

Father wound and its impact on children's psychological well-being: A literature review

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Abstract

The presence and quality of the father and child relationship are critical determinants of children's psychological development, yet they remain underrepresented in parenting and mental health research. The concept of father wound refers to emotional and psychological injuries arising from paternal absence, rejection, neglect, emotional unavailability, or harmful parenting practices. Although previous studies have examined father absence or paternal involvement, father wound as an integrated relational construct and its implications for multidimensional psychological well-being remain insufficiently explored. This study aims to critically review and conceptually integrate existing empirical evidence on the impact of father wound on children's psychological well-being, while elucidating the underlying relational mechanisms through established developmental and family theories. Using a narrative literature review approach, peer-reviewed articles were purposively selected from major academic databases based on conceptual relevance, scientific rigor, and full-text accessibility. A total of 15 peer-reviewed articles were analyzed using Attachment Theory, Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory), and the Family Stress Model, integrated with Ryff's psychological well-being framework. The findings indicate that father wound manifested through father absence, paternal rejection, low warmth, or maladaptive involvement is consistently associated with increased risks of depression, emotional and behavioral problems, and reduced psychological well-being from childhood to early adulthood. Early childhood exposure emerged as the most persistent risk factor, while warm and responsive father involvement functioned as a key protective factor. This review positions father wound as a multidimensional relational risk that undermines core dimensions of psychological well-being, highlighting the importance of father-inclusive preventive and therapeutic interventions.

Keywords: *father wound, father-child relationship, psychological well-being, paternal involvement, paternal rejection.*



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Introduction

The presence of the father and the quality of the father-child relationship are important determinants for the psychological development of children, but they are still often underpaid in the parenting discourse. The concept of father wound refers to the emotional or psychological wound experienced by a person due to a problematic, minimal, or unhealthy relationship with his father figure (Rohner, 2014). Father wound can also be interpreted as psychological wounds due to physical or emotional absence, rejection, violence, or cold parenting from the father figure (Rohner, 2021). These wounds occur not only because the father is physically "absent," but also because of emotional absence, rejection, violence, neglect, or very harsh and critical parenting.

Father wound is related to psychological wounds arising from the rejection, absence, or involvement of the father who is unresponsive or tends to hurt, this often appears in the form of patterns of insecure attachment, affective vulnerability, and decreased adaptive function of the child. Recent evidence suggests the attachment of parents and children to predict adolescent mental health, with "psychological qualities" as mediators, and coping styles as moderators, explaining why cold or inconsistent relationships from fathers can resonate as symptoms of depression, anxiety or problematic behavior in children (Tan et al., 2023).

The absence of the father, both physically and emotionally, often leaves deep psychological wounds in the child. Children with low paternal involvement tend to have higher levels of depression and anxiety compared to children with healthy paternal involvement (Keizer et al., 2019). Furthermore, warm and responsive father involvement plays a crucial role in fostering children's psychological well-being and socio-emotional competence, which in turn enhances their ability to cope with psychological stress throughout development (Yoon et al., 2021).

Empirically, a number of longitudinal studies conducted on a group of individuals who have similar characteristics or experiences and were followed over a certain period of time (cohort), reinforce the urgency of this research issue. A classic longitudinal systematic review found the majority of studies reported the positive effects of paternal involvement on a variety of child developmental outcomes, including reduced externalization problems. The implication is that low absenteeism or involvement, as shown in the father wound, has the potential to increase the risk of behavioral and emotional disorders (Sarkadi Anna et al., 2008). Paternal rejection and absence are related to emotional distress and behavioral problems. This provides an empirical basis that father wound is a direct risk to the child's psychological well-being (Rohner, 2021).

Psychological well-being is a mental health concept that refers not merely to the absence of psychological disorders, but to an optimal state of psychological functioning. Psychological well-being is a multidimensional construct that reflects the realization of personal potential and the quality of individuals' psychological functioning in everyday life (Ryff, 2013a). These dimensions are complementary and include self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In the context of child development, these six dimensions are shaped through early relationships that are secure, supportive, and characterized by acceptance, particularly within interactions with parental figures, including fathers.

