

# Efforts to Increase Fatherless Students' Learning Motivation Through A Learning Approach Based on Psychosocial Support in Primary Schools

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**Abstract.** Fatherless students are those who grow up without the physical or emotional presence of a father, often encountering challenges in emotional and social support, which can significantly affect their learning motivation. This study employs a systematic literature review method by analyzing 20 peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2024 that explore psychosocial support in primary education and its impact on student motivation. The selection of sources was based on relevance, methodological rigor, and focus on psychosocial interventions. The findings reveal that structured psychosocial support from teachers and the school environment plays a crucial role in enhancing self-confidence, classroom participation, and social engagement among fatherless students. These results were synthesized from qualitative analyses of student self-reports, teacher observations, and standardized motivation assessment tools used in the reviewed studies. The study concludes that psychosocial support-based learning approaches can effectively help fatherless students overcome emotional and social barriers, thereby significantly improving their learning motivation.

**Keywords:** Learning Motivation, Fatherless Students, Psychosocial Support, Elementary School.

**How to Cite:** Hanipah, N., Yuliyanto, A., Amanaturrahmah, I., Agustin, D. R., Sa'diyah, S. R., & Asyifa. (2025). Efforts to increase fatherless students' learning motivation through a learning approach based on psychosocial support in primary schools. *The 7th International Conference on Elementary Education*, 7(1), 590-601.

## INTRODUCTION

Learning motivation is a fundamental element in students' academic achievement, especially for those in primary education. Strong motivation helps students actively engage in learning, develop skills, and achieve better academic performance. However, fatherless students (students who grow up without an adequate father) often face significant challenges in terms of learning motivation. Studies suggest that the absence of a father figure can lead to disruptions in psychosocial development, including low self-confidence, social isolation, and difficulties in establishing emotional connections (Fadli, 2023; Riadi, 2024). These challenges contribute to decreased motivation, which may negatively affect academic performance.

Along with the increasing phenomenon of fatherlessness in Indonesia, researchers have begun to identify the negative impact on children's educational experiences. A study by Anggraini, 2022 found that fatherless students often experience "father hunger" or feelings of lack of paternal affection, which impacts their emotional and social development in the school environment. Additionally, studies by Handiyani, 2021 highlight the importance of psychosocial support in mitigating emotional distress and fostering resilience among students from non-intact families. Psychosocial support in schools provides emotional reassurance, promotes self-acceptance, and strengthens social bonds, which are particularly beneficial for students lacking paternal support.

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of psychosocial support-based learning approaches in increasing student motivation. For instance, research by (Eyber. et al., 2003) found that integrating psychosocial support in the classroom reduces stress, enhances student engagement, and fosters emotional stability. However highlight the importance of psychosocial support in mitigating emotional distress and fostering resilience among students from non-intact families. Psychosocial support in schools provides emotional reassurance, promotes self-acceptance, and strengthens social bonds, which are particularly beneficial for students lacking paternal support.

According to data from the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) in 2023, approximately 14% of children in Indonesia grow up in single-parent households, with a significant portion of them experiencing fatherlessness. This statistic underscores the urgency of addressing the psychosocial needs of fatherless students, ensuring that they receive adequate support to enhance their learning motivation.

Fatherless students are more likely to face economic hardships, which can further impact their academic performance. Studies indicate that financial instability often forces children from single-parent households to take on additional responsibilities, such as working part-time or caring for siblings, which reduces their time and energy for learning. These external pressures create an additional layer of difficulty that affects their ability to focus and stay motivated in school. Research by (Wang & Eccles, 2012) underscores the need for targeted interventions addressing the emotional and social struggles of children from non-intact families, yet no in-depth studies have specifically investigated how psychosocial support fosters motivation among fatherless students in primary education. This research gap underscores the necessity for further studies exploring tailored approaches that cater to the unique psychosocial needs of fatherless students.

