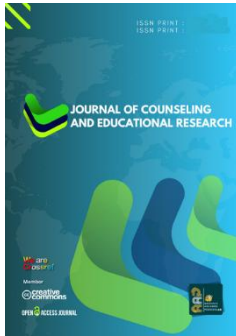


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Global Patterns of Father Absence: A Systematic Literature Review of Causes

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Original Article

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Abstract. The global phenomenon of father absence significantly affects children's psychological, academic, and social development. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to pinpoint and consolidate the patterns and causes of father absence worldwide. We searched four primary databases Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Google Scholar and found 253 articles. Following a screening process based on the PRISMA inclusion and exclusion criteria, we selected ten articles for detailed analysis. The synthesis reveals that factors such as labor migration, marital conflict, patriarchal cultural standards, and unsupportive social policies contribute to father absence. The impacts include children's reduced emotional well-being, lower academic achievement, and poorer social adjustment. These results support the idea that father absence is a multifaceted issue influenced not just by individual factors but also by structural and cultural elements. As such, inclusive policies and societal changes that promote fathers' emotional engagement and equal parenting duties are essential.

Keywords: Father Absence, Parenting Patterns, Systematic Literature Review

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Introduction

The family is the first environment an individual is born into (Lubis et al., 2021). The family is considered a child's first school, as children are born and develop within the family (Besari, 2022). The nuclear family, consisting of mother, father, and children, each has its own role. Even fathers and mothers, as parents, also play a role as primary educators, primary protectors, and play a crucial role in the development of a child's characteristics (Ayub et al., 2024). Child development is influenced by the presence of parents (Muthmainah & Wulandari, 2024). In recent decades, family structures in many countries, including Indonesia, have undergone significant changes. Social change, job mobility, urbanization, and economic dynamics have led to increasing variations in parenting patterns. (Husni et al., 2023).

While parental presence is crucial for children, the structure of families in various countries around the world has undergone significant changes in recent decades. For example, 14.8% of 12-year-old children in Ethiopia, 5.6% in India, 22.0% in Peru, and 7.7% in Vietnam experience changes in family structure and parental roles within the family (Oldroyd et al., 2022). Modernization, urbanization, and socio-economic dynamics have influenced parenting patterns

and parental roles (Kusnandar & Pribadi, 2022). One increasingly prevalent phenomenon is the increasing number of families without a father (Culpin et al., 2022).

Families without fathers have become a global issue because they are also related to child welfare and the quality of social relationships in future generations (Liu et al., 2023). The term fatherlessness refers to a condition where the father is physically absent due to death, parental divorce, or not living together. While psychologically, it refers to the father's emotional absence and lack of connection in the child's life (Anesti & Abdullah, 2024). For example, in Andalusia, Spain, it was reported that 82.8% of children live with both stepparents or a stepfamily, and 15.6% live with a single parent, specifically with their mother. This means that 1 in 6 children in the region lives without a father (Mejías-Leiva & Moreno Mínguez, 2024). Furthermore, the research results found that 10.8% of fathers in Kenya did not play any role at all, the research results also explained the reasons for the father's non-involvement, namely leaving the house permanently due to death or divorce 35.8%, fathers consider that the child is not their responsibility 17.5% and leaving the house or having another family 15.3% (Owino & Yigezu, 2023). In the United States, it was reported that 25% or around 18 million children live in homes without a father including biological, step, or adoptive fathers and they more specifically live with their mothers or other family (Brewer, 2023). Meanwhile in Indonesia, the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) showed that among 30.83 million early childhood children in Indonesia, only 7.04% live with their biological mothers without the presence of a father (Putri & Rahmasari, 2024). Other local studies also show an increase in single-parent families due to divorce, labor migration, and structural poverty (Husni et al., 2023). This shows that the phenomenon of children not living with their fathers from various countries proves that the father is not really present.