Recent studies indicate that the quality of parent and child relationships is a primary predictor of children's and adolescents' psychological well-being, often exerting a stronger influence than sociodemographic factors (Garcia & Serra, 2019). Conversely, experiences of parental rejection, emotional neglect, or unresponsive relationships, particularly involving fathers are associated with lower levels of self-acceptance, impaired interpersonal relationships, weakened sense of purpose in life, and difficulties in emotional regulation (Rohner & Lansford, 2017). Other studies further emphasize that paternal acceptance and emotional involvement contribute significantly to children's psychological well-being, whereas paternal rejection or emotional absence is linked to increased psychological distress and reduced adaptive functioning in children (Putnick et al., 2015; Yoon et al., 2021).

Beyond the dimension of whether or not there is a father, the quality of parental involvement is also crucial. The results of the study confirm that acceptance or rejection from mothers and fathers are both closely related to the child's psychological well-being (Putnick et al., 2015). Other findings in low-income families identified different patterns of fathering involvement and parenting, their consequences on the social-emotional and cognitive development of children, especially children under the age of five. It can be underlined that father wound is not only related to the absence of a father's role, but also the presence of a neglectful and harsh parenting pattern. Consistent with the above findings, studies in the United States show that better quality of paternal involvement is associated with lower internalization and externalization problems in pre-adolescents (Yoon et al., 2018).

It shows that father wound is a real risk factor, because it targets one of the most powerful relational levers in child development. Empirical evidence demonstrates that early father absence is significantly associated with elevated depressive symptoms throughout adolescence and early adulthood, suggesting that disruptions in father-child relationships can have enduring effects on psychological well-being (Culpin et al., 2022). Furthermore, meta-analytic findings indicate that warm, responsive father involvement significantly enhances children's social-emotional competence, outcomes closely tied to psychological health whereas deficient paternal engagement correlates with poorer emotional outcomes (Khademi et al., 2025; Zheng et al., 2025).

Although a growing body of research has highlighted the importance of father involvement for children's mental health and developmental outcomes, existing studies predominantly conceptualize paternal influence in terms of father absence or general father involvement. The notion of father wound as an integrated psychological and relational construct encompassing emotional absence, rejection, neglect, and harmful parenting practices remains underexplored. Moreover, prior research tends to emphasize specific psychopathological outcomes, such as depression, anxiety, or behavioral problems, rather than examining children's psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct that reflects both adaptive functioning and positive mental health. In addition, while Attachment Theory, Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory), and Family Stress Model have been widely employed to explain parent and child dynamics, few studies have systematically integrated these frameworks to elucidate how father-related relational wounds operate as long-term risk factors for children's psychological well-being.

Addressing these gaps, this study offers a comprehensive literature-based analysis of father wound and its impact on children's psychological well-being, positioning father wound as a central relational risk factor in child development. By synthesizing empirical findings through Attachment Theory, IPARTheory, and Family Stress Model, this review contributes a theoretically integrated and conceptually refined perspective, with practical implications for family counseling, preventive interventions, and father-inclusive mental health practices.

In contemporary social contexts, rapid changes in family structures, increased divorce rates, economic pressures, and shifting gender roles have further complicated the father-child relationship. Many fathers experience competing demands between work and family responsibilities, which may inadvertently reduce emotional availability and consistency in parenting. In addition, cultural narratives that position fathers primarily as economic providers rather than emotional caregivers may obscure the psychological consequences of paternal disengagement. These dynamics increase the likelihood of father wound occurring in subtle yet pervasive forms, such as emotional neglect, inconsistent involvement, or harsh disciplinary practices that are often normalized within families. Despite these realities, interventions and parenting programs continue to prioritize maternal roles, leaving father-specific relational risks insufficiently addressed. Without a clear conceptualization of father wound and its developmental implications, the psychological vulnerabilities arising from disrupted father and child relationships may persist unnoticed across developmental stages. Therefore, a theoretically grounded and integrative understanding of father wound is essential to inform evidence-based counseling

practices, family interventions, and mental health policies that acknowledge fathers as critical agents in fostering children's psychological well-being.

