

Fatherlessness as an Urban Social Phenomenon: A Study of the Absence of Fathers' Roles in Families in Bandung City, Indonesia

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Abstract. Fatherlessness has become an increasingly important social issue in urban communities, characterized not only by the physical absence of fathers but also by their limited emotional, educational, and social involvement in family life. This study aims to examine fatherlessness as an urban social phenomenon in Bandung City by identifying its forms, exploring the social factors contributing to fathers' absence, and analyzing its implications for family resilience. A qualitative case study approach was employed through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving fathers, mothers, adolescents, psychologists, social workers, and government representatives. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings are expected to show that fatherlessness is shaped by interconnected factors, including economic pressures, demanding work patterns, family instability, urban lifestyles, and changing gender roles, which collectively reduce fathers' involvement in parenting despite their physical presence. The study proposes an Urban Fatherlessness Model that explains fatherlessness as a consequence of urban social transformation and highlights the importance of strengthening paternal engagement through family-based interventions, community support, and responsive public policies. By positioning fatherlessness within the context of urban sociology rather than solely child psychology, this study contributes to a broader understanding of family change and provides insights for policies aimed at enhancing family resilience in urban settings.

Keywords: *Fatherlessness, Urban Sociology, Father Involvement, Family Resilience, Urban Family.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Family has long been recognized as the primary social institution responsible for nurturing children's physical, emotional, and social development. Within the family system, fathers play a distinctive role that extends beyond economic provision to include emotional support, guidance, protection, and active participation in childrearing (Lamb, 2010; Parke, 2000). Over the past four decades, the concept of fatherhood has evolved substantially from the traditional image of fathers as sole breadwinners toward a more comprehensive understanding of paternal involvement encompassing engagement, accessibility, and responsibility in children's lives (Lamb, 2000; Pleck, 2010).

Despite these theoretical developments, father absence remains an increasingly significant social issue across many countries. Fatherlessness refers not only to the physical absence of fathers due to divorce, death, migration, or separation but also to emotional and psychological disengagement despite fathers being physically present within the household (East et al., 2014; Lamb, 2010). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that limited father involvement is associated with poorer social competence, lower educational achievement, behavioral problems, emotional distress, and weaker family functioning (Amato, 2005; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Lamb, 2010). Consequently, fatherlessness should not be understood solely as an individual or psychological problem but also as a social phenomenon shaped by broader structural and cultural transformations (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Pleck, 2010).

The emergence of fatherlessness is closely linked to rapid urbanization and socioeconomic change. Urban societies are characterized by demanding work environments, increased labor mobility, dual-earner households, changing gender roles, and evolving family structures (UN-Habitat, 2022; OECD, 2023). These conditions frequently reduce the quantity

and quality of fathers' interactions with their children (Pleck, 2010; Cabrera et al., 2018; Prime et al., 2023). While contemporary fatherhood encourages greater paternal engagement, many fathers continue to experience structural barriers that limit their participation in parenting, creating a discrepancy between normative expectations and everyday family practices (Cabrera et al., 2018; Lamb, 2010).

Indonesia has experienced similar transformations. Economic development, urban migration, and changing family dynamics have altered parental roles, while patriarchal norms continue to position fathers primarily as financial providers (Hedo, 2020; BPS, 2024). Consequently, emotional caregiving and daily parenting responsibilities remain largely concentrated on mothers. Recent Indonesian studies indicate that although awareness of father involvement has increased, paternal participation in childcare remains inconsistent and strongly influenced by cultural expectations and occupational demands (Hedo, 2020; Prashinta et al., 2025).

Bandung City represents an appropriate setting for examining this phenomenon because it is one of Indonesia's largest metropolitan areas, characterized by rapid urbanization, economic diversification, and changing household structures (BPS Kota Bandung, 2024). Increasing employment pressures, long commuting hours, expanding service-sector occupations, and shifting family lifestyles may reduce fathers' opportunities to engage meaningfully with their children (OECD, 2023; UN-Habitat, 2022). Rather than viewing fatherlessness merely as the consequence of family breakdown, it is necessary to understand it as an outcome of urban social transformation that reshapes family relationships and parental roles (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Cabrera et al., 2018; Anesti & Abdullah, 2024).