Fatherlessness impacts child development. Research in Spain found that children from divorced families who grow up without a father experience high levels of stress (Viqueira-Gutiérrez & López-Larrosa, 2017). Another study in Kenya also found that 70% of prisoners in the industrial zone and 60% of prisoners in Nairobi come from broken homes without a father, 85% of children with poor behavior come from fatherless homes, and 71% of children who do not complete school come from fatherless homes (Ngunjiri, 2019). In the United States, the impact of children raised without a father is that 85% of children are involved in crime, and 70% of children raised without a father drop out of high school. 85% of children living without a father experience behavioral disorders, and children without a father are four times more likely to live in poverty (Tan, 2023). Meanwhile in Indonesia, the impact of the absence of a father from a psychological perspective tends to be difficult to control emotions and tends to look for a substitute father figure through other people (Romadhona & Kuswanto, 2024), in terms of social development, children who grow up without a father have an impact on passive behavior, are easily influenced, and do not dare to express their opinions (Ririn & Ika, 2024), in terms of self-identity, boys with absent fathers experience a crisis of masculinity, while girls will look for a father figure in romantic relationships and increase the risk of unhealthy relationships (Putri & Rahmasari, 2024). These negative impacts show that this issue is universal in both developed and developing countries.

However, the causes of father absence have different characteristics. In Spain, father absence is caused by divorce and father abandonment or lack of involvement with the child (Viqueira-Gutiérrez & López-Larrosa, 2017). In South Africa, the causes of father absence are due to low economic status, father unemployment, armed conflict, and death from endemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Salami & Okeke, 2018). And in Indonesia, research results show that the causes of father absence are due to death, parental divorce, the father not living together, or migration (Zuliani et al., 2024). In addition, the cause of father absence is due to the father's unwillingness to actively care for the child, although physically present but not present in the role and view that childcare is a woman's duty (Laman et al., 2023). The patriarchal cultural context in Indonesia also influences the low level of father involvement in child care (Hardiningrum et al.,

2024). These differences indicate that father absence can be seen as a single phenomenon but is influenced by social, cultural, and economic contexts.

Although numerous studies have examined the causes of father absence within a single country or context, systematic and comprehensive literature reviews examining global patterns across diverse countries, cultures, and socioeconomic contexts are still limited. Several studies highlighting father absence include Evans & Jakiela (2025) study on the role of fathers in child development, and (East et al., 2020) study on father absence. A literature review revealed that the definition of father absence remains inconsistent. Furthermore, research focusing on the pattern of father absence remains limited.

Therefore, this study aims to address these limitations. The aim of this study is to identify and synthesize global patterns of father absence through a systematic literature review. This study is expected to provide a more comprehensive picture of the various causes and forms of father absence, as well as its impacts in various countries, including Indonesia. This study is expected to contribute to enriching theoretical studies on father absence and serve as a foundation for the formulation of more effective social and child protection policies in various countries. The novelty of this study lies in its explicit mapping of global patterns of father absence by integrating findings from multiple countries with diverse cultural, social, and economic contexts something that existing studies have not comprehensively addressed. This study also contributes by highlighting cross-country similarities and differences, offering a broader theoretical understanding and informing policy development at an international level. Thus, this study not only provides a scientific overview of the complex causes of father absence but also supports efforts to improve family and child welfare more broadly.

Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) framework to synthesize current empirical research on the causes and global patterns of father absence. The SLR method was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, ensuring transparency, reproducibility, and methodological rigor throughout the review process. The aim of this review was to identify, analyse, and categorize determinants contributing to father absence across different countries and cultural contexts, focusing on structural, relational, economic, and policy-related causes.

Study Design

Appropriate identification of research participants is critical to the science and practice of psychology and/or social sciences, particularly for generalizing the findings, making comparisons across replications, and using the evidence in research synthesis and secondary data analysis. Identification the samples of participants major demographic characteristic for human, such as age; sex; ethnics and/or racial group; level of education; socioeconomic; generational, or immigrant status; disability status; sexual orientation; gender identity; and language preference as well as important topic-specific characteristic. The SLR design consisted of four major stages identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion as shown in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). Each stage was executed systematically to ensure only high-quality, relevant, and peer-reviewed studies were included.

The research questions guiding this review were as follows:

1. What are the main determinants and causes of father absence reported in empirical literature between 2015 and 2025?
2. How do these causes vary across different global regions?
3. What patterns or interconnections exist between economic, cultural, and policy-based factors leading to father absence?

Search Strategy and Data Sources

Describe the procedures for selecting participants, including (a) the sampling methods if a systematics sampling plan was used; (b) the percentage the sample approached that participated; and (c) the number of participants selected themselves into the sample. Describe the settings and locations in which data were collected as well as any agreement and payment made to participants. When applying inferential statistics, take seriously the statistical power consideration associated with the test of hypothesis.

The systematic search was carried out across four major scientific databases:

- 1. Scopus,
- 2. Web of Science (WoS),
- 3. Google Scholar, and
- 4. ERIC (Education Resources Information Center).

