultimately, SI's journey reflects the urgent need for family systems, educational institutions, and community networks to become more responsive to the emotional needs of adolescents, particularly those facing parental dysfunction. Waters (2020)

Emotional Resilience After Divorce (Case of SA)

SA experienced significant emotional turmoil following her parents' divorce. She stated that since her father left home, she became more withdrawn and found it difficult to trust men. She said:

"I don't trust men anymore. My father just left us like that. When someone tries to get close to me, I immediately become suspicious." (Interview with SA, Januari 06, 2025)

This statement indicates an early attachment trauma a disruption in building healthy trust, especially towards male figures. This aligns with Bowlby's attachment theory, which suggests that the loss of a primary attachment figure (such as a father) may impair a child's ability to form stable interpersonal relationships during adolescence. Bowlby's (1969). In SA's case, this manifests in the form of generalized distrust towards men, whom she perceives as inherently unreliable. This finding is consistent with research concluded that children of divorced parents are more likely to develop negative cognitive constructs toward gender relations, particularly when the father fails to maintain an emotional role after the divorce. In SA's situation, her father's absence was not only physical but also emotional, further deepening her psychological wound. What is noteworthy in SA's case, however, is the emergence of emotional resilience. Mautama et al. (2024), She said:

"Now I can accept all of this. Maybe this is just the path of my life. What matters is that I don't give up." (Interview with SA Januari 06, 2025)

This statement reflects a process of self-acceptance and post-traumatic growth. Despite the painful experience of her early years, SA was able to develop internal coping mechanisms, characterized by reflection and determination. This is a form of moral action the ability to act according to one's values despite adversity. Note that children from divorced families can still develop strong coping mechanisms if they have at least one emotionally stable adult figure in their life. In SA's context, although her mother was strict and often irritable due to exhaustion, she provided a sense of structure and consistency that offered a form of emotional grounding. This framework allowed SA to grow with order and discipline, even without emotional warmth. Hutauruk et al. (2019)

SA also demonstrated emotional intelligence, particularly in her capacity to reflect on her experiences and manage her emotional responses. This aligns emphasize

that emotional intelligence is a key factor in building character resilience in children dealing with family conflict. Furthermore, SA's ability to accept her circumstances and maintain her motivation shows that the absence of a father figure does not always result in character damage especially when the child is given space to process their emotions safely. In some cases, such as SA's, painful experiences can become a catalyst for the formation of self-worth, perseverance, and empathy. Rahmah et al. (2024),

From an educational and social intervention perspective, SA's case underscores the importance of creating supportive environments at school, particularly for children facing family restructuring. Teachers, counselors, or homeroom mentors can assist students like SA by offering safe spaces for emotional expression, listening without judgment, and providing positive reinforcement. Additionally, character education programs that integrate emotional awareness, self-acceptance, and conflict management are highly beneficial in empowering children from broken homes to see themselves not as victims, but as resilient individuals capable of growth. In conclusion, SA represents a resilient adolescent who managed to persevere and grow despite losing her father due to divorce. She experienced attachment trauma and distrust toward men but developed emotional strength through reflection and personal determination. Her case supports the findings of Mautama and rahmah who suggest that minimal but consistent emotional support combined with the ability to find meaning in life experiences can lead to the formation of emotionally mature and strong character. Mautama et al. (2024), and Rahmah et al. (2024)

Father Hunger and Identity Confusion (Case of RA)

RA grew up in a financially stable family, yet she experienced persistent emotional emptiness caused by her father's lack of involvement in her emotional life. Although material needs were fulfilled, her emotional needs were largely ignored. She stated:

"My dad was always busy. When he came home, he would just play on his phone or sleep. I felt unimportant at home." (Interview with RA, Februari 05, 2025).