Although fatherlessness has received increasing scholarly attention, previous research has predominantly examined its psychological consequences for children, including emotional well-being, resilience, identity formation, and behavioral development (Amato, 2005; Sarkadi et al., 2008; Lamb, 2010). Comparatively fewer studies have analyzed fatherlessness from the perspective of urban sociology by investigating how urban social structures, occupational patterns, and family transformations collectively produce paternal disengagement (Marsiglio et al., 2000; Cabrera et al., 2018). This limitation suggests the need for a broader sociological framework capable of explaining fatherlessness as an urban social phenomenon rather than solely an issue of child development.

This study aims to examine fatherlessness as an urban social phenomenon in Bandung City by identifying the forms of fathers' absence, analyzing the social factors that contribute to declining paternal involvement, and exploring its implications for family resilience.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Fatherlessness as a Social Phenomenon

The concept of fatherlessness has shifted considerably from its traditional definition, which primarily referred to the physical absence of fathers resulting from divorce, death, migration, or separation. Contemporary scholarship argues that fatherlessness also encompasses the emotional, psychological, and social absence of fathers despite their physical presence within the household (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 2010). This broader perspective emphasizes that effective fatherhood is determined not merely by co-residence but by the quality of paternal engagement in children's daily lives.

From a sociological perspective, fatherlessness should be understood as a consequence of structural and cultural transformations rather than solely as an individual family problem (Fajriyanti & Safitri, 2024). Changes in labor markets, urbanization, economic pressures, and evolving gender norms have altered family structures and parental responsibilities, reducing opportunities for fathers to participate actively in childrearing (Marsiglio et al., 2000).

Consequently, fatherlessness reflects broader social changes affecting family institutions and parenting practices.

Previous studies consistently demonstrate that limited paternal involvement is associated with adverse developmental outcomes, including poorer academic achievement, behavioral difficulties, emotional problems, and weaker social competence (Amato, 2005; Sarkadi et al., 2008). Nevertheless, these outcomes are mediated by family relationships, socioeconomic conditions, and community support, suggesting that fatherlessness should be analyzed within broader social contexts rather than solely through psychological perspectives.

2. Father Involvement Theory

The theoretical foundation for understanding fatherlessness is grounded in Father Involvement Theory developed by Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, and Levine (1985). This framework conceptualizes father involvement through three interconnected dimensions: engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. Engagement refers to direct interactions between fathers and children, accessibility denotes fathers' availability when needed, and responsibility reflects fathers' commitment to ensuring children's welfare and developmental needs (Lamb, 2000).

Pleck (2010) subsequently refined this framework by emphasizing that paternal involvement should be evaluated not only by the quantity of time fathers spend with their children but also by the quality of interactions. His revised model incorporates positive engagement, warmth and responsiveness, behavioral guidance, indirect care, and process responsibility, highlighting the multidimensional nature of fatherhood. These developments have shifted scholarly attention from measuring fathers' physical presence toward assessing meaningful paternal participation.

Recent empirical studies further indicate that father involvement is shaped by individual characteristics, family relationships, workplace conditions, and cultural expectations. Occupational demands, inflexible working arrangements, and traditional gender ideologies frequently constrain fathers' participation in childcare, particularly in rapidly developing urban societies (Cabrera et al., 2018).

3. Urban Social Transformation and Family Change

Urbanization has fundamentally transformed family organization and parenting practices. Modern cities are characterized by increased labor mobility, long working hours, dual-income households, technological advancement, and changing gender relations, all of which influence family interactions (UN-Habitat, 2022).