Searches were performed in August 2025, using combinations of keywords and Boolean operators as follows: (“father absence” OR “absent father” OR “non-resident father” OR “paternal disengagement” OR “fatherless homes”) AND (“cause” OR “determinant” OR “reason” OR “sociocultural factors” OR “economic factor”). Search filters were applied to include:

- 1. Publication years 2015–2025,
- 2. English-language empirical journal articles, and
- 3. Studies focusing on human populations and family dynamics.

Inclusion and Exclusion

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to ensure that only studies directly related to causes of father absence were analysed.

Table 1. The inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Articles published in peer-reviewed international journals.	Editorials, conference proceedings, book chapters, or dissertations.
Focused on determinants or causes of father absence.	Studies focusing only on child outcomes without analysing causal mechanisms.
Published between 2015 and 2025.	Duplicate publications across databases.
Used quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches.	Papers lacking empirical evidence (conceptual or opinion-based).
Discussed socio-economic, cultural, political, or relational causes.	Non-English or inaccessible full-text articles
Written in English and available in full text.	

Screening and Selection Process

An initial total of 253 records were identified across the four databases (132 from Google Scholar, 58 from Scopus, 41 from ERIC, and 22 from Web of Science). After removing 60 duplicates, 193 unique articles remained for abstract screening. During the screening stage, 162 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria (e.g., unrelated topics, theoretical commentaries, or lacking causal relevance). Subsequently, 31 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Following quality assessment and full-text review, 10 articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis (see Figure 1 – PRISMA Flow Diagram).

Design Extraction and Analysis

A data extraction matrix was developed to summarize the main attributes of each selected study, including: 1) Author(s), year, and country; 2) Research objectives; 3) Study design and sample size; 4) Type of cause (economic, relational, cultural, policy); and 5) Key findings and conclusions. All included articles were uploaded into NVivo 12 Plus for thematic coding. The analysis followed five main steps: 1) Open coding to identify key determinants, 2) Grouping codes into conceptual categories, 3) Mapping relationships using NVivo and network visualization, 4) Validation of emerging themes against original study contexts, and 5) Synthesis into the three major themes presented in the results section (global patterns and determinants of father absence; regional and cultural variation in father absence; and psychological, social, and educational impacts of father absence).