This illustrates the phenomenon of emotional fatherlessness, often referred to as father hunger a term that captures a child's deep yearning for validation, attention, and connection with a paternal figure RA's experience demonstrates that the presence of a father in the home does not guarantee emotional availability. This form of psychological absenteeism may be even more harmful, as it conveys to the child that they are invisible or insignificant despite proximity. The emotional neglect in her household led RA to act out in school in an attempt to gain attention. (Wahyudi, Nurbayani & Abdullah, 2024). She admitted:

"I caused trouble at school on purpose so my dad would notice. But nothing changed." (Interview with RA, Februari 05, 2025).

This behavior aligns with Marista who argue that children deprived of emotional attention often resort to disruptive conduct as an unconscious cry for recognition.

Despite being academically capable, RA felt emotionally empty. Marista et al. (2024), She shared:

“My friends say I’m smart, but at home I feel empty.” (Interview with RA, Februari 05, 2025).

This underscores the critical difference between external achievement and internal well-being. Children like RA may succeed in school but still struggle with self-worth and emotional regulation. According to Hidayati a father’s role is pivotal in shaping a child’s sense of discipline, values, and identity. In RA’s case, the absence of this influence resulted in a fragile moral foundation. RA’s coping mechanisms were largely internalized. Instead of receiving encouragement and affirmation at home, she turned to peers and teachers for acknowledgment. However, external sources of validation cannot replace the foundational role of the parent-child bond. Without consistent emotional mirroring from her father, RA was left without a clear reference for understanding her own value and behavioral boundaries. This lack of guidance may increase the risk of impulsive decisions and distorted self-concepts. Hidayati et al. (2011).

The internal contradiction RA faced being praised by peers while feeling invisible at home fostered confusion in her self-perception. This conflict can manifest as identity diffusion, a condition where adolescents struggle to establish stable values or direction in life. While not always overtly pathological, this state can lead to indecisiveness, anxiety, and overdependence on peer approval. RA’s situation exemplifies the nuanced impacts of permissive or disengaged parenting. Children of emotionally uninvolved fathers are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem and seek attention through non-normative means. This reinforces the necessity of parental emotional presence as a stabilizing factor in adolescent development. Children of emotionally uninvolved fathers are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem and seek attention through non-normative means. This reinforces the necessity of parental emotional presence as a stabilizing factor in adolescent development. Nurbayani & Abdullah (2024).

From a psychosocial perspective, RA’s unmet emotional needs suggest that interventions must go beyond academic support. Emotional literacy programs, school-based counseling, and family workshops can help bridge the gap for adolescents in similar situations. Educators and mentors also play a key role in offering supplemental emotional support, particularly when parents are physically present but emotionally unavailable. In summary, RA’s experience reveals how the absence of a nurturing paternal figure, despite physical proximity, can hinder identity formation and moral development. Her case illustrates the silent damage caused by emotional neglect, validating the concerns raised by research. Effective intervention must prioritize emotional connectivity within families as much as material provision or academic performance. Hidayati et al. (2011) and Marista et al. (2024).

Double Role Loss and Social Substitution (Case of TO)

TO's experience involved the loss of both parental roles, not only due to divorce but also from chronic emotional absence prior to the separation. He stated;

“Even before my parents divorced, we never had meals together. Everyone was busy. I felt like a guest in my own home.” (Interview with TO, Februari 05, 2025).

This highlights a condition of pre-divorce emotional neglect, where the lack of shared routines and meaningful interaction diminished any sense of familial belonging. After the divorce, TO's emotional state declined sharply. He became withdrawn, depressed, and nearly dropped out of school. The cumulative effect of long-standing emotional detachment and the formal breakdown of the family unit left TO without a support system. However, he began to recover after finding acceptance and empathy in a hobby-based community.

“I was depressed, didn't want to meet anyone, almost dropped out of school. But my hobby friends helped me. That's where I started to heal.” (Interview with TO, Februari 05, 2025).

This transition underscores the role of external protective factors in adolescent development. Minimal parental affection increases vulnerability to psychological disorders, yet peer support and community involvement can mitigate these effects. In TO's case, this external network served as a surrogate family, offering the recognition and emotional validation previously absent in his household. TO's recovery is also marked by emotional acceptance and cognitive reframing of his past. Sumargi, Prasetyo, & Ardelia (2020), He shared;

“Now I can accept all of this. I used to be really angry at my parents, but now I can make peace and focus on the future.” (Interview with TO, Februari 05, 2025).