Method

In this study, the narrative literature review method is used to describe and synthesize the findings of previous research thematically and conceptually. Narrative literature review is a flexible and reflective approach, which emphasizes the comprehensive integration of ideas and theories on certain topics, identifying knowledge gaps, and building a conceptual framework from previous research results (Ferrari, 2015). This approach was chosen because the main focus of the research is to understand the conceptual development of the father wound and its impact on psychological well-being, not just calculating the statistical effects of empirical studies.

In narrative literature review, the selection of articles is carried out purposively and thematically, by considering the conceptual relevance, novelty, scientific quality, and theoretical contribution of each source, not based on the number of articles or statistical selection procedures (Jahan et al., 2016). Articles were included based on their relevance to father and child relational dynamics and psychological well-being, theoretical grounding, publication quality, and accessibility of full-text sources. Studies that lacked empirical or theoretical rigor, focused exclusively on maternal parenting, or were inaccessible in full-text form were excluded from the review.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Article Selection

Aspect	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Topic Relevance	Studies addressing father and child relationships, father involvement/absence, paternal rejection, father wound, and their associations with children's or adolescents' psychological well-being	Studies focusing solely on maternal parenting or general family issues without explicit reference to the father and child relationship
Theoretical Framework	Studies grounded in established psychological or developmental theories (e.g., Attachment Theory, IPARTheory, Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Model, family or parenting theories)	Studies lacking a clear theoretical or conceptual framework
Type of Publication	Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, or scholarly book chapters	Non-peer-reviewed sources, opinion papers, editorials, blogs, or popular media articles
Publication Period	Articles published within the last 10–15 years, with the inclusion of seminal theoretical works when conceptually relevant	Articles published outside the defined time range without strong theoretical significance
Population Focus	Studies involving children or adolescents, or adult samples explicitly linked to childhood father and child experiences	Studies focusing on adult populations without reference to early relational or developmental contexts
Accessibility	Full-text articles available and downloadable from academic databases (e.g., Scopus, ScienceDirect, PubMed, Google Scholar)	Articles available only as abstracts or with inaccessible full-texts
Language	Articles published in English or Indonesian	Articles published in other languages without accessible translations

Searches are carried out in major academic databases, including Scopus, ScienceDirect, PubMed, Google Scholar, Researchgate, and other Open Access Journals. The selection is carried out by considering the relevance of the topic, by prioritizing sources that explicitly discuss the father wound, the father role and psychological well-being. The analysis is carried out

thematically by grouping sources based on the theoretical framework of Attachment Theory, IPARTheory, and Family Stress Model, as well as the psychological well-being dimension. Based on the article selection criteria, the total number of articles analyzed in this study was 15 articles.

Table 2. Article Selection

Author	Title (Link)	Year
Zheng et al.	Father's involvement is critical in social-emotional development in early childhood: A meta-analysis	2025
Bezrukova & Samoylova	The ways involved fatherhood and close relationships with fathers affect well-being of adolescents	2025
Maharani et al.	Hubungan Keterlibatan Ayah dalam Pengasuhan (Father Involvement) terhadap Psychological Well-Being Remaja	2025
Rothenberg et al.	Effects of Parental Acceptance-Rejection on Children's Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors: A Longitudinal, Multicultural Study	2023
Culpin et al.	Father absence and trajectories of offspring mental health across adolescence and young adulthood: Findings from a UK-birth cohort	2022
Rohner	Introduction to Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) and Evidence	2021
Yoon et al.	Patterns of Father Involvement and Child Development among Families with Low Income	2021
Risnawati	The Role of Father Involvement Towards Well-Being Adolescent	2021
Kim & Glasgow	The effect of father's absence, parental adverse events, and neighborhood disadvantage on children's aggression and delinquency: A multi-analytic approach	2018
Rohner & Lansford	Deep Structure of the Human Affectional System: Introduction to Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory	2017
Masarik & Conger	Stress and Child Development: A Review of the Family Stress Model	2017
Putnick et al.	Perceived mother and father acceptance-rejection predict four unique aspects of child adjustment across nine countries	2015
Culpin et al.	Early Childhood Father Absence and Depressive Symptoms in Adolescent Girls from a UK Cohort: The Mediating Role of Early Menarche	2015
McLanahan et al.	The Causal Effects of Father Absence	2013
Conger & Donnellan	An Interactionist Perspective on the Socioeconomic Context of Human Development	2007

