

Adolescents' psychological well-being after parental divorce in Indonesia: an interpretative phenomenological analysis

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ABSTRACT

Parental divorce has increased in Indonesia and may adversely affect adolescents' psychological well-being. However, limited qualitative research has explored how adolescents interpret divorce within the Indonesian sociocultural context. This study aimed to explore adolescents' experiences of psychological well-being following parental divorce and identify coping processes that foster resilience. A qualitative study using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with five female adolescents aged 14–15 years who had experienced parental divorce. Participants were purposively recruited from a junior high school in Bekasi, Indonesia. Data were analyzed using IPA to examine lived experiences and meaning-making processes. Three themes emerged: i) self-acceptance and identity reconstruction, ii) relational ecosystems as double-edged support systems, and iii) transition from survival strategies to purposeful autonomy. Participants described grief, self-blame, academic disruption, and social stigma. However, supportive relationships with peers, extended family, and teachers promoted adaptive coping and resilience. These findings highlight that parental divorce affects adolescent psychological well-being, but supportive environments can mitigate negative outcomes. School-based mental health programs, anti-stigma initiatives, and culturally sensitive counseling services are recommended to support adolescents experiencing family transitions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, divorce rates have shown a consistent increase in recent years. In 2023, approximately 463,654 divorce cases involving Muslim marriages were recorded, representing a rise compared with the previous year [1]. Notably, nearly 70% of these divorces were initiated by women, reflecting a significant shift within a traditionally patriarchal society [2]. Parental divorce can create profound emotional challenges for adolescents, often triggering feelings of loss, anxiety, and changes in family roles that may negatively affect psychological well-being [3].

Adolescents in Indonesia who experience parental divorce may face psychological distress shaped by complex sociocultural factors. In a predominantly Muslim society, religious and moral perspectives on family dissolution may contribute to confusion and internal conflict among adolescents [4]. At the same time, the widespread stigma associated with “broken homes” may intensify social exclusion and emotional

isolation [5]. Custody arrangements influenced by gender norms may also assign adolescents to culturally prescribed family roles that do not necessarily meet their emotional needs [6]. These contextual dynamics create challenges that differ substantially from those observed in western settings.

Cross-cultural research has consistently shown that parental divorce is associated with increased risks of depression, anxiety, and academic difficulties among adolescents [3], [7]. However, much of the existing literature is derived from western contexts, potentially overlooking culturally specific influences on adolescent adjustment. In collectivist societies such as Indonesia, extended family networks may both buffer stress through increased social support and amplify distress through community stigma [8], [9]. Furthermore, religion plays a central role in everyday life in Indonesia, with approximately 87% of individuals reporting that faith is “very important” in their lives [10]. Despite this, the role of religious beliefs in shaping adolescents’ responses to parental divorce remains underexplored in Indonesia.

Another important contextual factor is the timing of divorce. In Indonesia, the average duration of marriage before divorce is approximately 9.7 years, meaning that parental separation often occurs when children have already entered adolescence. This pattern differs from many western countries, where divorce frequently occurs earlier in the marital trajectory—often within the first five to seven years of marriage—thereby affecting children during early or middle childhood [11]. Consequently, Indonesian adolescents may encounter parental divorce during a critical developmental period characterized by identity formation, evolving peer relationships, and academic transitions.

Given these contextual differences, understanding adolescents’ experiences of parental divorce within the Indonesian sociocultural setting is essential. A qualitative approach can provide deeper insight into how adolescents interpret family disruption. It also helps explain how they cope with its consequences, particularly in contexts where cultural norms, stigma, and family expectations strongly influence emotional expression and coping behaviors.