This reflects a shift from reactive coping to reflective growth an essential feature of moral action in adolescent character development. Early disruptions in the parent-child relationship often lead to identity confusion and poor social functioning. However, TO's case demonstrates that compensatory attachments particularly those built in safe and interest-aligned communities can serve as corrective experiences. These experiences not only help restore self-worth but also promote emotional regulation and resilience. Furthermore, TO's progress illustrates the dual nature of adversity: while early loss can impair emotional development, it can also become a catalyst for growth when supported by healthy environments. The peer acceptance TO experienced functioned as both a mirror and a buffer, allowing him to reprocess his identity in a more affirming and hopeful direction. Jannah & Satwika (2021).

From an intervention standpoint, TO's journey emphasizes the importance of community programs that provide spaces for vulnerable youth to explore their identities in non-judgmental environments. These programs can foster social integration and prevent at-risk adolescents from falling into cycles of withdrawal, substance abuse, or delinquency. In conclusion, TO's case exemplifies how the loss of both maternal and paternal roles can be counterbalanced by strong social bonds outside the family. His emotional resilience and ability to find healing through peer support

validate findings Ultimately, TO's journey affirms that while family dysfunction poses serious risks, recovery is possible when adolescents are given opportunities to rebuild their sense of self through meaningful connection. Jannah & Satwika (2021) and Sumargi, Prasetyo, & Ardelia (2020).

Each theme drawn from these case studies reveals that the loss of parental roles significantly impacts children's character development. Although challenges arise, children also possess the potential to adapt and grow depending on the support they receive from their surrounding environments. Therefore, it is essential to provide appropriate attention and character education to children in parentless conditions so they can overcome life's challenges and fully realize their potential. The condition of being parentless can affect children's academic and social development. This is further exacerbated by the prevailing patriarchal culture in society, in which child-rearing responsibilities are disproportionately assigned to mothers, while fathers' roles are often limited to financial provision. As a result, children who experience emotional absence from their fathers often feel an irreplaceable void that mothers alone cannot fill. Tunga et al., (2023),

Table 1. Summary of Islamic Parentsless Children

No.	Name	Male/Female	Rate
1.	SI	Female	Beginner
2.	SA	Female	Beginner
3.	RA	Female	Advance
4.	TO	Male	Advance

Source: Data diolah oleh peneliti, 2025

Table 2. Comparison of Emotional and Behavioral Impact among Participants

Case	Type of Parental Loss	Emotional Impact	Behavioral Response	Social Coping Mechanism
SI	Emotional absence of both parents	Feeling unloved, abandoned	Formed dependent bond with friend	Compensatory same-sex attachment
SA	Father absence (post divorce)	Distrust, emotional withdrawal	Resilience, self-reflection	Structured support from mother
RA	Father emotionally unavailable	Emotional emptiness. Neglect	Attention-seeking at school	Peer validation dependency
TO	Emotional detachment then divorce	Depression, social withdrawal	Recovery through hobby community	Peer-based emotional substitution

Source: Data diolah oleh peneliti, 2025

Figure 1. Diagram of Resilience Development in Parentless Children

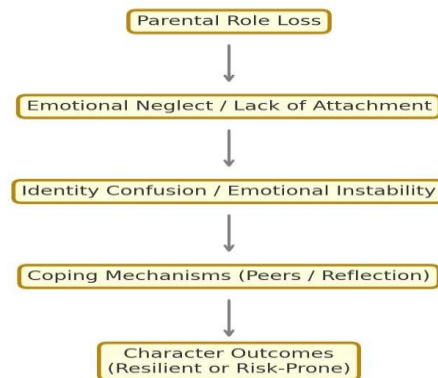


Figure 1. The Diagram Picture

Analysis/Discussion

This study analyzed the impact of parental role loss on adolescents' character development by interpreting qualitative data through a psychological and sociological framework. The data were derived from in-depth interviews with four adolescents SI, SA, RA, and TO each experiencing distinct patterns of parental absence. Thematic analysis was used to categorize the emotional, social, and behavioral impacts of role loss. The findings were interpreted using attachment theory (Bowlby), identity development theory, and concepts from character education literature.

