

Fatherless Students' Strategies in Maintaining Academic Achievement at MA Nurul Ummah Sampit

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Abstract

Fatherlessness is a phenomenon often associated with various psychological and academic problems among students. The loss of a father's role in a child's life has the potential to impact emotional development, learning motivation, and academic achievement. However, not all students experience this condition; research shows that being fatherless is associated with a decline in academic achievement. Some students are still able to maintain and even achieve good academic performance through various efforts and strategies. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the strategies used by students fatherless in maintaining academic achievements at MA Nurul Ummah Sampit. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The subjects were two eleventh-grade students experiencing fatherlessness, while one homeroom teacher served as a supporting informant. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis techniques through the stages of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that fatherless students employ several strategies to maintain academic achievement, including managing their study time independently, actively participating in learning activities, utilizing various additional learning resources, maintaining learning motivation, and being able to deal adaptively with academic pressure. In addition to these internal factors, students' success in maintaining academic achievement is also supported by external factors such as support from their mothers, teachers, peers, and a conducive school environment. The findings of this study indicate that the condition of being fatherless is not always an obstacle to achieving academic achievement if students have good academic resilience and receive adequate social support from their surroundings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and process that enables students to develop their potential optimally. Through education, students are expected to develop spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills that are beneficial to themselves, society, the nation, and the state, as mandated by Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Education also serves as the primary foundation for improving the quality of human resources and shaping individual character and thinking skills in facing life's various challenges (Ningsih, 2022).

Educational success is often measured by students' academic achievement. Academic achievement is influenced not only by internal factors, such as motivation and intellectual ability, but also by external factors, particularly the family environment as the primary educational institution for children (Siswandi). Families play a crucial role in providing emotional, social, and economic support, which contributes to the formation of character, personality, and social development in students (Siswandi, p. 2022).

In recent years, a social phenomenon has emerged that has received attention in studies of education and family, namely, *fatherlessness*. This term refers to a condition where a child loses a father figure, either physically due to divorce, death, or work that requires the father to be away from the family, or psychologically due to the father's low involvement in the child-rearing process (Fajrianti, 2024). This condition has the potential to impact the psychological development, interpersonal skills, decision-making processes, and academic achievement of students.

Data published by Fatherhood (2021) shows that Indonesia is among the countries with high rates of absent fathers. One contributing factor to this situation is the strong patriarchal culture that positions fathers primarily as breadwinners, thus limiting their involvement in childcare (Aulia, 2024). Furthermore, data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that approximately 20.1% of children in Indonesia grow up without the presence of a father figure or are in a situation where they are not physically present *fatherless* (BPS, 2024). Father absence is known to impact the psychological development and academic achievement of adolescents (f, 2024)

Safitri (2023) explains that father involvement in the family plays a crucial role in character formation and student academic success. Lack of attention and communication from fathers can lead to feelings of loss and affect a child's psychological development. Similarly, according to Sudarmono (2016), student achievement is influenced by several internal factors, including learning discipline, learning creativity, and learning interest. Learning discipline is reflected in students' compliance with learning rules, time management, and successful completion of assignments. Learning creativity is demonstrated through students' ability to find effective and innovative ways to understand learning materials. Meanwhile, learning interest is a drive within students that fosters a sense of enjoyment, attention, and a desire to actively participate in the learning process. These three factors have a positive influence on learning achievement, so the higher a student's discipline, creativity, and learning interest, the better their learning achievement will be (Apuanor & Sudarmono, 2016).

This phenomenon was also found at Madrasah Aliyah Nurul Ummah Sampit. According to information from educators, several students are growing up without fathers due to parental divorce or because their fathers work outside the area. This situation has the potential to create various emotional and psychological challenges that can affect students' motivation to learn, self-confidence, and concentration in the learning process. However, not all students who experience this condition *fatherless*, showed a decline in academic achievement. Some were able to maintain and even improve their achievement through various adaptive strategies, such as building independence, developing learning discipline, and utilizing support from teachers, peers, and the surrounding environment.

MA Nurul Ummah Sampit, as an Islamic educational institution, implements an educational system that emphasizes balancing the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual aspects of students through various character and religious development programs. This situation makes this madrasah interesting to study, particularly regarding how students who experience *fatherlessness* are able to maintain their academic achievement. In contrast to most previous studies, which focused more on the negative impacts of being *fatherless*, this study highlights the positive strategies that students use to maintain their achievement.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze fatherless students' strategies *for* maintaining academic achievements at MA Nurul Ummah Sampit.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to deeply understand fatherless students' strategies *for* maintaining academic achievement. This approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the experiences, motivations, and efforts made by students in coping with the loss of a father's role in their daily lives. The study was conducted from April to May 2026 at MA Nurul Ummah Sampit, East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan. The location was selected based on the presence of students experiencing this condition *fatherless*, so that it is in accordance with the focus of the study being researched.