By reviewing previous studies, this research aims to analyze the effectiveness of psychosocial support-based learning approaches in enhancing the learning motivation of fatherless students. The findings are expected to provide insights into how schools and teachers can implement structured psychosocial interventions to optimize the learning experiences of students who lack paternal support.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study's literature review was carried out through a structured search of relevant academic sources, utilizing specific keywords related to the research theme to ensure the inclusion of appropriate literature. Inclusion criteria were defined to focus on high-quality sources, methodologically sound studies, and those directly relevant to the research objectives. The selected literature was critically assessed to identify key theories, methodologies, findings,

and existing research gaps. A thematic approach was used to integrate insights from various studies, organizing the literature based on common themes and patterns. This process enabled the identification of conceptual frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and empirical evidence that underpin the study.

### **Fatherless**

Fatherlessness refers to the condition in which children grow up without the presence or support of a father figure due to various factors such as divorce, death, or paternal abandonment. This phenomenon has been extensively studied in developmental psychology and family sociology due to its significant impact on children's emotional, social, and academic development (Gadsden and Hall, 1996). Research indicates that fatherless children are at higher risk of experiencing low self-esteem, difficulties in forming peer relationships, and decreased academic engagement. Research indicates that fatherless children are at higher risk of experiencing low self-esteem, difficulties in forming peer relationships, and decreased academic engagement (Amato & Gilbreth, 2014).

A notable psychological effect of fatherlessness is "father hunger," a term describing the longing for paternal affection and guidance, which may lead to emotional distress and behavioral challenges in school (Anggraini, 2022). Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, (1999), assert that children lacking paternal support often display lower confidence levels and weaker social adaptability, both of which can negatively impact their motivation to learn. In addition to these psychological aspects, recent studies suggest that the absence of a father figure also correlates with lower self-regulation and increased anxiety, which can further hinder academic success.

Fatherless students may struggle with discipline, delayed gratification, and persistence in completing academic tasks. Some children are able to develop strong coping mechanisms through support from a positive social environment. (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002) emphasize that a strong relationship with the mother or another adult figure can help these children overcome the adverse effects of losing a father. A psychosocial approach in schools is also crucial in supporting these children. Hazin et al., (2022) show that school-based psychosocial support, including counseling and emotional assistance, can reduce the psychological impact of a father's absence.

### **Psychosocial Support in Education**

Psychosocial support in education refers to interventions aimed at addressing students' emotional and social needs to enhance their academic engagement. This concept Support from the family, especially the mother, plays a crucial role in helping fatherless children to

develop optimally. Research by Amato and Fowler (2002) indicates that mothers who provide full attention to their child's development and maintain healthy communication can compensate for the absence of a father figure. In this context, community involvement in providing support through programs such as mentorship or guidance also has a positive impact on building self-confidence and emotional development in children.

Furthermore, various intervention programs have been designed to assist fatherless children through psychosocial guidance, life skills development, and educational support. Programs such as School-based Social Support Programs have been proven effective in providing emotional support and fostering a sense of connection within the school environment (Flouri & Buchanan, 2003). Research results indicate that children participating in these programs tend to achieve better academic performance and show reduced levels of anxiety.

Therefore, educational policies must provide more resources for students in need of psychosocial support. Schools can collaborate with social institutions or organizations working in child welfare to develop more responsive learning modules and mentoring for fatherless students' psychosocial needs. Such efforts are expected to create a more inclusive learning environment where children without father figures feel supported and cared for. This is grounded in (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ecological systems theory, which highlights the influence of multiple environmental factors—including family, school, and peer relationships—on child development. Studies have demonstrated that a supportive school environment significantly contributes to students' well-being, motivation, and stress reduction (Wentzel, 1998). For fatherless students, psychosocial support fosters a sense of belonging and social inclusion within the school setting. (Hazin et al., 2022) found that school-based psychosocial programs, including counseling services and peer mentoring, play a crucial role in mitigating the psychological impact of fatherlessness. These interventions not only enhance students' emotional resilience but also cultivate their intrinsic motivation to engage in learning activities.

Furthermore, self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) identifies three essential psychological needs that drive motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met—such as when students feel they have control over their learning, believe in their abilities, and experience social connectedness—they are more likely to maintain high levels of motivation. Psychosocial support strategies that cater to these needs can be particularly beneficial for fatherless students, helping them develop sustained academic motivation. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory of social development (1978) highlights the importance of social interaction in learning. Without a father figure, students may lack a crucial source of guidance and reinforcement in their cognitive and emotional development.