Numerous studies show the relation between parental separation and the growing risk for adolescents to become emotionally distressed, engage in behavioural problems, and develop depression and anxiety [7], [12]. Adolescents from divorced families have been found to report greater social fear, avoidance behaviours, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation compared to adolescents from intact families [3]. Nonetheless, these adverse sequelae are by no means inevitable, with a growing body of research acknowledging considerable individual differences in adolescents’ responses to parental divorce [13], [14]. Such heterogeneity in outcomes arises from complex interactions between personal characteristics and relational context. Notably some adolescents exemplify extraordinary resilience, developing adaptive coping strategies that lead to psychological growth [15], [16].

Qualitative studies underscore how this disparity is often tied to differences in coping strategies with problem-focused methods resulting in more positive outcomes than avoidance strategies [16]. Overall, the quality of post-divorce relationships is just as important, as adolescents who keep close contact with both parents generally adjust better emotionally, whilst those involved in the continuous conflict between both parents tend to experience chronic stress [17], [18]. Stable support systems including attentive caregivers and empathetic peers could further sustain resilience [8], while certain temperament traits and the quality of the parent-child relationship also greatly influence adjustment to parental divorce [17].

Within Indonesia, these psychological processes are influenced by a unique cultural context that shapes adolescents experiencing parental divorce. Moreover, the high social stigma against divorce, as a value system that places great importance on family ties and marriage life permanency, that effectively reduces adolescent support during this phase [4], often intensifies problems of shame and isolation [5]. The image of divorce in society influences not only the spouses who are getting a divorce, but also their children who are at risk of falling into self-pity, blaming the mother or father, and deep disappointment [5], [9]. In-depth interviews show that Javanese adolescents often hide their distress to prevent burdening caregivers, thus complicating help-seeking behaviors [9]. However, challenges faced by older people in separated contexts and communities may be buffered by protective factors like religiosity [6]. Moreover, the emotional stability of children post-divorce is highly correlated with hadhanah (custody arrangements) and parental involvement [4], [6]. Nonetheless, many gaps persist in the understanding of the nuanced experiences of adolescents after parental divorce.

Much of the existing research relies on quantitative approaches, which, while valuable for identifying patterns and measuring outcomes, inherently limit the kinds of questions that can be asked about adolescents’ emotional experiences. Quantitative designs often emphasize measurable variables, such as frequency of symptoms or levels of well-being, while overlooking the nuanced, context-dependent, and subjective dimensions of how adolescents understand and express their emotions [19]. Few qualitative studies have centered adolescents’ voices in non-western contexts [5], [19], showed that cultural norms and family interactions strongly shaped coping—religious values and parental expectations often encouraged acceptance or suppression, while supportive families fostered healthier expression.

Building on this, the present study addresses key gaps in the literature by asking: How do cultural norms and family interactions shape the coping strategies of Indonesian adolescents experiencing parental divorce, and what factors determine whether they develop resilience or sustained distress? This study aims to i) examine how Indonesian cultural norm's structure adolescents' coping mechanisms in ways that may diverge from Western contexts, ii) identify resilience pathways that enable some adolescents to adapt despite stigma, and iii) generate insights for interventions by highlighting the types of support systems perceived as most or least beneficial.

Therefore, this study addresses a gap in qualitative research examining adolescents' psychological well-being after parental divorce within the Indonesian cultural context. Using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach, this study explores how adolescents interpret divorce experiences and identifies culturally relevant resilience pathways. The findings aim to inform school-based mental health interventions and public health strategies for adolescents experiencing family transitions.

Novelty Statement. This study is among the first IPA studies to explore how Indonesian adolescents make meaning of psychological well-being following parental divorce within a sociocultural context characterized by strong family values, religious influences, and divorce-related stigma. Unlike previous studies that primarily focused on psychological outcomes using quantitative approaches or were conducted in Western settings, this study provides an in-depth understanding of culturally specific resilience pathways, identity reconstruction processes, and relational support dynamics that shape adolescents' adaptation after parental divorce in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

2.1. Study design

This study utilized an IPA approach [20], which delves deeply into how adolescents made sense of their psychological wellbeing after parental divorce. Since the sample was small and homogeneous, and the study focused on lived experience, IPA was especially suitable, as it emphasizes in-depth examination of individual cases, with identification of common patterns only afterwards [21]. This study fills significant gaps in the existing literature by investigating the diverse coping trajectories observed in adolescents after parental divorce and how cultural and familial factors contribute to resilience versus sustained psychological distress. The qualitative design allows for rich exploration of the complex interplay of individual, familial, and sociocultural factors related to adolescents' emotional adjustment during family transitions.