Family sociology suggests that structural changes within urban societies reshape parental roles by increasing occupational pressures while simultaneously encouraging greater parental involvement. However, these competing demands often create role conflicts for fathers, limiting their availability for emotional support and daily caregiving (Parke, 2000). Consequently, urban fathers frequently experience tensions between fulfilling economic responsibilities and meeting expectations for active parenting.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory further explains that parenting behaviors are influenced by interactions among family, workplace, community, and broader social institutions (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Accordingly, fatherlessness should be understood not simply as an individual choice but as the outcome of interactions between structural constraints and family dynamics.

4. Family Resilience and the Consequences of Fatherlessness

Family resilience refers to the ability of families to adapt positively to adversity while maintaining healthy relationships and fulfilling essential family functions (Walsh, 2016;

Kelmedi et al., 2026). Numerous studies have shown that active father involvement contributes significantly to children's emotional well-being, academic success, self-esteem, and social adjustment (Sarkadi et al., 2008).

Conversely, prolonged father absence may weaken family resilience by increasing parenting burdens, reducing emotional support, and limiting children's access to positive role models (Amato, 2005). Nevertheless, recent sociological perspectives argue that these negative outcomes should not be attributed exclusively to father absence itself but rather to broader socioeconomic inequalities, unstable family relationships, and inadequate institutional support (Cabrera et al., 2018). Therefore, strengthening paternal involvement requires interventions not only at the family level but also through workplace policies, community support systems, and family-oriented public policies.

C. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore fatherlessness as an urban social phenomenon in Bandung City, Indonesia. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth understanding of the social meanings, experiences, and interactions underlying the absence of fathers' roles within urban families (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). The study focused on examining how urban social transformation influences paternal involvement and shapes family dynamics in the context of contemporary urban life.

The research participants were selected using purposive sampling, involving individuals who had direct experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. Participants included fathers, mothers, adolescents experiencing fatherlessness, psychologists, social workers, and government officials responsible for family and child welfare programs in Bandung City. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to obtain comprehensive and triangulated information regarding the forms, causes, and consequences of fatherlessness (Patton, 2015).

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview transcripts and field notes were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns related to paternal involvement, urban social change, family relationships, and family resilience. The analysis was conducted iteratively throughout the research process to ensure that emerging themes accurately reflected participants' experiences.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was strengthened through data triangulation, prolonged engagement, and member checking, while confidentiality and voluntary participation were maintained by obtaining informed consent from all participants and anonymizing their identities throughout the research process.

D. RESULTAS AND DISCUSSION

1. Fatherlessness as an Urban Social Phenomenon in Bandung City

From a conceptual perspective, fatherlessness in Bandung City can be understood as an increasingly visible urban social phenomenon characterized by the declining involvement of fathers in children's daily lives. Rather than being limited to physical absence caused by divorce, death, or migration, fatherlessness in urban families increasingly manifests through reduced emotional presence, limited communication, and minimal participation in parenting despite fathers remaining within the same household. This broader understanding suggests that fatherlessness is closely associated with changes in urban lifestyles and family organization

rather than merely with family disruption.

As one of Indonesia's largest metropolitan areas, Bandung has experienced rapid urbanization, population growth, economic diversification, and the expansion of the service and creative economy. These transformations have altered the balance between occupational responsibilities and family life. Urban employment often requires long working hours, high productivity, frequent mobility, and continuous digital connectivity. Under these circumstances, fathers may devote substantial time to employment while having fewer opportunities for sustained interaction with their children. Consequently, fatherhood is increasingly interpreted through economic provision, whereas emotional engagement and direct caregiving receive comparatively less attention.

The phenomenon is further influenced by demographic and cultural changes within Bandung. The city attracts students, professionals, entrepreneurs, and migrant workers from surrounding regions, creating increasingly heterogeneous family structures and lifestyles. The rise of dual-income households, flexible employment arrangements, and digital work patterns has transformed daily family routines. Although these changes contribute positively to household income and economic resilience, they also create challenges in maintaining meaningful father-child interaction. Family communication increasingly occurs within limited periods, and shared family activities become less frequent because parents and children follow different daily schedules.

