

## The Role of Father Absence in the Self-Acceptance of Young Adults Raised by Single Mothers

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**Abstract.** This study aimed to determine whether there is a significant negative correlation between the perception of father presence (specifically regarding father absence) and self-acceptance. A quantitative correlational research design was employed, targeting young adults aged 20 to 39 residing in the JABODETABEK area. Participants included both married and unmarried individuals whose parents had divorced while the subjects were between the ages of 0 and 17, and who had not lived with their fathers from childhood through adulthood. Data were collected via a Google Forms questionnaire using two adapted scales: the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ) developed by Chamberlain and Haaga (2001) and the Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ) developed by Krampe and Newton (2006). The 346 single male and female was selected as participants within aged 20 to 30 years ( $SD = 2.42$ ,  $M = 24.90$ ). The results indicated a negative but non-significant correlation between the perception of father absence and self-acceptance among young adults whose raised by single mother.

**Keywords:** *father absence, self-acceptance, young adults raised by single mothers*

### Introduction

Over the past decade, the number of unmarried individuals in the 35–39 and 40–44 age groups have roughly doubled (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021; Sari 2021). Opposite to developmental theory, where early adulthood is a stage characterized by efforts to form deep, intimate relationships and commitments with others. During this period, most individuals would typically begin planning romantic relationships, seeking partners, and even marrying (Montgomery & Arnett, 2015). Individuals with low self-acceptance has more fear of forming intimate relationships since they tend to be less sociable, avoid new people and environments, and reduce the frequency of communication and opportunities for new social interactions (Fatima, Niazi, & Ghayas, 2017; Islamia, Isnaini & Lestari, 2025; Murray, et. al, 2002).

Self-acceptance could be indicated from how well one maintaining awareness of positive qualities as well as flaws and accepting both to a long-term appraisal of their own personal

strengths and weakness, (Ryff & Singer, 2013). Self-acceptance is a journey of consciously and wholly accepting, valuing, and loving oneself unconditionally, regardless of how others view an individual's strengths and weaknesses. It is a state in which a person has confidence in their own qualities and is able to navigate life in light of their circumstances. Individuals who accept themselves hold a realistic view of their potential, trusting in their strengths without being overly critical of their weaknesses. Chamberlain and Haaga measure self-acceptance using four indicators: (1) the individual accepts themselves unconditionally; (2) the individual acknowledges that human beings have weaknesses; (3) the individual recognizes the presence of both negative and positive aspects within themselves; and (4) the individual perceives themselves as a person of worth (Chamberlain & Haaga, 2001).

Young adults raised by divorced parents higher fear of forming intimate relationship, related to the lack of role models for building high-quality romantic relationships resulting a low confidence regarding such relationships (Cartwright, 2006). They tend to harbour greater fears of rejection, abandonment, or relationship failure (Morrison, Fife & Hertlein, 2017; Obeid et al., 2020). It is particularly evident in individuals raised without a father figure, where the mother must take role as both breadwinner and primary caregiver (often referred to as "fatherlessness"). Krampe and Newton define fatherlessness as a state in which a child lacks a relationship or contact with their father, whether physically or emotionally. In their research, the term does not merely refer to the absence of a father due to death; it also encompasses situations where the father is alive but uninvolved in the child's life—such as in cases of divorce, separation, or other circumstances preventing active paternal presence. To measure father absence, Krampe and Newton utilized four dimensions: (1) feelings toward the father; (2) perceptions of the father's involvement; (3) physical contact with the father; and (4) beliefs about the father—all of which reflect the father's influence and significance to the individual (Krampe & Newton, 2006; Thomas, Krampe & Newton, 2008).

A father's absence during upbringing can impact self-confidence, self-acceptance, and resilience, making it difficult for the individual to accept their own circumstances. This situation shapes individuals who struggle to establish closeness and emotional bonds with others in

adulthood (Islamiah, et al., 2022; Kristiansson, Oberklaid & Bremberg, 2008; Puglisi, et al., 2024). For young adults who perceive themselves as "fatherless" or abandoned by their fathers, feelings of trauma, negative emotions, and a negative self-perception can lead to a sense of inadequacy compared to others (Hadyani & Indriana, 2017). Growing up without a father figure often gives rise to feelings of anger and shame, as well as low self-esteem. These factors contribute to the low levels of self-acceptance observed in young adults who experienced their parents' divorce during childhood (Sarmadi & Khodabakhshi-Koolaei, 2023).

No matter how hard the mother tries to meet her child's emotional and psychological needs, the absence of a father figure still creates a void in the child's life (DeBell, 2008). Individuals growing up without a father may experience feelings of abandonment and a lack of financial and emotional support (Lamb & Tamis-Le Monda, 2004). A scarcity of shared memories with a father can evoke a sense of emptiness when recalling the past and lead individuals to feel inferior to others, leading to have problem to accept themselves. A child raised without a father may feel abandoned, unwanted, and anxious; in cases of divorce or abandonment, the child often wrongly believes they are the reason the father left (Sarmadi & Khodabakhshi-Koolaei, 2023).