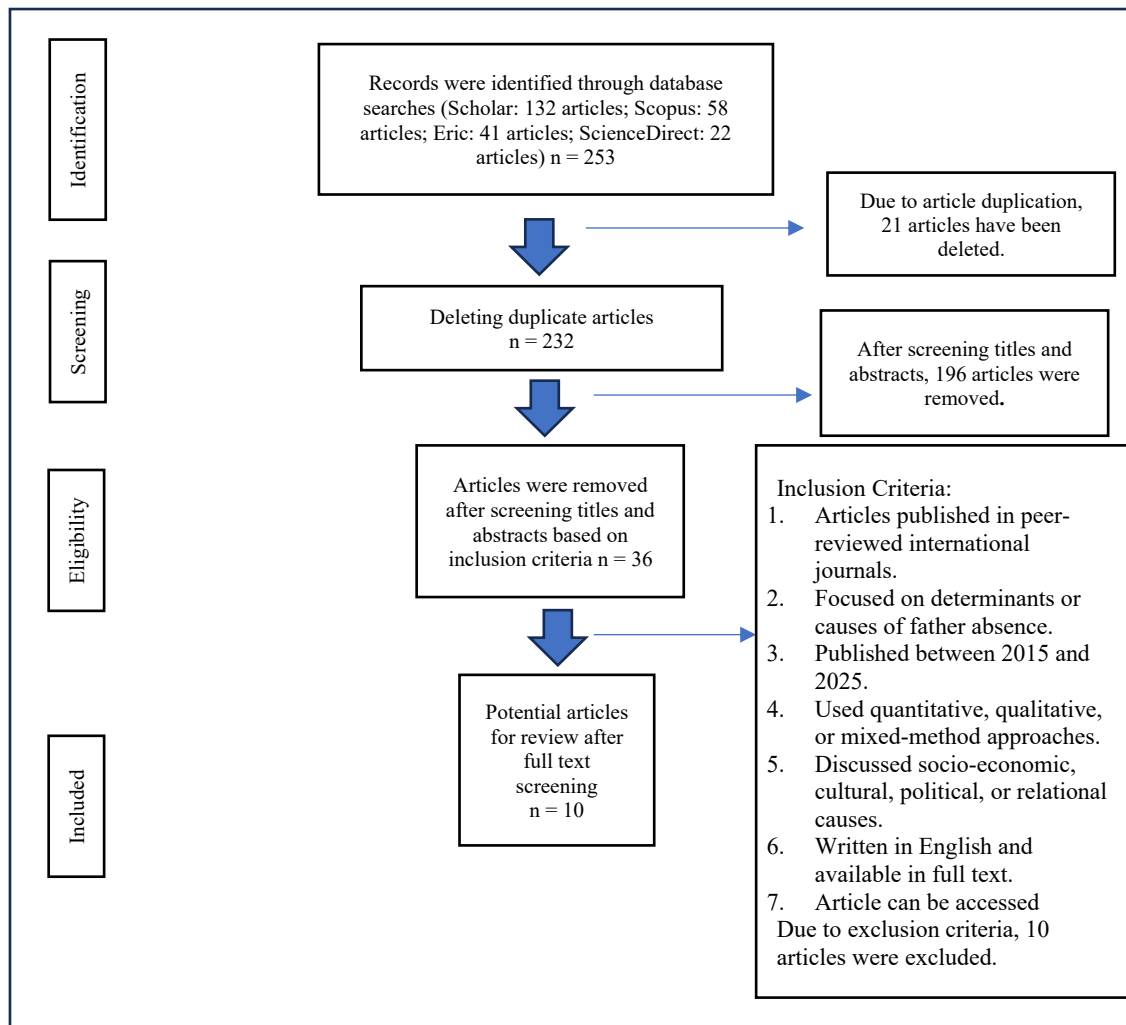


Figure 1. PRISMA study selection process flow diagram

Results and Discussions

Results

The findings of this systematic literature review summarize the global evidence on the causes and patterns of father absence. Based on searches conducted across four major databases Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar a total of 253 articles were initially identified. Following the PRISMA screening process, which included duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, and full-text eligibility assessment, only ten articles met the final inclusion criteria and were analyzed in depth. These selected studies represent research conducted in diverse geographical and cultural contexts, providing a comprehensive view of the multifactorial nature of father absence. The synthesis of these findings is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Article Search Results and Matrix Analysis Related to the Phenomenon of Father Absence in Various Countries

No	Author(s) & Year	Title	Country/Region	Methodology	Key Findings
1	Culpin et al. (2022)	Father absence and trajectories of offspring mental health	UK	Longitudinal cohort (ALSPAC)	Early father absence linked to higher adolescent depression/anxiety risk, especially in girls
2	Guo et al. (2020)	Meta-Analysis of Direct and Indirect Effects of Father Absence	Multi-country	Meta-analysis	Father absence accelerates menarche, increases family stress, and impacts child emotional outcomes
3	Schlomer & Marceau (2022)	Father Absence, Age at Menarche, and Genetic Confounding	USA	Quantitative genetic study	Father absence has small, robust impacts on earlier menarche due to genetic/environmental confounding
4	Markowitz & Ryan (2016)	Father Absence and Adolescent Depression and Delinquency	USA	Within-family comparison	Later father departure increases delinquency risk; not all timing increases depression risk
5	Liu et al. (2023)	The relationship between father absence and hostility among youth	China	Quantitative survey	Youth without fathers show higher hostility; self-esteem/ frustration tolerance are mediators
6	Nasution et al. (2023)	The Impact of Father's Absence on	Indonesia	Qualitative approach with a case study method	The impact of parenting without a father has a higher risk of aggressive behavior.

		Psychologic al Conditions in Children from Commuter Marriage Families			
7	Moila (2023)	The phenomenon of absent fatherhood: Perceptions, experiences and challenges of absent fathers and adolescent children	South Africa	Qualitative study	Maternal gatekeeping and social/economic factors are major causes for father absence
8	Magqamfana & Bazana (2020)	Absent fathers: Psychological and socio-economic implications for black children and directions for future research	South Africa	Qualitative study	Father's absence as a lack of material well-being
9	Vanchugova (2023)	The Father's Role: Impact of Absence in Modern Societies	European/Global	Literature review	Shifts in family context and social expectations affect father involvement and impact child outcomes
10	Lut et al. (2022)	"What about the dads?" Linking fathers and children in admin data	Global/admin data	Policy/methodological review	Lack of paternal linkage in data impedes understanding father roles; recommends data improvements

A. RQ1: Global Patterns and Determinants of Father Absence

The findings from the reviewed literature indicate that father absence has become a global social issue with diverse manifestations depending on cultural, economic, and political contexts. Across the ten studies reviewed (see Table 2), the pattern of father absence was found to be structurally and contextually embedded, meaning that the phenomenon arises from the intersection of economic hardship, social disintegration, and shifting gender expectations.