This emphasizes the role of teachers, peers, and school counselors in filling this gap through structured psychosocial interventions.

### **The Impact of Psychosocial Support on Learning Motivation**

Research has consistently highlighted the positive relationship between psychosocial support and students' learning motivation. (Wang & Eccles, 2012) found that students who receive continuous emotional and social support tend to show higher levels of academic engagement and perseverance. Similarly, (Eyber. et al., 2003) reported that integrating psychosocial support in schools leads to lower stress levels and greater classroom participation.

Additionally, effective learning motivation strategies involve goal-setting and feedback mechanisms. (Schunk, 2003). found that students who set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) and receive consistent teacher feedback demonstrate stronger academic motivation. For fatherless students, personalized guidance from educators can compensate for the absence of paternal support, reinforcing their sense of competence and self-efficacy.

Despite these benefits, the implementation of psychosocial support-based learning approaches faces challenges. Some students may initially resist counseling or mentoring due to unfamiliarity with such interventions. Additionally, the effectiveness of these programs can vary depending on school environments and the level of teacher involvement. Thus, for psychosocial interventions to be successful, they must be structured, continuous, and integrated into the broader school support system.

(Ryan & Deci, 2017) emphasizes the importance of meeting students' basic needs to support their learning motivation, namely autonomy, competence, and social relationships. When these needs are met, students are more likely to be actively involved in learning and strive to achieve their academic goals. Autonomy gives students the freedom to choose the most convenient way of learning, which ultimately increases their sense of responsibility for learning. Competence creates a sense of success that is important for student motivation, while healthy social relationships with classmates and teachers provide an essential sense of connectedness in the learning process. In other words, meeting these basic needs helps students feel more connected to the learning material and encourages them to continue striving to achieve academic targets.

Research has also shown that fatherless students tend to develop coping mechanisms that are either adaptive or maladaptive. Adaptive strategies include seeking out mentors, forming strong peer relationships, and engaging in extracurricular activities. Maladaptive strategies, on the other hand, may involve social withdrawal, aggression, or lack of academic

engagement. Understanding these coping mechanisms is essential for educators to provide appropriate support.

Various student-centered learning approaches, such as collaborative learning and project-based learning, are known to increase intrinsic motivation. (Huang et al., 2016) found that students who engaged in collaborative learning had higher motivation because they felt more empowered and motivated to participate in group discussions and project assignments. In the context of fatherless students, a psychosocial support-based learning approach is essential, as this method helps to overcome the emotional and social challenges they face. In the presence of psychosocial support, students can develop higher motivation that positively impacts their learning outcomes, increases engagement in learning, and helps them build valuable social skills.

Furthermore, goal-setting strategies also play an essential role in increasing learning motivation. The implementation of SMART goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) can help students stay focused and motivated throughout the learning process (Schunk, 2003). When students can see tangible and measurable progress in their learning, their sense of achievement will increase. In addition, constructive feedback from teachers and peers strengthens students' motivation by providing recognition for their efforts and achievements. Providing timely and positive feedback also helps students to improve their weaknesses and continue to improve in the learning process.

Thus, a deep understanding of the factors that affect learning motivation is essential for educators in helping students, especially those facing challenges such as fatherlessness. Educators need to implement strategies that support the growth of students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, create a positive environment, and meet students' basic needs to help them achieve academic success. Through this approach, it is hoped that students can develop good study habits, build confidence, and continue to be motivated to achieve optimal learning outcomes.

## **DISCUSSION**

This literature review demonstrates that a psychosocial-based learning approach plays a significant role in increasing the motivation of fatherless students, who often face emotional and social difficulties due to the absence of a father figure. Many studies indicate that the lack of emotional support from fathers can negatively affect students' academic engagement and lower their learning motivation. Research by (Amato & Keith, 1991) shows that students who grow up without a father figure are more prone to problems with low self-confidence and motivation to learn.



