

4-30-2020

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### Recommended Citation

Shabrina, Khairunnisa; Kusristanti, Chandradewi; and Listiyandini, Ratih Arruum (2020) "Gratitude and Resilience among Adolescents Who Have Experienced Parental Divorce," *Psychological Research on Urban Society*: Vol. 3: No. 1, Article 11.

DOI: 10.7454/proust.v3i1.59

Available at: <https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/proust/vol3/iss1/11>

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# Gratitude and Resilience among Adolescents Who Have Experienced Parental Divorce

Psychological Research  
on Urban Society  
2020, Vol. 3(1): 24-29  
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DOI: [10.7454/proust.v3i1.59](https://doi.org/10.7454/proust.v3i1.59)  
[proust.ui.ac.id](http://proust.ui.ac.id)

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Received: August 18th, 2019  
Revision Accepted: April 15th, 2020

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## Abstract

Compared to other cities in Indonesia, DKI Jakarta, as one of the largest urban areas, is ranked quite high in divorce rates. It is known that parental divorce has several impacts on children. For example, adolescents with divorced parents have a greater risk of various psychological problems. Previous studies have shown that gratitude enhances positivity and optimism, and it also helps individuals through difficult times, including parental divorce. This non-experimental study aims to determine the role of gratitude in resilience among adolescents (12 - 21 years old) based in the Jakarta metropolitan area (Jabodetabek), whose parents are divorced. Non-probability sampling was used to recruit the participants (n = 109). The measurements used in this study are the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale ( $\alpha = 0.896$ ) and Gratitude Scale Indonesian Version (Skala Bersyukur Versi Indonesia (SBI)) ( $\alpha = 0.896$ ). Simple linear regression showed that gratitude plays a significant role in a participant's resilience ( $p < 0.05$ ). Further, 28.9% of the variance in resilience can be explained by gratitude. These findings highlight the importance of gratitude interventions to enhance resilience among adolescents with divorced parents.

## Keywords

Adolescent, CD-RISC, Divorce, Gratitude, Resilience

**D**KI Jakarta, as one of Indonesia's largest urban areas, is ranked quite high in divorce rates. Based on data from the Directorate General of Religious Courts (Direktorat Jenderal Badan Peradilan Agama) and Indonesia's Supreme Court (Mahkamah Agung), the seven provinces with the highest divorce rates in Indonesia in 2016 were East Java, West Java, Central Java, South Sulawesi, DKI Jakarta, North Sumatra, and Banten (<https://lokadata.beritagar.id>). Nurlaelawati

(2010) found that the main reason for divorce cases in DKI Jakarta was economic factors, especially when wives initiated the divorce.

Several works of literature found that parental divorce affects children significantly. For instance, children whose parents divorce may experience prolonged sadness and severe depression (Lauman-Billings & Emery, 2000). Children who are exposed to parental conflict following divorce tend to experience an emotional decline that may include withdrawal, anxiety, and depression (Schepard et al., 1992). Moreover, adolescents with divorced parents have a greater risk of experiencing various psychological problems, compared to adolescents without divorced parents (Lauman-Billings & Emery, 2000). Alim (in Banne & Afiatin, 2014)

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stated that children who entered the adolescent developmental stage and experienced parental divorce tended to remember the conflict and stress associated with their parents' divorce. In Amato and Boyd (2014), children with divorced parents had lower average scores in academic achievement, behavior, psychological adjustment, self-esteem, and social relationships. They also had a lower level of well-being compared to children with parents who were not divorced.

On the other hand, in responding to parental divorce, some adolescents are able to adjust well. For example, Hadianti's et al., (2017) case study in Bandung about resilience and achievement in students who experienced parental divorce found that adolescents with divorced parents were still able to achieve well in their academics and have functional social interactions with others. The researchers also discussed the differences caused by adolescents' resilience after experiencing parental divorce. Resilience helps individuals deal with difficulties and can help minimize adverse effects (Hadianti et al., 2017).

Connor and Davidson (2003) described that resilience is a personal characteristic that enables people to grow during hard times. For adolescents, hard times can manifest as several situations. Walker (2005) found that the significant factors of stress experienced by adolescents stem from relations with friends and family, pressure and expectations from oneself and others, and school-related pressures. In other words, adolescents' stress worsens if their parents are divorced. However, resilience helps them face many kinds of adverse situations, including those originating from their parents' divorce.