In high-income countries such as the United States, the phenomenon is frequently associated with divorce, co-parenting conflict, and custodial inequality ([Markowitz & Ryan, 2016](#)). Here, father absence reflects the weakening of marital institutions and the growing normalization of single-parent households. However, in developing nations such as Indonesia, and South Africa ([Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020](#); [Moila, 2023](#); [Nasution et al., 2023](#)), the

absence of fathers often stems from economic migration, unemployment, and rigid patriarchal norms, which prioritize men's economic contributions over emotional involvement.

These global variations demonstrate that father absence cannot be understood as an isolated behavioral problem but rather as a structural consequence of globalization, economic inequality, and cultural expectations. The reviewed studies further suggest that this absence whether physical or emotional has transgenerational implications, perpetuating cycles of instability, poor attachment, and family dysfunction.

Furthermore, meta-analyses (Guo et al., 2020) confirmed that father absence is not limited to a specific demographic but is widespread across different socioeconomic levels, with effects observable in both individual and community domains. Hence, father absence represents not just a familial phenomenon but also a social and public health concern that requires integrated interventions across cultural and national boundaries.

B. RQ2: Regional and Cultural Variation in Father Absence

The review revealed significant regional differences in the causes and interpretations of father absence. In South Africa studies by (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020; Moila, 2023) describe how economic deprivation, combined with strong patriarchal traditions, reinforces gendered role divisions. Men are expected to serve as providers rather than emotional caregivers, which normalizes their physical absence from home. This cultural pattern results in psychosocial vulnerability among daughters, including identity confusion and emotional detachment.

In South and Southeast Asia, such as China and Indonesia (Liu et al., 2023; Nasution et al., 2023), father absence is strongly linked to labor migration and modernization pressures. Fathers frequently migrate to urban centers or overseas for work, resulting in what researchers call “*functional father absence*” where the father contributes financially but is emotionally distant. This phenomenon leads to weakened family communication, limited role modeling, and a reduced sense of security among children.

In contrast, in Western societies (Culpin et al., 2022; Lut et al., 2022; Markowitz & Ryan, 2016; Schlomer & Marceau, 2022; Vanchugova, 2023), father absence often emerges through voluntary or relational disengagement following divorce or separation. Legal custody systems and social attitudes toward parenting shape the degree of paternal involvement after family dissolution. Studies show that, despite economic stability, emotional unavailability and fragmented co-parenting remain persistent issues that affect child outcomes.

These regional comparisons suggest that while the form of father absence may differ economic, relational, or migratory the psychological and developmental outcomes are remarkably similar. Regardless of geography, children deprived of consistent paternal presence tend to exhibit lower resilience, greater emotional instability, and diminished social adjustment.

C. RQ3: Psychological, Social, and Educational Impacts of Father Absence

The psychological and educational consequences of father absence were the most consistently documented findings across the reviewed studies. Children and adolescents who grow up without an active father figure experience a range of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral challenges. According to Guo et al. (2020), father absence is strongly associated with increased family stress, early puberty, and higher vulnerability to anxiety and depression. The absence of a paternal role model disrupts normal emotional regulation and identity formation, leading to enduring psychological consequences.

Qualitative investigations (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020; Moila, 2023; Nasution et al., 2023) provide deeper insight into the psychosocial effects of father absence. Young people raised without father's report feelings of rejection, loneliness, and anger. The lack of emotional support and economic stability exacerbates these feelings, particularly among adolescent girls who often experience self-esteem issues and difficulty forming stable interpersonal relationships.

From an educational perspective, several studies [Liu et al. \(2023\)](#) confirm that father presence plays a crucial role in academic motivation and performance. In families where fathers are engaged in their children's schooling, academic outcomes are higher and dropout rates lower. Conversely, children with absent fathers display lower achievement and a weaker sense of educational purpose. However, the studies also note that protective factors such as maternal involvement, social support, or mentoring programs can mitigate some of these negative outcomes.