Findings

The synthesis of literature shows that empirical evidence about father wound comes from various study designs. Some studies use constructions such as father absence, father neglect, father involvement, low paternal warmth, or paternal rejection to represent aspects of father wound. The consistency of several findings is the association between exposure to father's wound, especially the absence of the father in the early childhood, and the increased risk of mental health disorders, depressive symptoms, psychological well-being disorders, or anxiety in adolescence and early adulthood.

Table 3. Article Analysis Results

Author Name/Title	Year	Method	Result	Analysis
Zheng et al. Father's involvement is critical in social-emotional development in early childhood: A meta-analysis	2025	This research uses the meta-analysis method, by systematically reviewing 65 empirical studies published in English and Mandarin since 2000. The total sample includes 154,801 children and 127,081 fathers. The analysis was carried out by calculating the weighted effect sizes between the	Meta-analysis of 65 empirical studies with the results showing a significant relationship between father involvement and children's social-emotional competence. Specifically, the most influential form of father involvement is positive involvement, warmth, and emotional responsiveness.	This finding provides evidence that the absence or low quality of father involvement, especially warmth and responsiveness, has the potential to be a source of psychological injury to children. The social-emotional competence that is identified is the key to psychological well-being in the dimension of positive

Author Name/Title	Year	Method	Result	Analysis
		father's involvement and the social-emotional competence of early childhood.		relationship with others, environmental mastery, and self-acceptance.
Bezrukova & Samoylova The ways involved fatherhood and close relationships with fathers affect well-being of adolescents	2025	This study uses a quantitative-descriptive approach with relational analysis, which assesses the father's contribution in child rearing, and its relationship with subjective well-being and child personality development. Data was obtained through the measurement of children's perception, which was then analyzed comparatively to examine the variation of influence.	The research results show that there is a shift in the parenting pattern of fathers from the traditional model to the involvement of a more active and emotional father (involved fatherhood). This father's involvement is proven to be the main foundation for the formation of a close and meaningful relationship between father and child.	This finding confirms that emotional closeness with the father is the main protective factor against psychological wounds in children. The warm and consistent father's involvement contributes to the optimization of psychological function and the strengthening of several dimensions of psychological well-being, such as self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, and personal growth.
Maharani et al. Hubungan Keterlibatan Ayah dalam Pengasuhan (Father Involvement) terhadap Psychological Well-Being Remaja	2025	This research uses a quantitative method with a correlational approach to test the relationship between the father's involvement in parenting and the child's psychological well-being. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, with a total of 245 teenagers who attend SMP Negeri 1 Bantarsari. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1-4, with data analysis using a correlation test.	The results of correlation analysis show that there is a positive and significant relationship between the father's involvement in parenting and the child's psychological well-being. This finding indicates that the higher the level of father involvement, the higher the child's psychological well-being level.	This finding reinforces the view that father involvement is one of many relational factors that contribute to children's well-being. In the context of psychological well-being, a supportive and accepting interpersonal relationship is the shaper of optimal psychological well-being.
Rothenberg et al. Effects of Parental Acceptance-Rejection on Children's Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors: A Longitudinal, Multicultural Study	2023	This research uses a cross-cultural quantitative study based on IPARTheory. The sample consisted of 1,315 children aged 7–14 years from nine countries (China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States). Data collection using Parental Acceptance-Rejection Questionnaire (PARQ)	The study involved 1,315 children from 9 countries with diverse cultural backgrounds and using the IPARTheory framework. The results of multilevel analysis show that at a cross-cultural level, higher father rejection tends to have more persistent child internalization problems. Another important finding is that the impact of parental acceptance-rejection is cross-cultural	The results of this study provide strong empirical evidence that the father's emotional rejection, whether in the form of neglect, cold attitude, or hostility, is a source of significant psychological wounds for children, regardless of the cultural context. Furthermore, this result expands the understanding of father wound as a cross-cultural phenomenon, not a