Several factors are known to contribute to building resilience, one of which is gratitude. As an internal protective factor, optimism can support an individual to form resilience if the individual has a sense of gratitude (Mahardika, 2019). Peterson and Seligman (2004) stated that gratitude can make individuals think more positively and have a broad perspective on life, which is a gift. McCullough et al., (2002) stated that grateful individuals tend to feel better physically and psychologically, as well as to report more optimistic feelings about their future.

To conclude, it is expected that gratitude contributes positively to resilience. More specifically, grateful adolescents are expected to

evaluate their lives as better and to feel more positive and optimistic despite having experienced parental divorce. All in all, this study is essential to investigate gratitude and its contribution to resilience among adolescents with divorced parents.

## Methods

### *Participants*

The research participants were adolescents aged 12–21 years old (mean = 19.61; SD = 1.742) who had experienced parental divorce and lived in the Jakarta metropolitan area (Jabodetabek). They were selected through non-probability accidental sampling. The participants were recruited through online and offline questionnaires. The sample (n = 109) are consisted of 11 male participants (10.1%) and 98 female participants (89.9%). The female participants outnumbered the male participants because, during the data collection, they more willing to fill out the questionnaire.

### *Measures*

**Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC).** The Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) was developed as a brief self-rated assessment to help quantify resilience and as a clinical measure to assess treatment response (Connor & Davidson, 2003). CD-RISC consisted of 25 items, all of which are answered on a 5-point scale from 0 "Not true at all" to 4 "True nearly all of the time." Total scores range from 0–100, with higher scores indicating greater resilience. According to Connor and Davidson (2003), the CD-RISC showed high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ).

In this study, we used internal consistency to test the CD-RISC's reliability. The tryout (n = 32) yielded  $\alpha = 0.896$ . We also conducted item analysis for the CD-RISC, which showed that the item-total score correlations ranged from 0.134–0.715. Based on these results, the CD-RISC was found reliable to use.

**Gratitude scale Indonesian version (Skala Bersyukur Versi Indonesia (SBI)).** The Gratitude Scale Indonesian Version (Skala Bersyukur Versi Indonesia (SBI)) is a measurement scale expected to be used in research, assessment, or

interventions related to gratitude in the Indonesian population (Listiyandini et al., 2015). Listiyandini et al. (2015) found that there are differences between gratitude as conceptualized in Western society versus Indonesia. Therefore, we chose to use this measurement in our study.

The SBI consists of 30 items, all of which carry a 6-point range of responses from 1 "Very unnecessary" to 6 "Very necessary." The total score from this scale represents the participants' level of gratitude, with higher scores indicating greater gratitude. According to Listiyandini et al., (2015), the SBI showed high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ).

This study used internal consistency to test the SBI's reliability. The tryout ( $n = 32$ ) showed that the SBI is reliable ( $\alpha = 0.896$ ). We also conducted an item analysis for the SBI and found that the item-total score correlations ranged from 0.085–0.797.

### **Participant Recruitment and Data Collection**

Participants were recruited using an online questionnaire on Google Forms. Links to the questionnaire were posted in various social media, especially ones related to psychology. We also spread the link among several relevant communities online (e.g., a community for broken homes). In addition to the online questionnaire, hard copies of questionnaires were given to participants who fit the study characteristics at Junior High School 5 Bekasi (SMPN 5 Bekasi). This part of the data collection was as-

sisted by teachers.

### **Data Analysis**

Simple linear regression was used to test the study hypothesis, and describe analysis was applied for the demographic data. Table 1 presents the results.

### **Results**

Using simple regression, we found that gratitude played a significant role in resilience among adolescents with divorced parents ( $p = 0.000$ ;  $R^2 = 0.289$ ). Moreover, 28.9% of the variance in resilience could be explained by gratitude. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Based on the regression formula, it can be concluded that when participants reported a high level of gratitude, they also showed a high level of resilience. In other words, being grateful enhanced the participants' resilience.