Additionally, psychosocial interventions contribute to broader educational outcomes, such as reducing dropout rates, improving emotional resilience, and fostering peer relationships. These findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which suggests that social support from multiple layers of a child's environment—including family, school, and community—plays a crucial role in shaping their academic motivation. Schools that actively implement psychosocial support programs, such as mentorship initiatives and peer support groups, have reported significant improvements in student participation and overall school climate. These improvements highlight the necessity of integrating psychosocial approaches into the daily educational experience of fatherless students to ensure their well-being and academic success.

Moreover, structured psychosocial interventions, such as school counseling programs and peer mentoring, have been shown to significantly impact students' psychological well-being. By fostering emotional security and providing a stable support network, these interventions can mitigate feelings of abandonment and isolation often experienced by fatherless students. Educational institutions should consider implementing policies that integrate psychosocial support into daily school activities, ensuring that all students, regardless of family background, receive the emotional guidance they need to thrive academically.

One of the most effective psychosocial interventions is the implementation of structured mentoring programs. These programs pair fatherless students with role models, such as teachers, older students, or community volunteers, who provide emotional and academic guidance. Studies have shown that students involved in such programs exhibit greater self-esteem and increased motivation to learn. Additionally, group therapy sessions and peer support circles allow fatherless students to share experiences and build social connections, mitigating feelings of isolation. This structured mentoring approach serves as a bridge to emotional support and academic motivation, allowing students to overcome challenges associated with the absence of a father figure.

Another promising approach is incorporating socio-emotional learning (SEL) into the school curriculum. SEL programs help students develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal skills, which are crucial for their academic and personal growth. These programs have been found to significantly enhance student engagement and motivation, particularly among fatherless children who struggle with emotional stability. The integration of SEL into the school environment not only benefits fatherless students but also improves the overall classroom climate, fostering a sense of inclusivity and mutual support among peers.

In this context, psychosocial-based approaches emerge as a solution by focusing on emotional support, social connection, and the development of interpersonal skills. Mentoring

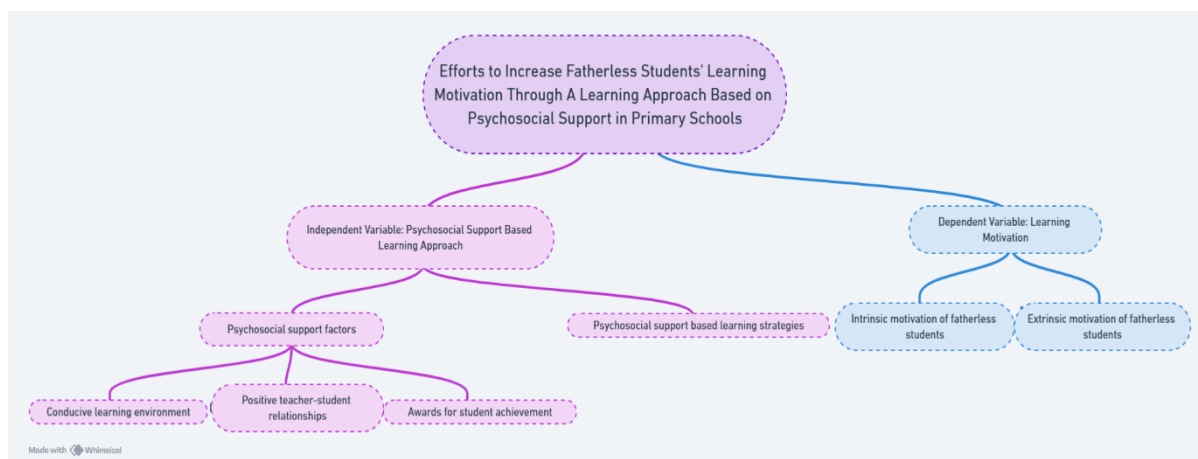
programs, such as individual counseling, discussion groups, and collaborative activities in the classroom, provide students with the opportunity to feel supported by their environment. Research has found that students who grow up without a father figure are more prone to experiencing low self-confidence, which in turn affects their willingness to participate actively in learning. The presence of a strong support system, particularly from teachers and peers, is essential in rebuilding students' confidence and encouraging active participation in academic settings.