2.2. Research questions

How do adolescents interpret and make meaning of their psychological wellbeing following parental divorce, particularly in relation to their cultural context and family dynamics?

2.3. Study setting

The study was carried out in junior high school in Bekasi City, Indonesia. As a diversified urban environment with a blend of traditional traditions and contemporary influences, Bekasi is part of the Greater Jakarta metropolitan region. The chosen school is a good fit for studying the complex experiences of psychological wellness among teenagers who have gone through parental divorce since it serves kids from a wide range of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Adolescents' daily lives as they deal with family transitions provide a rich background for investigating cultural norms, family dynamics, and emotional reactions in Indonesia. A separate space inside the school was reserved for data collection in order to maintain anonymity and create an environment conducive to open debate.

2.4. Study sample

This study utilized purposive sampling to recruit adolescents between the ages of 14 and 15 who had experienced parental divorce. The selection criteria required participants to: i) have lived through parental divorce for a minimum of one year, ii) currently reside with either one or both parents or guardians, and iii) be willing to openly share their experiences. Adolescents diagnosed with significant mental health conditions and having difficulties in verbal communication were excluded to maintain the study's focus on general psychological well-being.

All participants in this study were female. This occurred because the recruitment process was conducted through voluntary participation within the selected school, and all students who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate were female. Although this resulted in a gender-specific sample, it allowed for deeper exploration of shared experiences among adolescent girls. Future studies should include male adolescents to examine potential gender differences in psychological responses to parental divorce.

The final sample consisted of five adolescents aged 14 to 15, all of whom had experienced parental divorce and were selected from a junior high school in Bekasi City, Indonesia. The use of a small sample was deliberate, as IPA is concerned with a deep, case-oriented analysis rather than question generalisability [20]. IPA methodology is often applied to small, homogenous samples (3–6 participants) which allow for in-depth exploration of how individuals make sense of large-scale life events [22], [23]. This way of working is consistent with phenomenological research conventions that emphasise depth over breadth in the exploration of complex individual lives [24]. The youngest participant was 14 years old, while the oldest was 15. Among them, four were enrolled in the eighth grade, and one was in the ninth grade. Notably, all participants were female as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants

Participant ID	Age	Grade	Living arrangement	Parent remarriage status	Guardian occupation
P001	14	Grade 8	Lives with mother	Parent remarried	Homemaker
P002	15	Grade 9	Lives with mother	Parent remarried	Entrepreneur
P003	14	Grade 8	Lives with grandmother	Parent remarried	Homemaker
P004	14	Grade 8	Lives with grandmother	Unknown	Civil servant
P005	15	Grade 8	Lives with mother	Parent remarried	Homemaker

As shown in Table 1, the participants were five female adolescents aged between 14 and 15 years. Most participants were in the eighth grade, with only one participant enrolled in the ninth grade. Regarding living arrangements, three participants lived with their mothers, while two lived with their grandmothers. In terms of parental remarriage status, the majority reported that one of their parents had remarried, although one participant was uncertain about this information. The guardians' occupations varied, including homemakers, an entrepreneur, and a civil servant.

The inclusion of only female participants may reflect gender-related differences in emotional expression and willingness to discuss family issues. Adolescent girls are often more likely to articulate emotional experiences, which may have influenced voluntary participation in school-based recruitment. This gender-specific sample provides in-depth insights into female adolescents' coping processes but limits transferability to male adolescents. Future studies should include both genders to explore potential differences in psychological responses following parental divorce.