Emotional Security and Early Attachment Disruption (SI)

SI's case demonstrates the consequences of emotional neglect in early family life. Her emotional statements indicate a lack of secure attachment, essential in Bowlby's theory for healthy psychological development Water (2020). Affirms that without emotional responsiveness from caregivers, children often compensate by forming insecure or reactive attachments Zhang et al. (2022). Emphasize that adolescents lacking emotional validation are vulnerable to forming intense compensatory bonds, potentially leading to social or relational instability. SI's emotional dependence on a same-sex friend reflects this compensatory attachment model. Who explain that unstable family environments contribute to identity confusion. SI's emotional void led her to seek affirmation and protection outside the family unit, forming an attachment that may have influenced her emotional orientation. The lack of parental validation not only hindered her identity development but created vulnerability to psychological distress, evident in her withdrawal and displacement behaviors (Muttaqin et al. (2022).

Further, SI's experience suggests that the absence of emotional attunement from both parents can result in long-term consequences on a child's sense of self-worth and moral awareness. Without secure early bonds, SI lacked models of empathy and trust. This may impair her capacity for moral reasoning, which is often rooted in early relational experiences. Educators and counselors must be aware that children who experience

such deep emotional neglect may present externally as functional, yet carry significant unresolved trauma that influences their character development in hidden ways.

Emotional Adjustment and Resilience Post-Divorce (SA)

SA exhibited emotional withdrawal and mistrust following her father's departure. As Bowlby's attachment theory posits, the removal of a key attachment figure particularly during early childhood can disturb emotional development. SA's mistrust in men mirrors findings, which reveal that children of divorced parents often generalize negative traits across relational categories. Despite these effects, SA's responses reveal significant emotional resilience. Her ability to accept life's difficulties and commit to personal strength reflects a form of moral action and character growth. Mautama et al.'s (2024). Suggest that emotional resilience is possible when at least one stable adult figure remains post-divorce. SA's mother, while strict, provided emotional structure that helped buffer the loss Hutaaruk et al. (2019). Emotional intelligence facilitates recovery through reflection and emotional regulation skills SA gradually developed. Rahmah et al. (2024).

It is important to note that SA's development of resilience did not arise from denial or avoidance, but through active emotional processing and self-reflection. Her case suggests that moral character, including traits like perseverance and integrity, can emerge in contexts of adversity when a young person is able to reframe their experience in meaningful ways. This highlights the importance of supporting adolescents not only through counseling, but also by teaching emotional literacy and reflective thinking skills as part of character education.

Father Hunger and Emotional Compensation (RA)

RA's case underscores the psychological impact of father hunger, a condition where a child craves attention from an emotionally absent father Wahyudi, Nurbayani, and Abdullah (2024). Outline that this form of neglect fosters feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth. RA's disruptive behavior at school may be interpreted as an unconscious strategy to gain her father's attention, as outlined Her self-described emotional emptiness illustrates the dissonance between external achievements and internal well-being. Although RA excelled academically, she lacked a moral framework modeled by an involved father. Marista et al. (2024). Emphasize the father's role in teaching social values and behavioral boundaries. RA's reliance on peer validation reflects a coping strategy for unmet emotional needs, further reinforcing the importance of emotional involvement over material provision. Hidayati et al. (2011)

RA's condition also suggests the fragility of moral development in contexts where family values are not actively modeled. Her academic competence masks emotional confusion and a weakened moral compass, leading to difficulty in forming trustworthy, reciprocal relationships. This aligns with literature on permissive or emotionally disengaged parenting styles, where children often grow up with few boundaries or moral guidelines, making them more susceptible to peer pressure and emotional instability.

