

# Self-Efficacy in Young Adults with Divorced Parents

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*Abstract. Divorced parents have negative consequences and have an influence on the psychological condition of children in living their lives. Children from divorced families showed poor adjustments compared to children from non-divorced families. This is certainly experienced by children of various ages, including young adults. This study aimed at finding out how self-efficacy is owned by young adults who are victims of parental divorce, and how they perceive and interpret a divorce. The research method used is qualitative research using a phenomenological approach. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to reveal the meaning of the phenomenon experienced and realized by the subjects. Subjects were children of divorced parents, aged 20-25 years, both parents are still there, and live with mother. Data analysis uses phenomenological analysis techniques. The results showed a description of how subjects understood their experience of parental divorce and how their self-efficacy was demonstrated through cognitive, motivation, affection, and selection processes as long as they lived a life of divorced parents. This research also gives advice of the importance of the role of family and the closest person in helping children victims of parental divorce in increasing their self-efficacy in order to have readiness in facing the future.*

*Keywords: Self-efficacy, divorce parents, young adults, phenomenology*

## Introduction

The rate of divorce that increases continuously becomes a significant social problem. Children who experience parental divorce are at increased risk for various difficulties in some functions of life (Carr & Wolchik, 2015). Several studies have shown that the divorce process can affect a child's mental condition, including the development of behavioral problems, negative self-concept, social problems, difficulties in relationships with parents, to high risk for suicide attempts (Haimi & Lerner, 2016; Jr, Alonzo, Hu, & Hasin, 2016).

In particular, the impact of divorce can be felt from various ages of children, namely the existence of high risk in internalizing behavior, externalizing behavior, reducing academic performance, dropping out of school, and drug use in childhood and adolescence. Furthermore, there is an increased risk of experiencing mental health problems, a decrease in educational and job performance, and a worse quality of marriage in adulthood (Carr & Wolchik, 2015). Thus, parental separation proves to be stressful for most children and can affect their emotional health as adults (Amato, 2000; Clark, 2013).

On the other hand, there are different interpretations of the consequences of divorce situations in children's lives. Parental divorce can also have a positive effect on children, where children become more optimistic in facing their future. In this case the child can show that he has good achievements in the academic and non-academic fields. Haimi dan Lerner (2016) explained that children can also benefit from divorce situations when their life arrangements are well managed with the attention of both parents and those around them.

Lack of parental attention will certainly affect the child's mental condition. They do not get love from their

parents as a whole, so that the child will look for attention from other people or even feel insecure and depressed by the situation. Lennings dan Bussey (2017) stated that the level of conflict between parents influences the low self-efficacy of children, where it has an influence on the psychological adjustment of children in living their lives. This also relates to the extent to which individuals have the belief that they have the ability to do something.

Self-efficacy needs to be grown so that children who live in divorce situations are able to complete the tasks given with maximum results, even with incomplete families. According to Bandura (1997) that self-efficacy can determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. There is the fact that someone who is doubtful about his ability tends to move away from difficult tasks which are seen as personal threats to him. Thus, researchers are interested in researching how self-efficacy in young adult with divorced parents.

## Literature Review

Bandura (1997) explains that self-efficacy refers to the belief in the extent to which individuals estimate their ability to perform a task that is needed to achieve a certain outcome. Beliefs include confidence, adaptability, cognitive capacity, intelligence and the capacity to act in stressful situations. Self-efficacy develops gradually over time with increasing ability and increasing individual experience.

The psychological process in self-efficacy that plays a role in human beings, namely cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. The cognitive process refers to how individuals think, both in terms of success and failure in their lives. The motivation process refers to giving encouragement to themselves

and directing action through the stages of previous thoughts. The affective process refers to the process of regulating emotional conditions and emotional reactions related to how they think about their abilities. The selection process refers to the ability of individuals to choose certain activities and situations that also influence the effects of an event.

Every child certainly wants and hopes that parental love and family harmony can be felt since they were born until they grow up and even becomes a parent. However, in contrast to some children who have to accept the bitter reality that both parents must separate or divorce. Kelly dan Emery (2003) mention that in the first period after separation, children often feel divided between feelings of love and loyalty to their parents, they feel confused and angry at the separation that occurs in their parents.