2.5. Recruitment and data collection procedures

The study followed ethical procedures, including obtaining parental consent and assent from adolescents. Recruitment was conducted through school teacher that provide information about children of divorced parents. Initial contact was made via school teacher, who provided potential participants with study information. The preliminary screening consisted of a brief interview and checklist to confirm the adolescent's age, parental divorce status, ability to communicate experiences, and willingness of both the adolescent and guardian to participate. Data collection involved in-depth, face-to-face interviews, each lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The study used semi-structured interviews to ensures consistency across participants while allowing flexibility for in-depth exploration. Sample interview questions include:

- "Take me back to when you first learned about your parents' divorce. What was that like for you?"
- "How has your understanding of the divorce changed over time?"
- "Can you describe a particular moment when the divorce felt most real to you?"
- "What emotions have been most present for you since the divorce? Have these changed over time?"
- "How have your relationships with family members changed since the divorce?"
- "What has helped you most during difficult times since the divorce?"
- "How do you think this experience has shaped who you are?"

Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent to ensure accuracy. All interviews were conducted in a private setting to ensure confidentiality and comfort for the participants. A relationship was established with participants before the study commenced, ensuring trust and rapport to facilitate open discussions. The interviewer maintained a neutral stance, but potential biases and assumptions were acknowledged, including a professional interest in adolescent health and well-being. No nonparticipants were present during the interviews, except in two cases where participants requested the presence of a trusted individual for additional support. To enhance data richness, one participant required a repeat interview to clarify responses, while all participants engaged in transcript review and minor refinements of their responses. Additionally, field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. Transcription was completed within 24 hours of each interview. After transcription, transcripts were returned to participants for verification, allowing them to review and refine their responses if needed. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned a unique identifier (P1–P5) during the interview process. In this

study, no new themes emerged after five participants had been interviewed. Moreover, for IPA studies, saturation typically occurs rapidly with small samples as the methodology focuses on depth rather than breadth of experiences.

2.6. Data processing and analysis

The main investigators and two trained qualitative researchers conducted an iterative process to refine the analyses and ensure thoroughness and rigor. Initially, the research team performed multiple close readings of the interview transcripts, listening to the audio recordings to detect inflections in tone and emotion, to immerse themselves in the data. This process allowed us to become intimately familiar with the narrative of each participant. Two researchers coded data independently, highlighting segments of text that appeared meaningful and assigning descriptive labels to those segments. The codes were then contrasted and discussed in team meetings to resolve inconsistencies and refine interpretations. Coded data were organized and managed using NVivo software, which enabled systematic retrieval and review.

In the theme development stage, related codes were collated into potential themes, which were iteratively reviewed and refined through discussion with the wider research team. Transcripts were double-coded compared to establish consistency and validity and to allow for inter-coder agreement to be assessed; disagreements were resolved via consensus. The relevance and accuracy of the emerging themes in capturing participants' experiences were verified against the complete dataset. The final themes were refined and named during an iterative process, with a focus on how the themes captured the psychological and sociocultural dimensions of post-divorce adjustment. During the analysis, the team kept reflexive logs of the analytical decisions and potential biases to improve transparency and trustworthiness. Results were then collated to form a coherent narrative, supplemented with verbatim passages from participants that illustrated key insights. Member checking was performed by discussing preliminary interpretations with three participants to confirm if the themes reflected their experiences, which led to few modifications to the thematic structure. Clinical psychologists and adolescent health researchers reviewed the analysis to ensure it remained closely grounded in the data while also being sensitive to the complexity of adolescent psychological well-being following parental separation.