Author Name/Title	Year	Method	Result	Analysis
		and Achenbach System of Empirically-Based Assessment (ASEBA), with data analysis using multilevel modeling.	(pancultural), showing the universality of the psychological mechanisms involved.	construction that is limited to a certain social context. IPARTheory explains that parental acceptance, including fathers, is the foundation for the formation of healthy children's psychological functions.
Culpin et al. Father absence and trajectories of offspring mental health across adolescence and young adulthood: Findings from a UK-birth cohort	2022	This research uses a cohort-based longitudinal design by utilizing data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) involving up to 8,409 children. Mental health data was collected through self-report using Clinical Interview Schedule–Revised (CIS-R) and Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ), with relationship analysis using multilevel growth-curve modeling.	Longitudinal research examines the impact of the absence of a biological father due to the separation of parents on the mental health trajectory of children to young adults. The results of multilevel growth-curve modeling analysis show that the absence of a father in early childhood, increases the risk of depression at the age of 24. In addition, the absence of a father in the early stages of life is the strongest risk factor for a poor mental health trajectory.	This finding reinforces the view that the absence of the father in the early development period is a form of deep relational wound and has a long-term impact. The impact of father's absence is stronger when it occurs in the early stages of life, and systematically disrupts the psychological well-being dimension of the child, and increases the risk of depression throughout the individual's development.
Yoon et al. Patterns of Father Involvement and Child Development among Families with Low Income	2021	This research uses a quantitative design with a person-centered approach, utilizing data from the Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM) Program involving 2,650 fathers with children under 5 years old (average age of fathers = 29,35 years). To identify father's involvement patterns, researchers applied Latent Class Analysis (LCA).	This research uses data from 2,650 fathers who joined the Supporting Healthy Marriages program. The research results show that positive father involvement is related to the development of more adaptive children. Meanwhile, the pattern of involvement but with hard discipline correlates with increasing child behavior problems. This finding confirms the importance of the quality of father's involvement, not just the quantity of physical presence.	This finding shows that the psychological wound caused by the relationship between father and son not only appears because of the father's absence, but also due to maladaptive involvement. The pattern of low cognitive stimulation and engaged but harsh discipline can be understood as a form of emotional absence or a hurtful presence. From the perspective of psychological well-being, this finding indicates that the quality of father involvement directly contributes to the formation of the child's psychological well-being.
Risnawati The Role of Father Involvement Towards Well-Being Adolescent	2021	This research uses quantitative methods with a correlational approach to identify the relationship between father involvement and children's psychological well-being. The number	The results of Spearman correlation analysis show that there is a positive and significant relationship between the father's involvement and the child's psychological well-being. Father's involvement	This finding confirms that the involvement of an active and positive father serves as a protective factor against the emergence of psychological wounds in children. High father involvement contributes to