Clark (2013) explains that divorce can increase concerns about long-term consequences for the welfare of children and adolescents, as well as adjustments for adults. One of the impacts that occur to those children who are victims of divorce is the trauma that causes them to have a negative view of marriage, fear of finding a spouse, fear of marriage, and fear that divorce will occur to them. This is supported by Jacquet dan Surra (2001) that when entering young adulthood, a child victim of parental divorce is less confident in the dynamics of the romantic relationship they are living.

Divorce of parents can increase stress and social problems in children when adolescence to adulthood. In addition, divorce can also result in failure to complete the task because the child does not have high self-confidence. The role and upbringing and social support provided by parents and immediate family is very important for the formation of self-confidence in children. In this case, self-efficacy has an important role in living life and facing future challenges in divorced children.

Self-efficacy refers to the ability of individuals to motivate themselves and access the cognitive resources needed to control or exert their coping efforts in stressful situations (Lennings & Bussey, 2017). Children who have high self-efficacy have characteristics like they are more independent, optimistic, able to control themselves, and can motivate themselves in doing something. Benight & Bandura (2004) explain that children's perceptions of their ability to deal with something is important in understanding the relationship between parental conflict and children's psychological adjustment.

### **Method**

This study uses qualitative research methods, primary data sources, and the data produced is more profound. The approach used is phenomenology, where the researcher will explain or reveal the meaning of the phenomenon experienced and realized by several individuals by using in-depth interview methods. Determination of the subject in accordance with the characteristics that have been determined, that is children with parents who are divorced, both parents are still

there, live with the mother, and aged 20-25 years. Data collection is done through in-depth interviews that are used with the aim of getting as much information and depth as possible about thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, basic reasons, motivations, and subject feelings about a phenomenon under study (Hanurawan, 2016).

Data analysis techniques used are phenomenological analysis techniques. Researchers reduce the statements given by participants into core themes that show the essence of participants' experiences about a phenomenon. Then the researchers made observations of significant statements about the phenomenon. After constructing a list of significant statements, the researcher determines the themes in the data based on the significant statements given by the participants. Then after the construction of the themes is formed, the researcher can determine the general structure of psychological meaning on the participants' experiences related to a phenomenon (Willig, 2008).

Data validation was done through participant checks, which meant that participants carried out an assessment or review of the conclusions of the initial results of the study which were the results of the researchers' interpretation of their phenomenological experience (Hanurawan, 2016).

### **Results**

In this study, researchers used three subjects with different family backgrounds, such as the length of divorced parents, the reasons for divorce parents, and the status of parents after divorce. However, they have in common that they live with mothers and have a closer relationship with mothers than fathers.

The results showed that there were several psychological processes in self-efficacy that exist in each subject. Based on interviews conducted on subjects it is known that:

Cognitive process. In this process, the result was that the subjects have things they wanted to achieve in their lives, that is, things related to success in terms of education and hope that the families and others were proud of themselves. They found that it was quite difficult to realize, but they will try hard to achieve it by learning and honing their abilities so that these desires are easily achieved. Sometimes they felt sad because they did not have a whole family like their friends, but they wanted to show that they can live their lives well in such family conditions.

In achieving things they wanted, sometimes they felt uncertain about their abilities, were not confident, and felt pessimistic to be able to achieve them. The way they deal with a failure was crying, reflected, and self-introspect. The next step they did was to keep trying and praying in achieving their goals with the abilities they had.

Motivation process. Subjects had the ability to motivate themselves to do their best so that their wishes were achieved. Subjects had different ways to motivate themselves in achieving what they want, such as doing

something that makes the family proud, looking for role models that can succeed even with the condition of divorced parents, remembering things that have been given by parents, asking for prayer and support from family and closest people. That way, they will continue to struggle and work hard to achieve their goals. In achieving the desired things, the subject certainly gets the support of the family and the people closest.

In the process of achieving the things they wanted, the subject stated that they had certain considerations before acting. However, sometimes they were not quite sure of the decisions that will be made so that they thought carefully and asked for opinions from others. When the decisions they made did not give satisfactory results, of course they were disappointed and immediately tried to fix it to be even better.

**Affection process.** In this process, the subject stated that they tended to be anxious when facing a difficulty, but they did not show that feeling to others. Subjects can still face situations that trigger anxiety, of course it depends on the level of difficulty and is still within the limits of the subject's ability. In this case, the subject tried alone to deal with the difficulties they faced up by praying and reassuring themselves that they were able to deal with it. That way, the subject was still capable enough to control anxiety that can prevent the achievement of their goals. However, they tended to be unsure of their ability to deal with difficult and anxious situations.