In addition, digital technology has introduced a new dimension to fatherlessness. While smartphones, social media, and online communication facilitate occupational flexibility, they also blur the distinction between work and family life. Fathers may remain physically present at home while continuing to respond to professional responsibilities through digital devices. As a result, physical co-residence does not necessarily translate into emotional availability or active parenting. This condition reflects what contemporary family scholars describe as functional fatherlessness, where paternal disengagement emerges despite physical proximity.

Collectively, these observations suggest that fatherlessness in Bandung should not be interpreted solely as an individual parenting issue. Instead, it reflects broader structural transformations associated with urban modernization, occupational change, technological development, and evolving family roles. Consequently, the phenomenon should be examined through a sociological perspective that recognizes the interaction between urban social change and family dynamics.

The conceptualization of fatherlessness as an urban social phenomenon extends existing fatherhood literature by positioning paternal disengagement within the broader context of urban transformation. Traditional family theories generally emphasize fathers' economic responsibilities while assigning nurturing roles primarily to mothers (Parsons & Bales, 1955; Farkhatin, 2026). Although this division of labor reflected the socioeconomic organization of industrial societies, contemporary metropolitan environments require fathers to perform multiple and often competing roles. Modern fathers are expected not only to provide financial security but also to participate actively in children's education, emotional development, and daily caregiving. These expanding expectations have fundamentally reshaped the meaning of fatherhood.

Lamb (2010) argues that effective fatherhood consists of engagement, accessibility, and responsibility. These dimensions imply that fatherhood should be evaluated according to the quality of fathers' participation in children's lives rather than their physical presence alone. Pleck (2010) further emphasizes that positive paternal engagement includes emotional warmth, behavioral guidance, indirect care, and process responsibility. Within this framework, fatherlessness becomes evident whenever these dimensions decline, regardless of whether fathers continue living with their families.

The metropolitan characteristics of Bandung provide an important context for understanding this transformation. According to Badan Pusat Statistik Kota Bandung (2024), Bandung is one of Indonesia's most densely populated cities and serves as a regional center for education, commerce, tourism, and the creative economy. Such urban characteristics generate both opportunities and constraints for family life. Employment within professional services, creative industries, education, and digital sectors frequently requires flexible schedules, project-based work, and continuous online communication. Consequently, fathers experience increasing difficulties in balancing occupational commitments with family responsibilities.

These structural conditions correspond with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which argues that parenting behaviors emerge from interactions between individuals and multiple environmental systems. Fathers' involvement is influenced not only by personal motivation but also by workplace cultures, transportation systems, economic pressures, public policies, and prevailing cultural norms. In Bandung, long commuting times, traffic congestion, and the increasing prevalence of digital work environments represent exosystem influences that indirectly shape father-child relationships. Therefore, fatherlessness should be understood as a consequence of interactions between macro-level urban transformation and micro-level family processes.

This interpretation also resonates with Wirth's (1938) theory of urbanism, which suggests that metropolitan life tends to weaken traditional interpersonal relationships by encouraging individualism, occupational specialization, and impersonal social interaction. Within highly urbanized environments, family members often spend substantial portions of their day in different social settings, thereby reducing opportunities for sustained communication. While technological advances facilitate connectivity, they do not necessarily strengthen emotional intimacy. Turkle (2011) argues that digital communication frequently creates an illusion of togetherness while simultaneously diminishing meaningful interpersonal interaction. Applied to the Bandung context, this perspective helps explain why fathers may remain physically present within households but still become emotionally unavailable.

Compared with previous empirical studies, the present conceptual framework broadens the analytical perspective. Amato (2005) primarily examined the developmental consequences of father absence, emphasizing educational achievement and psychosocial adjustment. Similarly, Sarkadi et al. (2008), through a systematic review, demonstrated that active father involvement positively influences children's cognitive and emotional development. Cabrera et al. (2018) further identified fathers' unique contributions to language acquisition, self-regulation, and social competence. Although these studies establish the importance of paternal involvement, they predominantly analyze fatherlessness from developmental and psychological perspectives.