Double Parental Role Loss and Social Substitution (TO)

TO's experience of both emotional and structural parental absence demonstrates the compounding effects of double role loss. His detachment from family rituals, even before the divorce, mirrors early signs of emotional neglect. Following the divorce, TO's social withdrawal and depression reflect a loss of emotional anchors. Note that minimal parental affection increases susceptibility to behavioral disorders. Sumargi, Prasetyo, and Ardelia (2020)

However, TO's involvement in a hobby-based community offered a restorative outlet. His emotional recovery through peer support underscores the role of alternative social systems in mitigating psychological harm. Found that peer attachment can compensate for broken parent-child bonds, especially when those peers provide validation and emotional acceptance. TO's development of self-acceptance and forward-looking mindset highlights his emotional maturity and successful identity reconstruction. Jannah and Satwika (2021)

What makes TO's case unique is his ability to rebuild a sense of belonging and purpose in a context completely separate from his family. His character development illustrates how non-familial settings such as peer communities, schools, or extracurricular programs can serve as alternative platforms for youth empowerment. This supports the view that resilience is not only personal but also ecological, emerging from dynamic interactions with one's environment.

Comparative Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

All four cases SI, SA, RA, and TO reveal common consequences of parental role loss: emotional voids, identity confusion, and behavioral disruption. However, individual coping strategies varied depending on available emotional resources. Thematic comparison shows that the presence of alternative support systems either from friends (SI, TO) or remaining parents (SA) can significantly influence outcomes. This supports the ecological model of child development, where multiple systems (family, peers, school) interact to shape outcomes. The character dimensions observed (moral knowledge, moral feeling, moral action) fluctuate based on the child's ability to reflect, receive validation, and build secure relationships. These findings validate previous studies but also suggest new avenues for intervention such as integrating peer mentoring and emotional skills training into educational settings.

Additionally, the comparative synthesis suggests that character education cannot be limited to the family domain. Schools and communities must be proactive in cultivating emotionally supportive environments. Programs aimed at improving emotional literacy, promoting secure peer relationships, and offering mentorship opportunities can bridge gaps left by parental absence. Moreover, this study contributes to the discourse on character development by emphasizing the importance of reflective capability as a core competency. Adolescents who are able to reflect on their pain and reframe their experiences (as seen in SA and TO) demonstrate greater adaptability and moral strength. In contrast, those who lack this support and internal capacity (like RA and SI) may struggle longer with identity confusion and emotional dependency.

Religious Perspective: The Qur'anic Framework on Parentless Children

In addition to psychological and sociological theories, Islamic teachings particularly those derived from the Qur'an provide a deeply rooted ethical framework for understanding and supporting parentless children. Islam emphasizes the importance of compassion (rahmah), justice ('adl), and social responsibility (mas'uliyah) in the care of orphans, which directly aligns with modern concepts of character education and psychosocial resilience. The Qur'an repeatedly highlights the elevated status of orphans (yatim) and warns against any form of neglect or exploitation. For instance, Surah Ad-Duha (93:6–9) reminds the Prophet Muhammad of his own orphanhood: „Did He not find you an orphan and give [you] refuge? So as for the orphan, do not oppress [him].“ This verse reinforces that being parentless does not diminish one's worth or potential. On the contrary, orphans are to be treated with care and protection, and society bears moral responsibility to uphold their dignity. This supports the study's findings that emotional neglect and abandonment, as seen in cases like SI and TO, require societal intervention beyond the nuclear family.

Another relevant verse is Surah Al-Baqarah (2:220): „They ask you about orphans. Say, „Improving their condition is best. And if you mix your affairs with theirs, they are your brothers...““ This verse emphasizes not only protection but inclusion that orphans should be embraced as part of the social and moral community. The implication here is that schools, religious institutions, and local communities have an Islamic obligation to provide emotional support, mentorship, and moral guidance to parentless children. The emotional guidance SA received from her mother and the support TO gained through his hobby community are modern manifestations of this Qur'anic imperative.