Author Name/Title	Year	Method	Result	Analysis
		of respondents was 153 teenagers aged 12-15 years old, with the purposive sampling technique. Data collection instruments include Riff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB) and father involvement scale, which are analyzed using Spearman correlation.	contributes to the development of responsibility, autonomy, resilience, and children's ability to do positive self-evaluation.	the strengthening of the dimensions of autonomy, environmental mastery, self-acceptance, personal growth, and purpose in life which are the core aspects of children's psychological well-being.
Kim & Glasgow The effect of father's absence, parental adverse events, and neighborhood disadvantage on children's aggression and delinquency: A multi-analytic approach	2018	This research uses a quantitative approach with longitudinal design, applying various advanced statistical models. The main analysis includes fixed effects models, and hybrid models. This approach is used to increase causal inferences related to the influence of father's presence on children's aggressiveness in a broader social and environmental context.	The results of the analysis using hybrid models that distinguish between interindividual and intraindividual variations, differences between individuals in the absence of fathers showed a significant relationship with child aggressiveness. Children who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods show a higher level of aggression, either directly or indirectly.	This finding confirms that the father's absence cannot be understood as a single factor that stands alone, but as part of a broader relational and structural ecosystem. Father wound is often intertwined with contextual factors such as poverty, family stress, and a dysfunctional social environment. In this condition, the absence of the father can aggravate the vulnerability of the child's psychological well-being.
Putnick et al. Perceived mother and father acceptance-rejection predict four unique aspects of child adjustment across nine countries	2015	This research uses a multinational longitudinal design involving 1,247 families from nine countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and America. Children's perception is measured using an instrument based on Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory). Data analysis is carried out with a longitudinal model that controls the relationship between variables in each wave, cross-time stability, and parental characteristics.	This study involved 1,247 families from nine countries, namely China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States. The results of the study show that a higher rate of parental rejection consistently predicts an increase in internalization and externalization problems, as well as a decrease in academic performance and children's prosocial behavior. The perception of acceptance or rejection from parents has a small but universal effect on various domains of child development and adjustment.	This finding provides cross-cultural empirical evidence that the father's rejection perceived by the child is a significant source of psychological injury, regardless of the cultural context or social background. Father wound can be understood as part of the broader dynamics of accepting parents' rejection, where father's refusal directly contributes to the child's emotional vulnerability and maladaptive behavior. In addition, father wound is a universal phenomenon that has the potential to weaken children's psychological well-being in various social contexts.
Culpin et al. Early Childhood Father Absence and Depressive	2015	This research uses a longitudinal design based on a birth cohort, by utilizing data from the Avon Longitudinal	The results of structural equation modeling showed that about 15% of the relationship between father's absence in early	This finding provides strong evidence that the father's absence in the early stages of life is a form of relational wound that has a

Author Name/Title	Year	Method	Result	Analysis
Symptoms in Adolescent Girls from a UK Cohort: The Mediating Role of Early Menarche		Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) in England. The study sample consisted of 7,056 teenage girls. Depression symptoms are measured using Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ), with Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) data analysis.	childhood and symptoms of depression at the age of 14 was mediated by an earlier age of menarke. In addition to the mediation effect, the father's absence is directly associated with an increase of 11% in adolescent depression symptoms.	multidimensional impact, both psychologically and biologically. In addition, the absence of the father in early childhood systematically disrupts the psychological well-being foundation of adolescent girls.
McLanahan et al. The Causal Effects of Father Absence	2013	This study uses a systematic review method and comparative analysis of empirical studies that examine the impact of the father's absence on the child's well-being. Specifically reviewing quasi-experimental and longitudinal research design to overcome the omitted variable bias and reverse causality problems.	A critical review of the literature on father's absence, which showed the results that the studies found the negative impact of father's absence on the child's well-being. The strongest and most consistent evidence is found in several main outcomes, namely children's social-emotional adjustment, and mental health in adulthood, with the impact remaining significant and meaningful in terms of development.	This finding gives scientific legitimacy that psychological wounds due to father's absence are not just a methodological artifact, but a real phenomenon that persists even after the control of selection factors and causal bias. Father wound in this context can be understood as a relational experience that has a wide impact on the trajectory of individual development. In addition, the results of this study show that the absence of the father contributes to disturbances in various dimensions of psychological well-being throughout the life span.

Fathers' Emotional Involvement as the Foundation of Children's Socio-Emotional Development

Meta-analytical evidence shows that the involvement of fathers, especially in the form of warmth and emotional responsiveness plays a crucial role in the child's socio-emotional development (Zheng et al., 2025). The absence of the quality of involvement is not only a loss of nurturing role but also has the potential to cause psychological wounds that have a systemic impact on children's psychological well-being. Other empirical evidence involved fatherhood and the closeness of the relationship between father and child are important determinants in the formation of a healthy personality and psychological well-being of children (Bezrukova & Samoylova, 2025). The father's emotional involvement functions as a protective factor, while the father's emotional distance becomes a source of psychological vulnerability, especially for girls.

Father Involvement as a Protective Factor for Adolescents' Psychological Well-Being

Father's involvement has a significant relationship with the psychological well-being of teenagers, even when the father is physically present in the family (Risnawati, 2021). Other findings confirm that the father's involvement in nurturing has a positive and significant relationship with the child's psychological well-being (Maharani et al., 2025). This result confirms that the absence or low involvement of a father is not just a family structural problem, but a psychological risk factor that can weaken the mental well-being of adolescents. Therefore,

strengthening the role and quality of father's involvement is an important strategy in preventing father's wounds and improving the psychological well-being of adolescents.