In our qualitative study exploring the psychological well-being of Indonesian adolescents following parental divorce, we implemented multiple strategies to ensure the reliability and validity of our findings [25]. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is established through four essential criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To enhance credibility, we engaged in prolonged interaction with participants and conducted member checks. Extended engagement allowed us to build trust and gain deeper insights into their lived experiences. Member checking involved sharing our interpretations with participants to verify the accuracy of our findings, strengthening the study's credibility. Transferability was facilitated by providing rich, in-depth descriptions of the research context and participant demographics. This detailed documentation enables readers to assess the relevance of our findings to different contexts or populations. To ensure dependability, we maintained an audit trail that recorded all research decisions and procedures. This transparent documentation allows future researchers to replicate the study or evaluate the consistency of our findings. Lastly, confirmability was reinforced through reflexive journaling and peer debriefing. Reflexive journaling involved researchers documenting their biases, assumptions, and decision-making processes throughout the study, fostering self-awareness and minimizing subjectivity. Peer debriefing sessions provided a platform for discussing and critically evaluating the research process with colleagues, ensuring that the findings were based on participants' perspectives rather than researcher bias.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Participant characteristics

Five female adolescents participated in this study. All participants were Muslim and reported that their parents' divorce had occurred between two and five years prior to the interviews. Three participants lived with their mothers, while two lived with their grandmothers. In four cases, one or both parents had remarried, while the marital status of one parent was unknown. Guardians' occupations included three homemakers, one entrepreneur, and one civil servant. Participants were assigned identification codes ranging from P001 to P005 to ensure confidentiality. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews until data saturation was achieved.

3.2. Thematic findings

The analysis revealed three major themes describing adolescents' psychological well-being after parental divorce: i) self-acceptance and identity reconstruction, ii) relational ecosystems as double-edged

support systems, and iii) transition from survival strategies to purposeful autonomy. The themes and their corresponding sub-themes are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
Self-acceptance and identity reconstruction	Experiencing emotional loss after parental divorce Emotional responses and coping strategies Academic difficulties following family disruption
Relational ecosystems as double-edged support systems	Parental support and emotional availability Peer relationships and social adjustment Experiences of bullying and stigma Changes in sibling relationships
Transition from survival strategies to purposeful autonomy	Coping strategies and behavioral responses Social withdrawal and selective engagement Future expectations and life planning

Three major themes emerged describing adolescents' psychological well-being after parental divorce: i) self-acceptance and identity reconstruction, ii) relational ecosystems as double-edged support systems, and iii) transition from survival strategies to purposeful autonomy. These themes reflect emotional adjustment, social relationships, and future planning following family disruption.

- Theme 1: self-acceptance and identity reconstruction

Participants described self-acceptance as a gradual and complex process of adapting to the emotional impact of parental divorce. Many adolescents experienced feelings of sadness, confusion, and self-blame before gradually developing a more balanced understanding of their parents' separation. Some participants reported persistent feelings of loss when reflecting on their family situation or comparing themselves with peers from intact families.

"The divorce was years ago, but there are still birthdays that feel unfinished." (P4, age 14)

Several participants also described blaming themselves for the divorce, particularly during the early stages following the separation. Over time, however, some adolescents began to reinterpret the situation and recognize that the divorce was not their responsibility.

"Logically, I know their marriage had issues before I was even born, but my heart still says, 'What if you'd been a better daughter?'" "I have two brains — one that understands and one that still hurts." (P1, age 15)

Academic experiences were also closely connected to emotional responses. Some adolescents reported difficulty concentrating at school, while others used academic achievement as a coping strategy to regain a sense of control.

"Getting good grades was my way of showing that I was stronger than the situation at home." (P4, age 14)

- Theme 2: relational ecosystems as double-edged support systems

Adolescents' psychological adjustment was strongly influenced by their relationships with family members and peers. Participants described these relationships as both supportive and challenging following parental divorce. Parental support played an important role in helping adolescents adapt to the new family structure. Some participants described receiving encouragement and emotional support from caregivers or step-parents.

"My stepfather helps me with my homework and reminds me that my future is still important." (P2, age 15).