Based on the explanation above, the researcher hypothesizes a significant negative correlation between the perception of father presence (or fatherlessness) and self-acceptance. Although numerous similar studies have been conducted, few have addressed this phenomenon among single young adults raised by single mothers in the absence of their fathers.

## **Method**

### *Participants and Design*

This study employed a quantitative correlational design aimed at determining whether a significant relationship exists between the perception of father presence and self-acceptance among young adults. The sample was selected using an accidental sampling technique. Participants were limited to single males and females aged 20 to 30 whose parents were divorced while they were in the ages between 0 and 17, and perceived their fathers were absents in their lives.

### *Instruments*

This research procedures were conducted in accordance with the code of ethics for psychological research, ensuring the confidentiality of participants' identities and data. All research procedures and instruments employed were reviewed by the university's review team. The measurement scales used were also evaluated by three subject-matter experts, and was determined to possess content alignment with the blueprint, which was developed based on the conceptual definition and the target of measurement.

Data were collected via Google Forms using two scales: the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ) developed by Chamberlain and Haaga (2001) and the Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ) developed by Krampe and Newton (2006). Both scales translated into Indonesian and adapted to the local culture. Subsequently, content validity tests, reliability tests, and item analyses were conducted to ensure their suitability for the study. The adaptation instrument from USAQ scale consists of 20 items using a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from "almost always untrue" (1) to "almost always true" (6). The adapted FPQ scale used in this study comprises 4 dimensions and 44 items. As the study aimed to measure the perception of father \*absence\*, the scoring utilized a Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (score = 6) to "strongly agree" (score = 1).

### *Data Analysis*

Data were collected from 346 participants (131 males and 215 females) aged 20 to 30 years ( $SD = 2.50$ ,  $M = 250$ ) residing in the JABODETABEK area. All the collected data underwent screening and cleaning, which involved identifying, correcting, and removing inaccurate, incomplete, irrelevant, or unstructured data from the dataset. This stage was carried out to ensure data validity and accuracy. The research data were analysed using JAMOV 2.7.6 software. Reliability and item analysis revealed that all items from both instruments yielded positive corrected item-total correlation values, and shows a McDonald's Omega coefficient of 0,904 for the USAQ and 0.988 for the FPQ.

## Results

Measurement of the self-acceptance variable, using an adapted version of the Unconditional Self-Acceptance Questionnaire (USAQ), yielded a minimum score of 60 and a maximum of 117 (SD = 11.3; Mean = 103). Measurement of the father absence variable, using an adapted version of the Father Presence Questionnaire (FPQ) scale, resulted in a minimum score of 58 and a maximum of 247 (SD = 72.7; M = 139).

A Pearson Product-Moment correlation test was conducted to determine whether father absence is significantly correlated with self-acceptance in early adulthood. The results of the bivariate correlation test are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.  
Pearson Product Moment Correlation

|                    | Total USAQ | SA1    | SA2      | SA3     | SA4    | Mean   | Standard Deviation |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------|---------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Total FQP          | - 0.07     | - 0.07 | - 0.07   | - 0.08  | - 0.01 | 139.42 | 72.74              |
| F1                 | - 0.12*    | - 0.09 | - 0.15** | - 0.13* | - 0.04 | 33.71  | 18.21              |
| F2                 | - 0.16*    | - 0.11 | - 0.13** | - 0.11  | - 0.03 | 56.27  | 29.67              |
| F3                 | - 0.04     | - 0.05 | - 0.02   | - 0.05  | - 0.03 | 28.16  | 15.84              |
| F4                 | 0.08       | - 0.03 | - 0.15** | 0.03    | 0.08   | 21.29  | 13.36              |
| Mean               | 101.97     | 30.93  | 25.44    | 20.61   | 24.99  |        |                    |
| Standard Deviation | 11.25      | 4.15   | 3.65     | 2.85    | 2.63   |        |                    |

Notes:

N 346

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

F1 Negative feelings toward father

F2 Perception that father is not involved in parenting

F3 Perception that father shows a lack of affection

F4 Perception that father is unimportant

SA1 Accepts themselves unconditionally

SA2 Recognizes that human beings have weaknesses

SA3 Acknowledges the presence of both negative and positive aspects

SA4 Recognizes themselves worthy

Pearson correlation analysis shows negative correlation but not significant between the total score on the Self-Acceptance scale and the total score on the scale measuring father absence. Regarding correlations between the dimensions of the two variables, three dimensions of father

absence were found to correlate significantly with two dimensions of self-acceptance. The dimension of negative feelings toward father showed a significant negative correlation with the dimensions of recognizing human fallibility and acknowledging both negative and positive aspects within oneself. Meanwhile, the dimensions of perceived there was lack of father involvement and perceived lack of paternal influence or importance showed significant negative correlations with the dimension of recognizing human fallibility.