**Selection process.** In choosing activities and situations that can affect the effects of an event, the subjects chose to avoid things that trigger anxiety and certain situations that were beyond the subject's ability. This was certainly related to past events related to parents. That way, the subjects had the ability to consider behavioral choice well to maintain the stability of their activities. In this process, individuals with good self-efficacy will show that they had the ability to control challenging activities. The challenging activity that the subjects had experienced is to feel the conflict between the desires to be achieved with the abilities they have. This also made them anxious and worried in achieving their goals. However, they still faced it by doing things that can improve their abilities.

Based on the elaboration of interview results that are classified in several psychological processes that determine the self-efficacy of subjects, researchers can conclude that the subjects have a visionary thinking process by imagining things related to goals that can later make their lives better. The existence of encouragement and support from themselves and their family make increasingly strive to achieve their desires and be ready to face the challenges that exist. Subjects are very vulnerable to anxieties that arise from past traumatic experiences related to divorce of their parents. So they are unable to control and tend to avoid situations that make them anxious. However, with the things that make anxious and prevent the achievement of goals, the subjects are able to make choices that can control the situation.

## Discussion

Based on the results of the interviews it is known that divorce that occurs in the subject's parents is due to incompatibility and domestic relations that cannot be maintained anymore. This is possible because of the problems in the household. The child's response is certainly different in response to the divorce of their parents, most of them disagree, but there are also those who agree that this happens in their family.

Subjects tend to have a high attitude towards divorce, which indicates that they agree with the divorce as an option that must be taken by their parents. The findings are in line with the statement by Fine dan Harvey (2006), that young adults whose parents divorce consider divorce to be natural, so they show an attitude that agrees to divorce. However, the subject thinks so because if both parents' households are retained, then there will be an injured party. Therefore, they also agree with the divorce after experiencing better changes when their parents divorce. Although the subject knows that divorce is not permissible in religion (Alqashan & Alkandari, 2010) and also sometimes the subject feels jealous when they see their friends whose parents are not divorced as they experienced.

Systematic thinking must exist at the stage of cognitive development of young adults. This makes the subjects able to accept the conditions of their family and have more mature thoughts related to divorce. Bandura (1997) states that someone who has high self-efficacy, then he is sure of his abilities. This behavior is shown by subjects who have a future orientation to have a better life, so they think about what actions they should do to achieve their desires. Of course, the desire they want to achieve cannot be separated from the encouragement and support of themselves and family. Therefore, they try to maximize their ability to be ready to face up the challenges that exist.

However, divorced parents certainly leave a deep mark for a child. Parental divorce is an event with a high level of stress experienced by children, they also have a higher level of anxiety than children from intact families (Alqashan & Alkandari, 2010). This is accordance with the findings of the study that the subject cannot handle matters relating to past events that were obtained when the divorce occurred. They will feel anxiety and feel unable to handle it, so that it can interfere with activities and things that children want to achieve in their lives. This shows that the subject as a child with divorced parents has high anxiety when faced with certain situations.

The existence of a cognitive process that is mature on the subjects, the ability to motivate oneself, try when facing a failure, progress in thinking and acting, and have social support from the family, especially the mother, shows that the subjects has high self-efficacy. This is supported by the results of research that the quality of social support has a significant positive relationship with career expectations and trust in romantic relationships (Jackson & Fife, 2017). Even though from the affection

process, the subject still cannot control certain anxiety, especially when faced with a situation that suppresses and relates to the subject's family status. However, the subject is able to make choices that can control these situations.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded that self-efficacy in children who are victims of divorce who have grown up tend to be quite high, which is indicated by the progress in thinking and acting, more independent, optimistic about a better future, which is also obtained from social support provided by the family especially mothers and people closest to them. Although sometimes there is a feeling of doubt and pessimism on the subject to confront of a challenge. However, the subject can make choices that can control the situation.

Young adults with divorced parents view and interpret divorce as events that can make them more mature in terms of their thoughts and actions. From that event the subjects become learning how to later choose a life partner, maintain commitment, and think about the impact that will occur if something like that happens again. Therefore, the subject does not want this to happen in the next life.

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