### **Discussion**

The results showed that gratitude played a significant role in building resilience among adolescents who experienced parental divorce. This finding supports the results of previous research conducted by Listiyandini (2016), which demonstrated that individuals who are able to appreciate things they receive from God, other people in the social environment, and life

**Table 1. Demographic data**

Aspect	Total (n=109)	Percentage
Sex		
Male	11	10.1 %
Female	98	89.9 %
Age		
12 - 15 years	5	4.6 %
16 - 17 years	7	6.5 %
18 - 21 years	97	88.9 %
Educational Background		
Elementary School	3	2.8 %
Junior High School	4	3.7 %
Senior High School	78	71.6 %
Diploma	13	11.9 %
Bachelor's Degree	11	10.1 %

**Table 2. Result of simple Regression**

R	R2	F	Df	Sig.	Regression Formula
0.537	0.289	43.401	1.108	0.000	$Y = 22.417 + 0.346X$

Note.  $p < 0.05$

experiences are better able to rise above difficult situations.

Some aspects of gratitude are related to resilience, such as positive feelings with positive acceptance of changes, tolerance of negative affect with acting positively as a form of expression of positive feelings, and appreciation. Positive feeling is related to acceptance of changes. Grateful adolescents will be able to have positive feelings as well as to accept changes in their lives, including negative events like parental divorce. So, if adolescents have positive feelings in themselves, this can help to build resilience as well. Individuals who have a sense of gratitude can develop adaptive coping methods, have positive relationships with others and demonstrate cognitive flexibility (Listiyandini, 2016). Similarly, when faced with a problem, adolescents who have gratitude will be able to use an adaptive way of problem-solving, maintain good social relationships with others, and have cognitive flexibility. This can be demonstrated through the ability to think more positively and have a larger perspective regarding the things experienced in his life.

Tolerance to negative affect in resilience is related to the tendency of individuals to act positively as a form of expression of positive feelings and appreciation. This form of expression can be manifested in direct action or positive desires. It is related to the individual's ability to be calm and immediately cope with stresses, think carefully, and stay focused even when facing pressure (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The type of coping that is related with gratitude is emotion-focused. This type of coping is based on the ability to view all the things positively and to involve God in one's life. According to Cahyono (2014), positive reappraisal takes place in emotion-focused coping, where individuals change their thinking positively and rely on religious values. Therefore, adolescents with divorced parents who have a sense of gratitude for the things they experience will be able to view their lives more positively

and involve God in their lives.

Spirituality is another aspect of forming resilience, according to Connor and Davidson (2003). Belief in a greater power that gives and governs all human life, as well as an appreciation for God's role in one's own life, helps individuals to have feelings of surrender and acceptance of their experiences. The feeling of surrender and acceptance is known to help individuals improve their capability in being resilient (Listiyandini, 2016). It is expected that adolescents who have a sense of gratitude will have feelings of surrender and acceptance, thus helping them to form resilience after experiencing parental divorce.

Watkins (in Listiyandini et al., 2015) suggested that another characteristic of grateful people is that there is no feeling of insufficiency, and this leads the individuals to have positive feelings in themselves. Thus, they feel content with what they have and are satisfied in life. Related to our findings, adolescents who are grateful for the things they have experienced, despite traumatic events such as parental divorce, will be able to appreciate the contributions of other people in the surrounding environment, appreciate simple pleasures, and even feel satisfied in life. All in all, these positive feelings can help boost their resilience.

McCullough et al., (2002) found that grateful people reported feeling more optimistic about their future. If this finding is associated with this study, it could mean that adolescents who once felt bad about their parents' divorce will feel that there is hope for them to have a better life. In the end, this will also help to build their resilience.

An imbalanced number between female and male participants may be a shortcoming in this study. For example, Klimstra et al., (2009) found that female adolescents generally reported a more mature personality. Another shortcoming is related to age distribution, as the majority of participants were in late adolescence. According to Papalia et al., (2008), late adolescents have

improved their moral reasoning as well as their cognitive abilities. This finding may explain how the participants in this study reported their gratitude and resilience.

### Conclusions

Based on the results of this research, it can be concluded that gratitude plays a significant role in resilience among adolescents whose parents are divorced. The more grateful adolescents feel, the higher their reported resilience is. This finding highlights the importance of gratitude interventions to enhance resilience among adolescents with divorced parents.

### Declaration of Conflicting Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Acknowledgment

We thank the participating teachers at Junior High School 5 Bekasi (SMPN 5 Bekasi) for helping us with the data collection.

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