The present framework extends this literature by emphasizing the structural determinants of fatherlessness. Rather than interpreting declining father involvement exclusively as a consequence of individual parenting behavior or family dysfunction, it positions fatherlessness within the broader processes of urbanization, labor market transformation, and technological change. In this sense, fathers' reduced engagement reflects not only personal choices but also institutional and structural constraints that characterize metropolitan societies.

Another important implication concerns the changing meaning of masculinity within urban families. Traditional patriarchal norms continue to identify fathers primarily as breadwinners, while contemporary parenting discourse increasingly encourages emotional engagement and shared caregiving responsibilities. These overlapping expectations often generate role conflict. Fathers may perceive long working hours as fulfilling their familial obligations, whereas children increasingly expect emotional availability, communication, and

active participation. This discrepancy illustrates that fatherlessness is not simply a matter of physical absence but also a mismatch between evolving social expectations and the realities of urban family life.

The Bandung context also highlights the importance of considering fatherlessness as part of broader urban governance. Policies promoting family resilience should not focus exclusively on parenting education. Organizational support for work-life balance, flexible working arrangements, father-friendly employment policies, community parenting initiatives, and accessible family counseling services may collectively strengthen paternal involvement. Consequently, addressing fatherlessness requires collaboration among families, employers, educational institutions, local governments, and community organizations rather than relying solely on individual behavioral change.

From a theoretical perspective, this conceptual discussion contributes by integrating Father Involvement Theory (Lamb, 2010), Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and Urban Sociology (Wirth, 1938) into a single explanatory framework. While previous studies largely examine either child development or parenting behavior, the proposed perspective conceptualizes fatherlessness as a multidimensional social phenomenon emerging from interactions between structural urban transformation and family dynamics. This integration offers a broader understanding of paternal disengagement within contemporary metropolitan societies such as Bandung and provides the conceptual foundation for developing an Urban Fatherlessness Model in the following section.

2. Factors Contributing to Fatherlessness in Bandung City

The emergence of fatherlessness in Bandung City cannot be attributed to a single factor but rather results from the interaction of multiple structural, economic, cultural, and technological changes accompanying urban development. The metropolitan characteristics of Bandung create conditions that reshape paternal roles and influence the quality of father-child relationships. These interrelated factors explain why fatherlessness increasingly appears even in families where fathers remain physically present.

One of the primary contributing factors is economic pressure. As the cost of living in Bandung continues to increase alongside housing prices, education expenses, and daily household needs, fathers frequently prioritize economic productivity to maintain family welfare. This economic pressure encourages longer working hours, overtime employment, and multiple job arrangements, thereby reducing opportunities for fathers to spend quality time with their children. In many urban households, financial provision becomes the dominant indicator of successful fatherhood, while emotional engagement and caregiving responsibilities receive comparatively less attention. This situation supports the argument of Lamb (2010) that economic provision alone cannot adequately represent paternal involvement because fatherhood also requires accessibility and emotional engagement.

A second factor is occupational transformation associated with urban labor markets. Bandung has developed into one of Indonesia's major centers for education, creative industries, tourism, and digital entrepreneurship. These sectors are characterized by flexible working hours, project-based employment, and continuous digital communication that often extends beyond conventional office schedules. Consequently, many fathers experience difficulties separating professional responsibilities from family life. Although physically present at home, they frequently remain psychologically occupied with work-related tasks. This phenomenon reflects the changing nature of work in modern urban societies, where technological advancement simultaneously increases occupational flexibility and family role conflict (Cabrera et al., 2018).

The third contributing factor involves urban mobility and transportation challenges. Bandung Metropolitan Area is characterized by high traffic density and daily commuting between Bandung City and surrounding municipalities, including Cimahi, Kabupaten Bandung, Bandung Barat, and Sumedang. Long commuting durations reduce the amount of discretionary time available for family interaction, particularly during weekdays. Fathers often leave home early in the morning and return late in the evening, limiting opportunities to participate in children's educational activities, recreational experiences, or routine family communication. These structural conditions illustrate Bronfenbrenner's (1979) argument that parenting behaviors are indirectly shaped by environmental systems beyond the family itself.