However, other participants felt emotionally neglected after parental remarriage or changes in family dynamics.

"The baby gets all the attention now. Sometimes it feels like my mom is starting a new family without me." (P2, age 15).

Peer relationships also became more complex. Some adolescents experienced difficulties discussing their family situations with friends, which led to feelings of isolation.

"When my friends talk about their parents, I just stay quiet because they wouldn't understand." (P5, age 14)

Several participants also reported experiences of teasing or bullying related to their parents' divorce, which further affected their emotional well-being.

"Some students said my dad left because he didn't want me anymore." (P1, age 14)

- Theme 3: transition from survival strategies to purposeful autonomy

Following parental divorce, adolescents described developing new ways of coping and adapting to their changing family environments. Some participants initially engaged in avoidance behaviors, such as spending excessive time online or withdrawing socially.

"I stayed in my room and spent hours on the internet because online nobody knew about my family problems." (P4, age 14)

Over time, however, several adolescents began to develop more adaptive strategies, including selective engagement with family members and focusing on personal goals.

"Now I go to the library when things get stressful at home so I can focus on myself." (P5, age 14)

Participants also described differences in how they viewed their future depending on the stability of their family situation. Adolescents who experienced more stable living arrangements were better able to plan their educational goals.

"My stepfather said he would help me apply to senior high school, so I feel more confident about the future." (P2, age 15)

In contrast, ongoing family uncertainty made it difficult for some adolescents to think about long-term plans.

"I want to go to university, but I don't even know which parent I will live with next year." (P1, age 14)

4. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the nuanced experiences of adolescents navigating psychological well-being after parental divorce. Key themes included: i) The paradox of self-acceptance: navigating loss and identity reconstruction; ii) Relational ecosystems: the double-edged nature of support systems; and iii) The contested path to autonomy: from survival behaviors to purposeful living. The existing literature emphasized that parental divorce can profoundly affect adolescents' emotional stability and psychological health, often disrupting their sense of identity and family dynamics [26]-[29]. However, adolescents' experiences are not uniform, with some demonstrating resilience and the ability to adapt to these changes, as seen in this study and supported by previous research [19].

The adolescents in this study reported divorce-related loss, emotional processing associated with divorce, and academic challenges as expressions of divorce-related distress. A previous study conducted by [27], highlights how disruptions in family roles can lead to anxiety, depression, and reduced self-esteem. Additionally, this study found that some participants resorted to negative coping strategies, such as isolation and substance use commonly identified in other studies examining adolescents' responses to parental divorce [28], [30]. However, the presence of supportive relationships with step-parents and extended family members helped some participants maintain positive psychological development, echoing prior research emphasizing the importance of social support in fostering resilience [29]. Achieving self-acceptance after parental divorce requires balancing emotional challenges with a sense of self-worth and resilience. Adolescents who struggle to accept their circumstances may experience greater emotional distress, while those who gradually develop self-acceptance tend to cope better with life's difficulties and find ways to rebuild their well-being [26], [27], [31]. Interventions focused on emotional regulation and fostering positive self-concepts can enhance adolescents' ability to cultivate self-acceptance and navigate the complex changes that accompany parental separation.

In the context of Indonesian culture, adolescents face unique challenges and expectations. Traditional family values emphasize close-knit structures and strong parental roles [32], [33]. Divorce

disrupts these expectations, often leaving adolescents feeling judged within their communities. This was reflected in participants' accounts of peer bullying, which in the Indonesian context may be understood as a cultural expression of social stigma, where children are teased or excluded because their family no longer fits the normative ideal. Such stigma compounded feelings of isolation, making it harder for adolescents to seek support [34]. At the same time, the findings highlight how extended family networks, particularly grandparents played a protective role, consistent with cultural norms where kinship ties extend beyond the nuclear family. This combination of heightened social judgment and compensatory extended family support underscores the ways Indonesian cultural dynamics shape adolescents' adjustment to parental divorce.