This research is based on the theory of academic resilience, which explains students' ability to persist and continue to achieve academic success despite facing various challenges in the learning process. In this context, the condition of being *fatherless* is seen as a challenge that has the potential to impact students' motivation and emotional balance. However, through self-regulation skills, intrinsic motivation, and a supportive school environment, students can still develop positive learning strategies and maintain their academic achievement.

The study subjects consisted of two class XI students of MA Nurul Ummah Sampit who experienced the condition of being *fatherless* due to parental divorce or fathers working outside the area. Subject determination was carried out using the technique of *purposive sampling*. In addition to students, homeroom teachers were also involved as supporting informants to obtain more comprehensive information regarding students' learning strategies and academic achievement.

The research instruments used included interviews, observation, and documentation. The interviews were structured based on the learning strategy concept proposed by Hayaturraiyan (2022), while observations were conducted to observe student learning activities, discipline, and participation during the learning process.

Data were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively through the stages of data collection, data grouping, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was maintained through technical triangulation and *member check* to ensure the consistency and credibility of research findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

Interview and Observation Results

Based on the results of interviews and observations conducted, it was found that students of being *fatherless* at MA Nurul Ummah Sampit were able to maintain their academic achievements despite being in a dysfunctional family. The two research subjects, MP and MR, demonstrated various strategies that helped them optimally navigate their education despite the limited role of their fathers in their daily lives.

On the subject of MP, the condition of being *fatherless* did not lead to a decrease in learning motivation or engagement in academic activities. MP demonstrated the ability to manage study time independently by utilizing evenings after completing work and other activities. Despite frequently experiencing fatigue and having limited study time, MP still strives to complete schoolwork and participate effectively in lessons. During the learning process, MP also utilizes digital media, especially learning videos

on YouTube, to help understand material that is not yet understood in class. In addition, MP receives support from his mother, teachers, and school friends, who play a role in maintaining his enthusiasm for learning. When facing stress or learning difficulties, MP tends to divert his attention to positive activities, including studying and completing various academic assignments.

Similar findings were also found in MR. Based on interviews and observations, MR had several strategies for maintaining academic achievement despite being in a difficult situation, *fatherless*, due to his parents' divorce. This situation did not cause MR to lose his enthusiasm for learning, but instead encouraged him to remain responsible for his education. Throughout the learning process, MR demonstrated sincerity in following lessons, paying attention to teacher explanations, and remaining engaged in classroom activities. Furthermore, MR maintained good social relationships with his peers and utilized these interactions as a learning tool, especially during discussions and group assignments.

During his learning process, MR utilizes various additional learning resources. In addition to using the internet to research material he doesn't yet understand, he also participates in tutoring to improve his understanding of the lessons. This strategy demonstrates initiative and responsibility in maintaining the quality of his learning outcomes. MR's motivation to learn is also quite high. This is evident in his consistency in participating in lessons and his success in maintaining his academic performance, achieving a top-three ranking in his class. When faced with pressure or learning difficulties, MR tends to calm down first before gradually returning to his learning activities. Furthermore, support from his mother, older sibling, teachers, and school friends has also positively influenced his enthusiasm for learning and the continuity of his education.

Based on the results of the interviews and observations, it was found that MP and MR had several strategies that helped them maintain academic achievement amidst these conditions of *fatherlessness*. These strategies include the ability to manage study time independently, involvement in the learning process, utilization of additional learning resources, strong learning motivation, the ability to deal with learning pressure positively, and social support from the surrounding environment. These various strategies indicate that the condition of being *fatherless* does not always hinder students' academic success if it is balanced with adequate adaptation skills and support.

Data Analysis: Fatherless Students' Strategies for Maintaining Academic Achievement

The data analysis results indicate that the strategies used by MP and MR to maintain academic achievement can be grouped into several key aspects. First, both subjects demonstrated the ability to manage their study time independently. MP and MR attempted to adapt their study schedules to their individual circumstances so they could still fulfill their academic responsibilities despite facing various limitations within their family environment.

Second, both subjects demonstrated good participation in the learning process. MP and MR continued to take the learning process seriously, paying attention to the teacher's explanations and completing the assigned tasks. This engagement demonstrated an awareness of the importance of education and the responsibilities of being a student.

Third, both subjects implemented active learning strategies through the use of various supplementary learning resources. MP utilized instructional videos as learning support, while MR used the internet, textbooks, discussions with peers, and tutoring to

reinforce understanding of the material. These strategies demonstrate a learning initiative that goes beyond the classroom learning process.