Another important factor concerns persistent patriarchal cultural norms. Despite increasing public awareness regarding shared parenting, many Indonesian families continue to perceive fathers primarily as breadwinners, whereas mothers remain responsible for childcare and household management. Such cultural expectations influence fathers' perceptions of parental responsibility and may unintentionally discourage active participation in daily caregiving. Consequently, emotional caregiving is often considered secondary to economic provision. Pleck (2010) argues that this traditional understanding of masculinity limits opportunities for fathers to develop closer emotional relationships with their children despite changing societal expectations.

The rapid expansion of digital technology also contributes to fatherlessness in contemporary urban families. Bandung is widely recognized as one of Indonesia's digital innovation and creative economy hubs, where internet connectivity and mobile technology are deeply integrated into everyday life. While digital technologies facilitate communication and occupational efficiency, they simultaneously increase the likelihood of work-family boundary blurring. Fathers frequently continue responding to emails, participating in virtual meetings, or managing online businesses after returning home. Turkle (2011) describes this condition as a paradox in which technological connectivity enhances communication while simultaneously reducing meaningful interpersonal interaction. Consequently, physical proximity does not necessarily guarantee emotional presence within family relationships.

Family structural transformation further reinforces this phenomenon. Increasing female labor force participation has contributed to the expansion of dual-income households, particularly among urban middle-class families. Although dual-income arrangements improve household economic resilience, they also require parents to negotiate caregiving responsibilities more carefully. When organizational support such as flexible working arrangements or accessible childcare services is limited, both parents experience time constraints that reduce opportunities for intensive family interaction. Under these circumstances, fathers frequently prioritize occupational responsibilities, while mothers assume greater responsibility for everyday parenting.

Finally, weakening community social cohesion represents another contributing factor. Traditional neighborhood relationships that historically supported collective child-rearing have gradually declined in many urban communities. Urban residents generally experience higher residential mobility, more individualistic lifestyles, and reduced participation in neighborhood activities. Putnam (2000) argues that declining social capital weakens community capacity to reinforce positive parenting practices and family support networks. In Bandung, reduced interaction among neighbors, extended families, and local communities may limit informal social mechanisms that encourage fathers' active participation in parenting.

Taken together, these factors demonstrate that fatherlessness in Bandung City should not be interpreted merely as the consequence of individual parental choices. Rather, it represents the cumulative outcome of structural economic transformation, changing labor markets, urban mobility, cultural expectations, technological development, family

restructuring, and declining community social capital. This multidimensional perspective distinguishes fatherlessness from conventional family problems by positioning it as a manifestation of broader urban social transformation. Consequently, strengthening father involvement requires interventions that address both individual parenting practices and the structural conditions shaping family life in contemporary metropolitan societies.

3. Implications of Fatherlessness for Family Resilience

Family resilience refers to the capacity of a family to withstand, adapt to, and recover from internal and external challenges while maintaining its essential functions, emotional bonds, and social stability (Walsh, 2016). Within this framework, the presence and active involvement of both parents constitute an important protective factor that enables families to cope effectively with social, economic, and psychological pressures. Consequently, fatherlessness should not be viewed solely as an issue affecting individual children but also as a phenomenon that influences the resilience and sustainability of the family as a whole.

In the context of urban families in Bandung City, fatherlessness has implications that extend beyond the reduction of paternal involvement in parenting. The phenomenon gradually reshapes family interaction patterns, redistributes parental responsibilities, and influences the family's adaptive capacity in responding to contemporary urban challenges. Families experiencing limited paternal engagement often encounter greater difficulties in maintaining balanced communication, collaborative decision-making, and shared caregiving responsibilities. As a result, the family's ability to function as a cohesive social institution becomes increasingly vulnerable.