Adolescents' relationships with family and peers create a complex relational ecosystem that can both support and challenge their psychological well-being following parental divorce. These relationships provide emotional support and foster a sense of belonging, trust, and empathy [35], [36]. In the context of adolescents experiencing parental divorce, positive relationships play a crucial role in supporting psychological well-being, helping them navigate emotional challenges, and promoting resilience [27]. Healthy relationships with family and peers are essential for adolescents' psychological well-being, especially during times of emotional upheaval such as parental divorce. Positive relationships provide a secure base from which adolescents can build emotional resilience, develop social skills, and enhance their ability to cope with stress [26], [37]. Strengthening communication and emotional support within families and peer groups is critical for helping adolescents maintain healthy social relationships during challenging life transitions.

The participants exhibited a development of autonomy that was primarily influenced by their experience of divorce. Rather than following the normative adolescent trajectory toward independence, autonomy was reshaped as a direct response to family disruption. This reflects [38], self-determination theory, which defines autonomy as the ability to act according to one's own values and goals. In this study, autonomy emerged not as a gradual developmental milestone, but as a contested process marked by survival, distancing, and future orientation. Our findings suggest that divorce reshaped these processes in divergent ways. For instance, P5 demonstrated autonomy positively, showing responsibility and discipline in school tasks, which aligns with the idea that autonomy, when nurtured in a supportive environment, fosters resilience and psychological growth [39]. In contrast, other participants described autonomy as withdrawal or self-isolation, such as locking themselves in their rooms or engaging in excessive online activity, indicating that autonomy without adequate emotional scaffolding can manifest as risky or maladaptive behavior. These divergent patterns reflect [40], assertion that autonomy is a central developmental task of adolescence, but one that can take adaptive or maladaptive forms depending on the relational and cultural context. Within the Indonesian setting, where strong family and community expectations shape adolescents' choices, autonomy was negotiated between cultural obligations and personal coping needs. Interventions that encourage decision-making, problem-solving, and self-reflection, while also embedding family and cultural sensitivity, may be particularly effective in promoting healthy autonomy for adolescents navigating parental divorce.

A key finding concerned the way adolescents oriented themselves toward the future, which revealed sharply divergent trajectories depending on their post-divorce circumstances. For some, stable living arrangements and supportive relationships enabled purposeful planning for education and long-term goals, consistent with [35], view of life purpose as a core dimension of psychological well-being. As illustrated by P2, whose stepfather promised to support her high school applications, a secure environment allowed her to channel energy into meaningful aspirations. By contrast, participants who faced instability expressed uncertainty and paralysis in envisioning their future. P1, for example, could not think about university while custody arrangements remained unresolved. This sense of limbo echoes [29], observation that divorce often introduces economic and relational insecurities that hinder adolescents' ability to plan ahead. Taken together, these accounts suggest that future orientation among Indonesian adolescent's post-divorce is highly contingent on stability: where structure and support are present, life purpose can emerge as a protective factor, but where instability dominates, adolescents struggle to move beyond immediate survival.

In the context of adolescents navigating parental divorce, personal development reflects how they respond to emotional challenges, engage in social interactions, and discover their capacities for self-growth. Personal development refers to the process through which individuals recognize and cultivate their potential, skills, and emotional growth. It involves both internal reflection and external influences that shape their behaviors, relationships, and aspirations over time [36]. Personal development requires adolescents to strike a balance between self-reflection and external engagement, building resilience and emotional well-being over time [41]. While some participants withdrew from challenges, others embraced opportunities for personal growth through family connections and social activities. This process is dynamic and can significantly shape adolescents' future behavior, aspirations, and emotional well-being. Providing adolescents with supportive environments that foster both individual reflection and positive social interactions is crucial for healthy personal development.