Fourth, both subjects demonstrated good abilities in responding to the pressures and challenges of learning. MP tended to channel the stress experienced into productive activities, while MR preferred to calm down first before returning to academic activities. These differences in response indicate that each student has a different way of adapting to the situation of being *fatherless*.

In addition to internal factors, the analysis also shows that social support plays a significant role in the academic success of both subjects. Support provided by mothers, family, teachers, and peers helps students maintain motivation, manage emotional stress, and maintain the continuity of the learning process. Thus, students' strategies, *such as* maintaining academic achievement is not only influenced by individual abilities, but also by environmental support that supports their academic development.

3.2. Discussion

Study Time Management

The results of the study show that managing study time is one of the main strategies used by *fatherless* students in maintaining academic achievement. Based on interviews and observations, MP and MR were able to adjust their study time to the circumstances they faced. MP made a habit of studying in the evenings after completing work and other activities, while MR used his free time to review course material and complete school assignments. Despite being in an incomplete family situation, both subjects still tried to maintain consistent learning as a form of responsibility for their ongoing education.

The ability to manage study time demonstrates self-awareness of the importance of education for the future. MP and MR do not create conditions of being *fatherless* as an excuse to neglect academic obligations. Instead, both strive to adapt their daily activities to their learning needs so that the educational process can continue optimally. This attitude demonstrates the ability to set priorities and organize activities independently.

In the educational context, managing study time is an important component of self-regulation skills. Students who can organize their study schedules, set learning targets, and maintain consistency in their studies tend to have a greater chance of achieving academic success. This finding aligns with the opinion that in the educational context, managing study time is an important component related to student learning discipline. Students who can organize their study schedules, adhere to study rules, and complete assignments consistently tend to have better academic achievement. This aligns with the opinion of Apuanor and Sudarmono (2016), who stated that study discipline is one of the factors that positively influences student achievement. Through good study discipline, students can carry out their academic responsibilities regularly, thus supporting the achievement of optimal learning outcomes. The abilities demonstrated by MP and MR also reflect academic resilience. Academic resilience is demonstrated not only through achieving good grades but also through students' ability to continue fulfilling academic obligations when facing various obstacles. In this study, both subjects maintained their study habits despite facing emotional stress and limitations due to their circumstances of being *fatherless*. This shows that they are able to adapt to the situations they face without losing focus on their educational goals.

The findings of this study also show that the condition of being *fatherless* does not always result in a decline in students' learning abilities. In some situations, this condition actually encourages the development of stronger learning independence. MP

and MR are accustomed to managing academic activities independently without full guidance from a father figure, so they develop personal responsibility for determining study time, completing assignments, and maintaining consistent learning. Thus, managing study time is an important strategy that helps *fatherless* students maintain academic achievement amidst various challenges faced.

Participation in Learning

Participation in learning is another factor contributing to MP and MR's ability to maintain academic achievement. The results showed that both subjects continued to strive to participate effectively in learning despite their dysfunctional family circumstances. MP demonstrated commitment to paying attention to teacher explanations and completing schoolwork, while MR was able to maintain engagement in the learning process, achieving good academic performance in class.

These findings indicate that the condition of being *fatherless* does not always cause students to lose interest or engagement in learning. Instead, MP and MR demonstrated that awareness of the importance of education can encourage students to remain actively engaged in the learning process. The engagement demonstrated by both subjects reflects a commitment to achieving established educational goals.

Participation in learning is not only related to class attendance, but also includes attention to the material, involvement in learning activities, completion of assignments, and sincerity in participating in the entire educational process. This involvement helps students understand the subject matter more optimally and increases their academic responsibility. In this study, MP and MR demonstrated that good participation in learning is one of the factors supporting their academic success.

This finding aligns with Hayaturraiyani's (2022) opinion, which explains that learning strategies are not only related to the ability to understand subject matter but also to student engagement in the learning process. The greater the student's involvement in learning activities, the greater their chances of achieving optimal learning outcomes. Therefore, participation in learning can be viewed as a form of learning strategy that supports academic success.

Furthermore, Fauzi (2022) stated that student engagement in the learning process influences academic achievement. Students who actively participate in learning tend to have a better enthusiasm for learning, a deeper understanding of the material, and a higher level of academic responsibility. This is evident in MP and MR, who maintain their engagement in learning despite facing various challenges within their family environment.

From an academic resilience perspective, engagement in learning demonstrates a student's ability to maintain their role as a learner despite challenging circumstances. MP and MR did not allow their family circumstances to hinder their involvement in education. Instead, they viewed the learning process as a means to a better future. These findings suggest that participation in learning is a form of positive adaptation that helps *fatherless* students maintain academic achievement.