Father Rejection as a Universal Predictor of Emotional and Behavioral Problems

Father's rejection is a significant and universal predictor of children's emotional and behavioral problems, which is an early indicator of low psychological well-being (Rothenberg et al., 2022). Cross-cultural longitudinal evidence found that the child's perceived father's rejection had a small but consistent and almost universal impact on various aspects of child adjustment and development (Putnick et al., 2015). This finding reinforces the father wound's position as a key relational construct in understanding children's psychological risks across cultures.

Early Father Absence as a Persistent Risk Factor Across the Life Course

The absence of a father in early childhood is a significant and persistent risk factor for childhood depression until early adulthood (Culpin et al., 2015, 2022). Relational wounds that occur in the early phase of life have the most profound and long-lasting psychological impact. In the framework of psychological well-being, these results show that the father wound not only affects the affective aspect but also weakens the core psychological function that supports the mental well-being of the individual throughout the life cycle. Another study found that the relationship between father's absence and children's aggressive behavior is complex and heavily influenced by the structural and environmental context (Kim & Glassgow, 2018). Psychological wounds caused by father relations cannot be understood reductionistically but must be placed in an ecological and systemic framework.

Quality and Pattern of Father Involvement as a Determinant of Long-Term Psychological Well-Being

The quality and pattern of father's involvement is much more decisive than just the level of father's attendance in early childhood care (Yoon et al., 2021). The pattern of father involvement that is harsh, minimal stimulation, or unresponsive functions as a form of father wound that has a negative impact on the child's social, emotional, and cognitive development which is the foundation of long-term psychological well-being. Father's wound is a real and sustainable developmental risk (McLanahan et al., 2013). In the framework of psychological well-being, this result places the quality and sustainability of the father-child relationship as a key factor that affects adaptive psychological function throughout the life cycle.

Discussion

To understand the impact mechanism, three main theoretical frameworks are used, namely Attachment Theory (Bowlby et al., 1992), Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory) (Rohner, 2021), and Family Stress Model (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Attachment Theory was chosen because it provides a fundamental explanation of the early relationship between the child and the main caregiver figure forming an internal working model that affects the emotional regulation, sense of security, and adaptive capacity of the individual throughout the life span. IPARTheory was chosen because it specifically focuses on the dimension of interpersonal acceptance and rejection in the relationship between parents and children, including the father's role as a significant figure. This theory is very relevant to conceptualize father's wound as a psychological wound that arises due to the experience of emotional rejection, neglect, or inconsistent warmth from the father. The Family Stress Model was chosen because it complements the previous two theories by including contextual and structural factors, especially economic pressure and family stress, as an important determinant of the quality of the father-child relationship. This theory explains that economic pressure increases the psychological distress of parents, including fathers, has an impact on the quality of nurturing and family

interaction. The combination of these three theories allows a more holistic and balanced analysis, as well as avoiding psychological reductionism in understanding the impact of father's wound.

The psychological well-being framework developed by Carol D. Ryff provides a comprehensive conceptual foundation in understanding the impact of father's wound on children's mental well-being. Psychological well-being emphasizes individual optimization through six main dimensions: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth (Ryff, 1989, 2013; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). These six dimensions develop progressively through an initial relational experience that is safe, consistent, and full of acceptance, especially in the context of the relationship between parents and children.

In the context of father's wound, empirical findings from Attachment Theory show that the insecurity of attachment with the father interferes with the foundation of emotional regulation and the child's sense of security. This condition is directly correlated with low self-acceptance, because children tend to internalize the experience of rejection or the father's emotional absence as a negative assessment of themselves. Attachment studies show that children with unresponsive paternity relationships are more prone to experiencing anxiety, feelings of worthlessness, and difficulty understanding self-emotions, all of which are indicators of weak self-acceptance and personal growth in the framework of psychological well-being (Ryff, 2013; Tan et al., 2023).