Furthermore, Surah An-Nisa' (4:10) offers a stern warning: „Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming fire into their bellies.“ While this verse refers directly to material abuse, scholars such as Al-Ghazali and Ibn Qayyim extend its interpretation to emotional and social injustice. Emotional neglect, which may not leave visible scars, is considered equally harmful in light of the Qur'anic principle of maslahah (public interest) and amanah (trust). This aligns with RA's case, where emotional deprivation despite material sufficiency led to identity confusion and a fragile sense of self-worth. The integration of Islamic perspectives thus reinforces the study's psychological and educational findings. It demonstrates that the Qur'an not only anticipates the modern developmental needs of parentless children but provides a moral and spiritual mandate for their care and character formation.

From an Islamic educational standpoint, the care of yatim is not merely a social responsibility but a form of ibadah (worship). This ethical call is reflected in Surah Al-Insan (76:8): „And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive.“ In the context of character building, this verse promotes empathy, generosity, and social solidarity key components in both Islamic and modern character education. The participants in this study, despite their parentless conditions, showed growth in these areas when supported by compassionate environments. SA's perseverance, TO's resilience, and even SI's search for meaningful connection all represent the human potential that Islamic teachings aim to protect and elevate.

Additionally, the Prophet Muhammad himself, having grown up as an orphan, serves as a powerful moral model. His life exemplifies that character strength is not determined by the presence of biological parents, but by the values internalized through supportive relationships and divine guidance. Thus, in Islamic pedagogy, the experience of being parentless should never be framed as a deficit, but as an opportunity for the community to reflect divine mercy through action. In conclusion, the analysis underscores the multidimensional impact of parental role loss on adolescent character development. While each case reveals unique patterns, they collectively affirm the necessity of emotionally nurturing environments whether within the home or beyond. Effective character development interventions must consider not only the presence or absence of parental figures but also the quality of emotional engagement and the availability of supportive relational networks.

D. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the loss of parental roles has a significant impact on children's character development. Children who experience parentless conditions tend to face various challenges in internalizing moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy. The absence of parental figures as moral role models affects the components of moral knowledge, moral feeling, and moral action, which serve as the foundation of character.

However, the study also reveals that social environments outside the family such as schools, communities, and peer groups can function as protective factors that support children's character development. Through positive interactions and emotional support from these environments, children are able to build resilience and mitigate the negative effects of parental loss. Therefore, although the loss of parental roles presents substantial challenges, the active involvement of the broader social environment is crucial as a buffer to help children cultivate strong and morally sound character.

Acknowledgments: The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to the administrative and technical staff who provided valuable support during the research process. Special thanks are also extended to all participants who willingly shared their time and insights.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions: Asyifa Annur Safitri designed the research framework, conducted the interviews, and performed the data analysis. Naufal Ahmad Rijalul Alam drafted and approved the final version of the manuscript. Both authors participated in the overall review process.

Data availability: The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of their affiliated institutions.