Overall, the reviewed evidence suggests that the absence of a father disrupts not only the emotional security of the child but also the social capital of the family, creating cumulative disadvantages that extend into adulthood. This aligns with prior psychological frameworks identifying father presence as a key predictor of resilience, motivation, and emotional competence.

Discussions

Literature shows that the phenomenon of father absence is a global issue that exhibits different patterns in each country. In developing countries, father absence patterns are generally influenced by economic factors. Economic factors are the dominant cause of father absence, particularly through fathers' migration to other regions or countries, resulting in reduced involvement in childcare, which impacts father-child closeness and leads to low emotional closeness. This is evident, for example, in the Philippines, where the poverty rate is 36% in rural areas and 13% in urban areas ([Onsay & Rabajante, 2024](#)). In the Philippines, fathers who emigrate for work due to economic factors result in a lack of involvement in the care of their children, resulting in father absence ([Norori et al., 2025](#)). To meet low economic needs, fathers emigrate, resulting in paternal absence from home care. This is not only a lack of physical involvement in childcare, but also emotional paternal absence, manifested by a lack of communication, negative emotions, and a lack of time for children. This is in line with research conducted by ([Utami et al., 2025](#)), which explains that paternal absence is caused by economic factors, leading to relocation or immigration, which not only creates physical but also emotional distance between fathers and children. Although fathers still fulfill their role as breadwinners, their emotional presence or role is absent, creating a gap between father and child. This pattern is also found in several other Asian countries, such as China. This pattern is said to be due to the perception that the father's role is only as a breadwinner and not the primary caregiver for the child. Therefore, paternal absence due to work migration leads to a decline in children's social and emotional development ([Chang et al., 2024](#)).

Furthermore, a very patriarchal social and cultural factor is the assumption that fathers are absent because they are only responsible for earning a living without being involved in the development and upbringing of children. This pattern is found in various countries in Southeast Asia, the results of research conducted by [Sofyan et al \(2025\)](#) Indonesian society still upholds a patriarchal culture that considers that fathers are only responsible for earning a living, and considers that the task of raising children is the task of women, intended as mothers or paid caregivers. Patriarchal culture is also found in Korea and Japan which shows that fathers are not physically and emotionally present for child development, but they are present as economic providers, this pattern is in the form of behavior that lacks time together between father and child so that children are only cared for by mothers or paid caregivers ([Heo, 2022](#)). Patriarchal culture in Asia is also related to the view that men have a higher position than women, which also states that the father is the head of the family so that power is held by the father. In this case, the father's absence is because it is considered that the head of the family does not take care of or care for children ([Ko et al., 2023](#)).

Meanwhile, in developed countries such as France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, father absence is caused by divorce, conflict or lack of positive relationships between

fathers and mothers, as well as bureaucratic issues or the absence of legal marriage records, which cause the father to be absent from the child's life. Family conflict also plays a role in forming a pattern of father absence because the father no longer plays a physical or emotional role due to family conflict factors, for example between the mother and father. Although fathers also have contact rights or joint custody rights, father absence can occur due to post-divorce relationships. In France, it is stated that 77% of children live with their mothers due to divorce and 84% of children live with their mothers due to separation outside of marriage (Letablier & Wall, 2018). Furthermore, the bureaucracy or legal and social systems in the United Kingdom and France tend to provide child care to mothers and tend not to side with fathers in child care (Gregory & Milner, 2008). Meanwhile, in the United States, births outside of marriage indicate that 48% of fathers are separated from their children, and this figure rises within 5 years to 63% of fathers being absent from their children's lives, either emotionally or physically (Haux & Platt, 2021). This phenomenon broadens the understanding of father absence, explaining that laws and bureaucracy also contribute to father absence and lead to the perception that children have no role, either physically or emotionally, in their lives.

In countries with high levels of conflict, such as Kenya, father absence is also caused by high paternal mortality rates, which can be caused by war or disease. Research shows that 35.8% of father absences are due to death resulting from war or conflict with the state (Owino & Yigezu, 2023). This also indicates that fathers are unavoidable, as they must defend the country, leaving their children with their mothers. However, war certainly has consequences, such as death or physical accidents, which can affect health. Therefore, this pattern suggests that the health and stability of a country influence father absence in families.