From a public health perspective, these findings highlight the importance of school-based mental health support for adolescents experiencing parental divorce. Schools can serve as critical environments for early identification of emotional distress and provision of counseling services. Programs that strengthen peer support, promote emotional coping skills, and reduce stigma related to family disruption may improve adolescents' psychological well-being. In addition, collaboration between schools, families, and community health services is essential to ensure comprehensive psychosocial support for adolescents during family transitions.

These findings emphasize the need for integrated public health interventions targeting adolescents experiencing parental divorce. School-based mental health screening, teacher training in emotional support, and collaboration with community health services are recommended. Addressing stigma related to divorce through psychoeducation may further enhance adolescents' psychological well-being.

4.1. Study implications

This study underscores the importance of family and school-based interventions that address the emotional needs of adolescents following parental divorce. In the Indonesian context, efforts to support adolescents must consider cultural norms and the stigma surrounding divorce, encouraging more open conversations within families and communities. Schools also play a vital role in providing emotional support and fostering resilience by integrating counseling services and mental health education into the curriculum. Future research should explore the long-term outcomes of divorce on adolescents' well-being across diverse cultural settings and examine the role of school-family collaboration in supporting their development. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how psychological well-being evolves over time following parental separation. Expanding research to include adolescents from varied socioeconomic backgrounds could further illuminate the intersection of financial stress and emotional well-being in post-divorce contexts.

4.2. Strengths and limitations

This study has several notable strengths. First, the use of IPA allowed for an in-depth exploration of adolescents' lived experiences following parental divorce. This methodological approach facilitated a detailed understanding of how participants interpret and construct meanings related to their psychological well-being. The purposive sampling of five adolescents aged 14–15 years was consistent with the idiographic nature of IPA, which emphasizes depth of analysis rather than large sample sizes. In addition, strategies such as reflexive journaling and member checking were employed to enhance credibility and ensure that the findings accurately reflected participants' perspectives.

Another important strength lies in the cultural context of the study. By focusing on Indonesian Muslim adolescents, this research contributes culturally relevant insights into how religious and social norms may shape adolescents' coping processes after parental divorce. Such perspectives remain relatively underrepresented in existing literature, which is largely dominated by Western contexts.

This study also has several limitations. First, the small sample size and the inclusion of only female participants may limit the transferability of the findings. Second, participants were recruited from a single Islamic junior high school in Bekasi City, which may not fully represent the experiences of adolescents from different educational, cultural, or regional backgrounds in Indonesia. Additionally, as the data were based on self-reported experiences, there is a possibility of recall bias or social desirability bias. Future research should involve more diverse participants, including male adolescents and individuals from different socioeconomic and religious backgrounds. Longitudinal studies may also provide a deeper understanding of how adolescents' coping strategies and psychological adjustment evolve over time following parental divorce.

5. CONCLUSION

This study identified three key processes shaping adolescents' psychological well-being after parental divorce: identity reconstruction, relational support dynamics, and emerging autonomy. Adolescents experienced grief, self-blame, academic disruption, and social stigma; however, supportive relationships with peers, extended family, and teachers promoted resilience. The findings highlight the importance of stable support systems in mitigating psychological distress. These findings demonstrate that psychological adjustment following parental divorce is influenced not only by individual coping mechanisms but also by the quality of social support available to adolescents.

From a public health perspective, schools play a crucial role in providing early mental health support. Implementing school-based counseling, peer-support programs, and anti-stigma initiatives may improve adolescents' well-being following parental divorce. These findings contribute culturally grounded evidence for developing adolescent mental health policies in Indonesia. Furthermore, integrating mental

health promotion into routine school activities may help adolescents access support earlier and reduce the long-term consequences of psychological distress.

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This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : **C**onceptualization

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E : Writing - Review & **E**diting

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

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Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, Universitas Indonesia (Approval: 0150/UN2.F12.D1.2.1/ETIK/2022).

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, [S], upon reasonable request.

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