REFERENCES

- Bowlby, J. (1969). "Attachment and Loss: Volume I. Attachment." In *Basic Books*.
- Bronfenbrenner, Urie. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv26o71r6>.
- Elya, & Widyatno, A. (2022). "Hubungan Tujuan Hidup Dan Resiliensi Pada Remaja Yang Kehilangan Orang Tua Karena Meninggal Mendadak." *Jurnal Flourishing* 2, no. 4 (2022): 298–314.
- Hidayati, N., Sari, D. P., & Wulandari, R. (2011). "Peran Figur Ayah Dalam Pembentukan Nilai Sosial Anak Melalui Keterlibatan Langsung Dalam Kehidupan Sehari-Hari." *Jurnal Psikologi Perkembangan* 9, no. 2 (2011): 123–135.
- Hutauruk, Febriady, Riska Ahmad, and Alwen Bentri. (2019). "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, no. 1 (2019): 9. <https://doi.org/10.24036/00124za0002>.
- Jannah, Miftahul, and Yohana Wuri Satwika. (2021). "Pengalaman Krisis Identitas Pada Remaja Yang Mendapatkan Kekerasan Dari Orangtuanya." *Jurnal Penelitian Psikologi* 8, no. 2 (2021): 51–59.
- Jokhio, Farhat, and Nagina Parveen Soomro. (2022). "The Role of Parental Control in Dealing with Drug Addiction and Juvenile Delinquency among Adolescents in Sindh: Narrative Literature Review." *Progressive Research Journal of Arts & Humanities (PRJAH)* 4, no. 2 (2022): 29–40. <https://doi.org/10.51872/prjah.vol4.iss2.225>.
- Lickona, T. (1991). "Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility." In *Bantam Books*. New York.
- Marista, Ona, Uli Sinaga, Mika Seri Dear, Rohani Siahaan, Putri Setia Zebua, Dorlan Naibaho, Institut Agama, and Kristen Negeri Tarutung. (2024). "Dampak Kurang Nya Perhatian Orangtua Terhadap Perkembangan Emosi Dan Kecemasan Pada Remaja." *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin* 1, no. 4 (2024): 358–64. <https://doi.org/10.62017/merdeka>.
- Masten, A. S., & Reed, M. G. J. (2002). "Resilience in Development. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.)." *Oxford University Press*, 2002, (pp. 74–88).
- Mautama, R., Handayani, S., & Putra, A. R. (2024). "The Impact of Parental Divorce on Adolescents' Emotional Development and Relational Cognition." *Journal of Family Psychology and Child Development* 12, no. 1 (2024): 34–49.
- Muttaqin, Darmawan, Alfi Rossi Chanafi, Baiq Irma Anggi Nofelia, Theodora Carelina Khristi, and Sri Wahyuningsih. (2022). "Role of Parents and Friends in Adolescents' Identity Formation in Indonesia." *Indigenous: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 7, no. 1 (2022): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.23917/indigenous.v7i1.15680>.
- Rahmah, Siti Hafizhah, Reni Zulfitri, Program Studi, Ilmu Keperawatan, Fakultas Keperawatan, and Universitas Riau. (2024). "Hubungan Kualitas Relasi Ayah-Anak Dengan Kecerdasan" 8, no. 2 (2024): 158–66.
- Sumargi, Agnes Maria, Eli Prasetyo, and Benedicta Winona Ardelia. (2020). "Parenting Styles and Their Impacts on Child Problem Behaviors." *Jurnal Psikologi* 19, no. 3 (2020):

269–85. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jp.19.3.269-285>.

Tunga, Lola Audree, I Wayan Karta, and Sriwarthini. (2023). “Deteksi Perkembangan Sosial-Emosional Anak Pada Keluarga Tidak Utuh.” *Detikproperti* 08 (2023): 119–21.

Wahyudi, Sandra, Siti Nurbayani, and Mirna Nur Alia Abdullah. ((2024). “Father-Hunger: Dampak Fatherless Pada Perempuan Dewasa Awal Dalam Aspek Hubungan Romantis.” *Equilibrium: Jurnal Pendidikan* 12, no. 2 (2024): 160–72. <http://journal.unismuh.ac.id/index.php/equilibrium>.

Waters, Everett, and E. Mark Cummings. (2020). “A Secure Base from Which to Explore Close Relationships.” *Child Development* 71, no. 1 (January 2020): 164–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00130>.

———. (2020). “A Secure Base from Which to Explore Close Relationships.” *Child Development* 71, no. 1 (January 28, 2020): 164–72. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00130>.

Yasmansyah, Y., Ahida, R., Sesmiarni, Z., & Hanani, S. (2024). “The Development of an Extracurricular Activity Model Based on Religious Strengthening in Building MAN Batusangkar Students’ Characters.” *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 15, no. 2 (2024): 123–140.

Zhang et al. (2022). “Validation of an Adolescent Version of the Parental Metaemotion Philosophy Scale.” *Current Psychology* 41, no. 5 (2022): 2545–2555.

Zhou, Y., & Wang, Y. (2020). “Parental Emotional Neglect and Left-behind Children’s Externalizing Problem Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Self-Control.” *Children and Youth Services Review* 118 (November 2020): 105363. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105363>.