Globally, patterns of father absence differ depending on the circumstances of a country. Developing countries are dominated by economic and patriarchal cultural factors, while developed countries are dominated by social and legal factors such as divorce and bureaucracy, and conflict-ridden countries by death and political instability. This suggests that the causes of father absence are multidimensional, influenced not only by individual factors but also by social, economic, cultural, and political structures (Alemu, 2025). This relates to the ecological theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (2000), which states that human development is influenced by the interaction between individuals and their surrounding environment. Father absence arises not only from individual factors within the family system (microsystem), but also from the influence of broader systems, such as the economy, which encompasses the family ecosystem, followed by patriarchal culture (macrosystem), and state policies (chronosystem). Therefore, father absence needs to be understood as a product of the interaction between individuals and the social context.

Meanwhile, when linked to the gender role theory developed by Eagly (1987), it states that behavioral differences between men and women are not only biological factors, but also due to social expectations regarding gender roles. Society forms norms that men must be strong, independent, and breadwinners, while women must be gentle, caring, and play a role in parenting. In this case, it explains that mothers or women play a full role in parenting and form a patriarchal culture. Father absence occurs not only due to economic factors, but also because of social constructions that limit the role of fathers in parenting.

The causes of father absence can vary, but the impact of fatherlessness tends to be similar across countries: decreased psychological well-being and material well-being, leading children to grow up in poverty. This is evidenced by Tan (2023) who stated that children who experience father absence are more likely to live in poverty, and poverty also affects psychological well-being. Children who grow up without paternal involvement are at higher risk of experiencing higher stress than other children, as evidenced by Viqueira-Gutiérrez & López-Larrosa (2017) who stated that children from divorced families, living only with their mothers, and without paternal intervention experience higher stress than children from non-divorced families, living with their parents, and being cared for by both their father and mother. Furthermore, father absence will have an impact on behavioral problems characterized by maladaptive behavior.

This is evidenced by Ngunjiri (2019) statement that 85% of children with maladaptive behavior come from families without a father. This shows that the presence of a father has an important role that is not only limited to economic, but also psychological and emotional.

Based on the presentation, it is clear that the phenomenon of father absence is a complex and multifaceted global issue. Therefore, efforts to address father absence can be achieved through collaboration and require cross-sectoral policies that strengthen the father's role in the family, not merely as a breadwinner but also as a caregiver and emotional figure for children. Children are introduced to the world through the roles of fathers and mothers. However, in some cases, fathers choose not to be involved or absent from their children's growth and development, thus depriving children of the paternal support they deserve. Even if parents are not legally married through civil registration, children still have the right to a father's role and involvement in their development.

The persistence of father absence worldwide reflects deep-rooted structural and policy-related challenges. Economic factors such as unstable employment, low wages, and poor work-life balance are among the primary drivers. Many fathers, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, are compelled to work far from home, resulting in long-term physical separation and limited family interaction. At the same time, societal expectations that define men's worth by their economic success discourage emotional caregiving and involvement in daily parenting.

In addition to structural constraints, social stigma toward separated or nonresident fathers also limits paternal involvement. In some societies, divorced fathers are denied equal custody rights, while in others, men who take on caregiving responsibilities face social ridicule. Therefore, efforts to address father absence must move beyond individual counseling and focus on systemic reform that combines economic, legal, and cultural dimensions.

Policy recommendations include: 1) introducing family-friendly labor regulations that balance economic productivity with family presence; 2) implementing mandatory paternity leave to normalize father child bonding; 3) expanding community-based fatherhood education to reshape masculine norms; and 4) providing counseling access for families affected by migration or marital disruption. By reframing fatherhood as both a social and emotional responsibility, nations can foster more balanced gender roles and stronger familial structures.

Conclusions

This study concludes that father absence is a global issue driven by economic, cultural, and policy-related factors. Despite variations across countries, its impacts on children's emotional, academic, and social development remain consistently harmful. Addressing this problem requires coordinated efforts from policymakers, educators, and communities to strengthen paternal involvement. This review reinforces ecological and family-systems perspectives by showing that father absence is shaped by structural influences such as labor mobility, gender norms, and socio-economic pressures rather than individual family dynamics alone. It also supports attachment theory by emphasizing the universal risks caused by disrupted father-child relationships. This study relies solely on secondary literature, which varies in quality and geographic coverage. The lack of primary data limits causal conclusions and reduces the global generalizability of the findings. Future research should conduct cross-national and longitudinal studies to better understand cultural and policy-related factors influencing paternal involvement and to evaluate interventions that strengthen family engagement.

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