Active Learning Strategies

The results of the study showed that active learning strategies were one of the factors that helped MP and MR maintain academic achievement. Both subjects relied not only on classroom learning but also sought additional learning resources to improve their understanding of the material. MP utilized instructional videos as additional learning media, while MR used the internet, textbooks, discussions with friends, and tutoring as learning support tools.

The active learning strategies employed by both subjects demonstrate initiative and responsibility for the educational process. MP and MR recognize that academic success is determined not only by class attendance but also by independent effort to understand the subject matter. This awareness drives them to explore various learning alternatives that suit their individual needs.

In an educational context, active learning strategies position students as directly involved in the learning process. Students not only passively receive information but also strive to understand, seek additional information, review material, and utilize various available learning resources. This active involvement helps improve understanding of the material while developing thinking skills and independent learning.

The findings of this study align with Hayaturraiyen's (2022) opinion, which states that learning strategies are the efforts and methods students employ to optimally achieve learning goals. Learning strategies encompass the ability to manage the learning process, utilize learning resources, and adapt to conditions encountered during the educational process. In this study, MP and MR demonstrated various forms of active learning strategies that helped them maintain their academic achievement.

Furthermore, Mutiah (2023) explained that academic achievement is influenced by students' ability to manage the learning process and utilize learning resources effectively. The results of the study showed that both subjects were able to utilize various learning resources to overcome difficulties encountered in learning. This ability helped them better understand the material and maintain the quality of their learning outcomes.

This finding also shows that the condition of being *fatherless* can encourage the development of independent learning. The lack of direct guidance from their fathers has made MP and MR accustomed to seeking learning solutions independently. This situation indirectly shapes their adaptability, responsibility, and initiative in the educational process. Therefore, active learning strategies are a form of academic resilience that helps students survive and thrive in the midst of a dysfunctional family environment.

Response to Learning Challenges

Responding to learning challenges is a crucial aspect influencing MP and MR's ability to maintain academic achievement. The study results show that the two subjects have different ways of coping with stress and learning difficulties. MP tends to divert attention from the problems they face into productive activities, particularly studying and completing schoolwork. Meanwhile, MR prefers to calm down first before gradually resuming learning activities.

These differences in responses indicate that each individual has a different coping mechanism when faced with stress. Despite their differing approaches, both subjects demonstrated the ability to manage stress positively. They did not use the challenges they faced as an excuse to abandon academic responsibilities, but instead sought to maintain their involvement in the educational process.

The ability to face learning challenges plays a vital role in maintaining the continuity of the students' educational process. In these conditions, fatherless students are likely to face greater emotional stress than those raised in intact families. Therefore, the ability to manage emotions and respond positively to stress is a factor that helps students stay focused on their educational goals.

The findings of this study align with the concept of academic resilience, which explains that students who are able to survive difficult situations generally possess

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emotional regulation skills, adaptability, and the ability to cope positively with stress. In this study, MP and MR demonstrated these abilities through their efforts to continue fulfilling their study obligations despite facing various challenges within their family environment.

In addition to internal factors, social support is also a crucial factor in helping students overcome learning challenges. Research shows that mothers, teachers, family, and peers play a significant role in providing emotional support and motivation to learn to both subjects. This support helps students feel cared for and appreciated, and helps them maintain their enthusiasm for their education.

These findings align with Mutiah's (2023) opinion, which states that emotional well-being and adaptability are factors that influence students' academic success. Positive social support can help students reduce emotional distress, maintain learning motivation, and improve their ability to adapt to various challenges. In this study, support from mothers, teachers, family, and peers was a factor that helped MP and MR maintain emotional stability and academic success.

Overall, the results of the study showed that *fatherless students* do not always show a negative response to the conditions they experience. Instead, MP and MR can develop productive ways of coping with learning pressures and use education as a means to a better future. These findings indicate that the condition of being *fatherless* is not always an obstacle to academic success, but can be an experience that shapes self-resilience, adaptability, and academic resilience if supported by strong internal motivation and a positive social environment.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the condition of being *fatherless* is not always an obstacle for students in maintaining academic achievement. *Fatherless* Students at MA Nurul Ummah Sampit have demonstrated academic resilience through various positive strategies, including managing their study time independently, actively participating in learning, utilizing additional learning resources, maintaining motivation, and positively coping with academic pressure. These strategies help students maintain academic responsibilities and achieve high performance despite the limitations imposed by the lack of a father figure.

In addition to internal factors, support from mothers, teachers, peers, and the school environment plays a crucial role in maintaining students' motivation, emotional stability, and the continuity of their learning process. These findings indicate that fatherless students' academic success is determined not only by family circumstances but also by the individual's ability to adapt to the condition of being *fatherless* and utilize available social support. The results of this study also reinforce the theory of academic resilience, which emphasizes students' ability to survive, adapt, and thrive amidst life's various challenges.

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