One of the most immediate implications concerns family communication. Effective communication is widely recognized as one of the fundamental dimensions of family resilience because it facilitates trust, emotional attachment, conflict resolution, and collective problem-solving (Walsh, 2016). When fathers spend limited time interacting with their children, opportunities for meaningful dialogue decrease substantially. Conversations become increasingly functional and task-oriented, focusing primarily on academic performance, financial matters, or household responsibilities rather than emotional experiences and psychological support. Consequently, emotional intimacy between fathers and children gradually weakens, reducing children's willingness to seek guidance during periods of personal or social difficulty.

The weakening of father-child communication also influences the quality of parental cooperation. Healthy family resilience depends upon collaborative parenting in which fathers and mothers share responsibilities for child development, education, discipline, and emotional support. However, fatherlessness frequently shifts these responsibilities disproportionately toward mothers. Mothers become the primary source of emotional care, educational supervision, and household management while simultaneously participating in economic activities, particularly within dual-income families. Such role imbalance increases caregiving burdens and may contribute to parental stress, fatigue, and reduced family well-being. Cabrera et al. (2018) argue that active father involvement not only benefits children but also strengthens co-parenting relationships by reducing parenting stress and enhancing family functioning.

Another important implication relates to children's social development. Families constitute the first social environment in which children learn communication, empathy, cooperation, discipline, and emotional regulation. Fathers provide distinctive contributions to children's socialization by encouraging autonomy, problem-solving, self-confidence, and social competence (Lamb, 2010). When paternal involvement declines, children may experience reduced opportunities to develop these competencies through everyday family interaction. Previous longitudinal studies demonstrate that consistent father involvement

contributes positively to children's academic achievement, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships (Sarkadi et al., 2008). Conversely, prolonged paternal disengagement may increase children's vulnerability to social isolation, behavioral problems, or reduced self-esteem, particularly during adolescence when paternal guidance becomes increasingly important.

Within metropolitan environments such as Bandung, these developmental challenges are intensified by broader social changes. Urban children are increasingly exposed to digital technologies, social media, peer influences, and diverse cultural values. In such contexts, fathers play an important role in providing supervision, value transmission, and behavioral guidance. Reduced paternal engagement therefore limits families' capacity to navigate complex social environments characterized by rapid technological change and increasing social uncertainty. From Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological perspective, diminished father involvement weakens the interaction between the family microsystem and broader environmental systems that shape children's development.

Fatherlessness also affects family adaptability, one of the central components of family resilience. According to Walsh (2016), resilient families demonstrate flexibility in responding to changing circumstances through shared leadership, mutual support, and collaborative decision-making. However, when fathers participate minimally in family processes, adaptive responsibilities become concentrated on mothers or other family members. Decision-making regarding children's education, healthcare, financial planning, and social activities increasingly relies on one parent, thereby reducing the family's collective capacity to respond to crises. During periods of economic instability, illness, or educational challenges, families with limited paternal participation may encounter greater difficulty coordinating effective responses.

An additional implication concerns the intergenerational transmission of parenting patterns. Family sociology suggests that parenting behaviors are often learned through observation and socialization across generations. Children who experience limited paternal involvement may internalize these interaction patterns as normative family behavior, potentially reproducing similar parenting practices in adulthood. Although this process is influenced by numerous social and personal factors, fatherlessness may contribute to the persistence of unequal parenting roles and weak paternal engagement across generations. Such intergenerational continuity highlights the importance of addressing fatherlessness not only as an immediate family issue but also as a long-term challenge affecting social development.

The consequences of fatherlessness should nevertheless not be interpreted as deterministic. Family resilience theory emphasizes that families possess adaptive capacities that may compensate for reduced paternal involvement through alternative protective mechanisms (Walsh, 2016). Strong maternal support, effective communication, supportive extended family networks, positive school environments, religious communities, and neighborhood social capital can strengthen children's resilience despite limited father involvement. Putnam (2000) similarly argues that community social capital enhances collective capacity to support families through networks of trust, reciprocity, and civic participation. In Bandung, community organizations, religious institutions, neighborhood associations (*Rukun Warga* and *Rukun Tetangga*), and parenting communities may therefore function as important sources of social support that partially mitigate the effects of fatherlessness.