Table 2.  
Linier Regression

|                                                                                                                 | Sig. | R <sup>2</sup> | F    | β      | t      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|----------------|------|--------|--------|
| Negative feelings toward father - Recognizes that human beings have weaknesses                                  | 0.01 | 0.01           | 2.45 | - 0.09 | - 1.56 |
| Negative feelings toward father - Acknowledges the presence of both negative and positive aspects               | 0.04 | 0.02           | 6.72 | - 0.15 | - 2.54 |
| Perception that the father is not involved in parenting - Recognizes that human beings have weaknesses          | 0.03 | 0.02           | 4.75 | - 0.13 | - 2.18 |
| Perception the father is not involved in parenting - Acknowledges the presence of negative and positive aspects | 0.00 | 0.57           | 0.33 | - 0.03 | - 0.57 |
| Perception that the father is unimportant - Recognizes that human beings have weaknesses                        | 0.02 | 0.01           | 1.82 | 0.08   | 1.34   |

Notes: N = 346

To clarify the research findings, a linear regression analysis was conducted solely on the dimensions exhibiting significant correlations; the results are presented in Table 2 above. The analysis revealed that the dimension of "negative feelings toward the father" predicts the dimensions of "recognizing human fallibility" and "acknowledging both negative and positive aspects of the self." Additionally, the dimensions of "perceived lack of paternal involvement in parenting" and "perceiving the father as having little influence or importance" predict the dimension of "recognizing human fallibility".

## Discussion

Although the research data showed a non-significant correlation between the total scores for father absence and self-acceptance, the negative correlation value suggests that self-acceptance in the young adults studied is linked to their perception of father absence. A higher perception of father absence during childhood or adolescence can lower an individual's level of

self-acceptance in adulthood. This aligns with the findings of several previous studies. Past research indicates that a father's presence and involvement during childhood and adolescence can influence how individuals relate to others and affect their psychological well-being in adulthood. Adolescents require a positive self-perception and high self-esteem to navigate the changes and transitions inherent in their development (Heaven & Chiarrochi, 2008).

Parenting patterns—including the father's involvement in child-rearing—are among the factors that influence the development of healthy self-esteem and self-acceptance. A father's presence is crucial within the family unit and, consequently, has a significant impact on a child's life; conversely, a father's absence can lead to emotional, financial, and social suffering for the child, as well as hinder their overall development. Father absence can result in low self-regard, feelings of incompetence in social settings, and low self-confidence. A weak father-child relationship is correlated with both destructive and constructive conflict-resolution styles (Condon, Dettmer, Baker, McFaul & Stover, 2022).

This study also indicates perception that the father is not involved in parenting and negative emotions towards fathers correlates significantly to accept their own shortcomings, while also making it difficult for them to accept that they possess positive aspects alongside negative ones. Individuals who harbour negative emotions toward their father often face challenges in accepting themselves, because our relationships with parents play a crucial role in shaping our sense of identity and self-worth. Father absence influences a child's life achievements, such as those related to education, marriage, and career decisions (Jiang et al, 2023).

A meta-analysis of 24 longitudinal studies involving 22,300 children, demonstrated the positive impact of parental involvement on children's psychosocial adjustment (Sarkadi, et al. 2008). This may explain why negative feelings toward one's father are linked to an individual's ability to acknowledge human fallibility. It may also explain why individuals who perceived their fathers as absent during childhood or adolescence struggle to recognize both the negative and positive aspects of themselves in adulthood.

In this research, the perceived of fatherless indicates they could associate with how they perceived others. The more negative feelings toward father and perception that the father is

unimportant figure to themselves, the less they will recognize that human beings have weaknesses. We can perhaps explain this phenomenon based on a systematic review of 43 studies exploring the potential role of fathers in the development of emotion regulation (ER) in children, conducted by Islamiah et al. in 2021. The review summarized that a higher-quality father–child relationship, greater father–child attachment security, and positive parenting—characterized by sensitivity, engagement, and expressiveness—were significantly associated with better emotion regulation skills in children (Islamiah et al, 2022). A similar explanation was also found in a meta-analysis study conducted by Puglisi, et al (2024).

### **Conclusion**

The results of this study indicate a non-significant negative correlation between the total score on the Self-Acceptance scale and the total score on the scale measuring father absence. Regarding correlations between the dimensions of the two variables, three dimensions of father absence were found to correlate significantly with two dimensions of self-acceptance. The dimension of negative feelings toward the father showed a significant negative correlation with the dimensions of recognizing human fallibility and acknowledging both negative and positive aspects within oneself. Meanwhile, the dimensions of perceived low father involvement and the perception of the father as having little influence or importance showed significant negative correlations with the dimension of recognizing human fallibility.

### **Suggestions**

Consider this study were conducted primarily relied on observational measures for both constructs, limited by the questions in the scale used, further research is needed to explore in greater depth the phenomenon of self-acceptance among adults who experienced a fatherless situation during their upbringing. The researchers also argue that a meta-analysis of studies conducted in Indonesia regarding this phenomenon is necessary to obtain a clearer overview and comparison of findings across studies.

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