One key aspect identified in the literature is the importance of emotional support, social connection, and the development of interpersonal skills. Mentoring programs, including individual counseling, discussion groups, and collaborative classroom activities, have been shown to help fatherless students feel more supported by their environment. According to (Hazin et al., 2022) students who receive psychosocial support consistently show improvements in intrinsic motivation, increased academic engagement, and better social interaction. These findings suggest that fostering strong student-teacher relationships and peer support networks is crucial in helping students develop a sense of belonging, which is essential for their motivation to learn.

The indicators of increased self-confidence and social engagement were measured in several studies through qualitative observations, student self-assessment questionnaires, and teacher evaluations. For instance, Wang & Eccles (2012) used engagement scales to assess students' classroom participation and willingness to express opinions in discussions. Similarly, Ryan & Deci (2017) (Ryan & Deci, 2017), examined self-confidence development by analyzing students' responses in structured interviews regarding their perceived competence and autonomy in learning. These studies provide empirical support for the claim that psychosocial interventions contribute to the enhancement of students' self-efficacy and social interactions in an academic setting.

To illustrate the relationship between the key components of the psychosocial approach and their impact on learning motivation, the following diagram presents an overview of how psychosocial support influences fatherless students' educational experiences.





**Figure 1.** The Impact of Psychosocial Support on Learning Motivation in Fatherless Students

The long-term impact of psychosocial interventions extends beyond academic motivation. Studies indicate that students who receive consistent psychosocial support not only show improvement in their academic engagement but also develop essential life skills such as problem-solving, effective communication, and resilience in facing challenges. These aspects are crucial in building sustainable learning motivation and ensuring that students remain committed to their educational goals despite personal adversities.

However, the implementation of psychosocial support-based approaches is not without challenges. Some students initially resist mentorship or counseling programs due to unfamiliarity or trust issues. This highlights the need for gradual and patient efforts in establishing meaningful relationships between students, teachers, and counselors. Additionally, the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions depends on the level of collaboration between educators, parents, and school administrators. Schools should focus on developing structured and well-integrated psychosocial programs that align with students' individual needs.

Overall, this review confirms that a psychosocial approach is an effective and feasible strategy for increasing the learning motivation of fatherless students. Despite some challenges in implementation, the positive short-term outcomes indicate that this approach can serve as a sustainable solution for supporting students' emotional well-being and academic success in primary schools. To enhance the long-term effectiveness of psychosocial interventions, further research should explore diverse methodologies and involve multiple stakeholders in education to ensure that the benefits of psychosocial support are maximized and sustained. The integration of psychosocial approaches in educational policies can provide long-lasting benefits, ensuring that all students, regardless of family background, have the necessary support to achieve their full academic potential.

## CONCLUSION

The literature indicates that fatherlessness presents significant emotional and academic challenges, yet structured psychosocial support can effectively mitigate these issues. School-based psychosocial interventions, aligned with self-determination theory and ecological systems theory, have been shown to enhance students' motivation by addressing their psychological needs. These interventions foster a sense of autonomy, competence, and social belonging, which are crucial for students' academic persistence and engagement.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of psychosocial support strategies may depend on various contextual factors, such as school culture, teacher involvement, and the availability of external support systems. Schools that integrate mentoring programs, emotional counseling, and peer support networks tend to create a more inclusive environment, enabling fatherless students to thrive both emotionally and academically.

However, further research is required to assess the long-term effectiveness of these interventions across diverse cultural and socioeconomic settings. Future studies should explore the sustainability of psychosocial interventions, investigate how different educational policies impact fatherless students, and identify best practices for educators seeking to implement supportive learning environments. By addressing these gaps, educational institutions can develop more effective, evidence-based strategies to support the well-being and academic success of fatherless students.

Future studies should also consider longitudinal research designs to assess the long-term impact of psychosocial interventions on students' academic performance and emotional well-being. By adopting a holistic approach that includes family engagement, community involvement, and school-based mentoring, educators can develop more effective strategies to support fatherless students in achieving their full potential.

Additionally, policymakers should prioritize funding and training programs that equip educators with the skills to provide effective psychosocial support. Establishing school-wide initiatives that focus on social-emotional learning, mentorship, and community collaboration can create a lasting impact on fatherless students' educational experiences. With these efforts, schools can bridge the gap created by fatherlessness, ensuring that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

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