Compared with previous studies, the present conceptual discussion extends existing knowledge in several important ways. Amato (2005) primarily examined father absence from the perspective of children's developmental outcomes, whereas Sarkadi et al. (2008) focused on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences associated with paternal involvement. While these studies establish the importance of fathers for child development, they provide

relatively limited explanation regarding the broader implications of fatherlessness for family resilience as a social system. Similarly, Lamb (2010) and Pleck (2010) concentrate on conceptualizing paternal involvement but pay less attention to the structural conditions that influence family adaptation within urban environments.

The present framework broadens these perspectives by integrating Father Involvement Theory, Family Resilience Theory, and Urban Sociology. Rather than viewing fatherlessness solely as a deficit in parenting behavior, it conceptualizes the phenomenon as a multidimensional challenge affecting communication, role distribution, adaptive capacity, intergenerational socialization, and social cohesion within urban families. This integration demonstrates that family resilience depends not only on individual parental commitment but also on structural conditions that enable fathers to participate meaningfully in family life.

From the perspective of Bandung City, strengthening family resilience therefore requires a multidimensional approach. Family education programs should encourage shared parenting and strengthen fathers' emotional engagement from early childhood. Employers and public institutions should promote family-friendly workplace policies, including flexible working arrangements and work-life balance initiatives that enable fathers to allocate sufficient time for parenting. Local governments may also strengthen family resilience by expanding parenting education, family counseling services, and community-based support programs through collaboration with schools, religious organizations, and civil society. Such interventions acknowledge that father involvement is shaped not only by individual attitudes but also by institutional opportunities created within urban society.

Fatherlessness should be understood as a phenomenon with implications extending far beyond the relationship between fathers and children. It influences communication patterns, co-parenting relationships, children's social development, family adaptability, and the long-term resilience of urban families. Addressing fatherlessness therefore requires integrated interventions that simultaneously strengthen paternal involvement, family relationships, community support, and structural policies. This broader sociological perspective positions family resilience not merely as an outcome of successful parenting but as a dynamic process shaped by interactions between family institutions and the wider urban environment.

E. CONCLUSION

This study conceptualizes fatherlessness as an urban social phenomenon that extends beyond the physical absence of fathers to include diminished emotional, psychological, and relational involvement in family life. In the context of Bandung City, fatherlessness emerges as a consequence of rapid urban transformation, where increasing economic demands, changing occupational structures, digitalization, and evolving family dynamics have reshaped paternal roles. These structural changes have contributed to a growing imbalance between fathers' responsibilities as economic providers and their participation in nurturing, communicating with, and supporting their children.

The study further identifies that fatherlessness is driven by multiple interconnected social factors rather than by individual parenting failure alone. Economic pressure, long working hours, urban mobility, the expansion of dual-income households, persistent patriarchal norms, and the blurring of work–family boundaries through digital technology collectively reduce fathers' opportunities for meaningful engagement with their children. These findings suggest that fatherlessness should be understood as a product of broader urban social transformation that influences family relationships and parenting practices.

The analysis also demonstrates that fatherlessness has important implications for family resilience. Reduced paternal involvement weakens family communication, disrupts the balance of parental responsibilities, limits children's opportunities for social and emotional

development, and diminishes families' capacity to adapt to social and economic challenges. Nevertheless, family resilience may be strengthened through collaborative parenting, supportive community networks, and institutional policies that promote active father involvement.

The principal contribution of this study lies in reframing fatherlessness from a predominantly psychological issue into a broader sociological phenomenon shaped by urbanization and structural change. By integrating Father Involvement Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, and Family Resilience Theory, this study proposes an Urban Fatherlessness Model that explains the interaction between urban social transformation, paternal involvement, and family resilience. This model offers a conceptual framework for future research and provides practical implications for policymakers, local governments, employers, educational institutions, and community organizations seeking to strengthen father engagement and promote resilient urban families in Indonesia.

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