According to Attachment Theory (Bowlby et al., 1992; Bowlby, 1983), the quality of emotional bond with parents, including fathers, is the basis for the formation of secure attachment. When a child experiences a father wound in the form of emotional rejection or the absence of the father, the child is more vulnerable to forming insecure attachment. This condition implies difficulty in developing trust, emotional regulation, and stable self-esteem (McLanahan et al., 2013). When associated with the psychological well-being dimension, father's wound can hinder self-acceptance because children tend to feel unworthy of love, as well as positive relationships with others because fragile initial relationship experiences make it difficult for children to build healthy interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, from the perspective of Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory), the father's experience of emotional rejection has significant implications for the dimension of positive relations with others. Children who experience paternal rejection tend to develop a negative relational scheme, characterized by distrust, excessive sensitivity to rejection, and difficulty building warm and stable interpersonal relationships. This is in line with cross-cultural findings that show that the acceptance of parents, especially fathers, correlates positively with the child's ability to establish healthy, empathetic, and cooperative social relationships (Putnick et al., 2015; Rohner & Lansford, 2017).

IPARTheory emphasizes that the experience of acceptance or rejection of parents greatly determines the psychological well-being of children (Rohner, 2014). Father wound is often perceived by children as a form of rejection, both in emotional form (absence, coldness, or criticism) and physical (total absence). This rejection has an impact on the decrease in self-acceptance and autonomy, because children tend to experience low self-esteem, difficulty trusting their own abilities, and seeking validation from the outside. In addition, the limited support of the father also hinders personal growth, because the child loses a supporting figure in the exploration of identity and life goals.

Research based on the Family Stress Model shows that father stress, both due to economic pressure or family conflict correlates with less supportive parenting patterns, which in turn weakens the child's ability to manage environmental demands and life pressure (Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Masarik & Conger, 2017). Family Stress Model provides a broader perspective that father wounds not only arise from individual factors, but also stressful family conditions, such as economic difficulties or marriage conflicts. In this condition, the father often withdraws or shows negative behavior, so that the emotional relationship with the child deteriorates (Neppel et al., 2016). The implication towards the psychological well-being dimension is the weakening of environmental mastery and purpose in life, because children grow up in stressful family situations that reduce their capacity in managing life's challenges and formulating the direction of life goals.

The Ryff framework allows the integration of findings from Attachment Theory, IPARTheory,

and Family Stress Model into one complete conceptual model, which places the father-child relationship as a key determinant of optimal psychological function. If these three theoretical points of view are integrated, then father wound can be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon that affects almost all aspects of children's psychological well-being (Bowlby et al., 1992; Conger & Donnellan, 2007; Rohner, 2021; Ryff, 1989).

Self-acceptance is disturbed because the child feels rejected and worthless, the father's rejection lowers the child's self-esteem and self-acceptance (Putnick et al., 2015, 2018). Positive relationships with others are difficult to form due to insecure attachment with the father figure, so that the father figure projects the difficulty of trust or intimacy in social relationships in adolescence and adulthood. This is in line with the effect of attachment on mental health (Tan et al., 2023). Autonomy is weakened because children seek external validation due to the lack of father's support. The need for validation due to father's wound can reduce psychological autonomy, especially when parental acceptance is low (Rohner, 2014, 2021; Rohner & Lansford, 2017). Environmental mastery is hindered because children grow up in a family full of conflict or pressure, where continuous family pressure reduces the opportunity for children to practice environmental control competencies (Masarik & Conger, 2017; Neppl et al., 2016). Purpose in life is reduced due to the loss of direction and support of the father figure, the lack of father's support as a goal scaffolding can obscure the direction of the goal and meaning, especially in the context of family stress (Neppl et al., 2016). Personal growth is not optimal due to lack of stimulation and emotional support from fathers, low involvement related to weaker cognitive and social development (Yoon et al., 2018, 2021).

Thus, father's wound has significant long-term psychological consequences to the child's psychological well-being, which can last until adulthood if not realized and overcome. This study reinforces the importance of the father figure in the framework of the child's psychological development, in line with Ryff (2013) which emphasizes that psychological well-being not only depends on individual factors, but also the quality of interpersonal relationships and family context. Practically, these findings provide a strong theoretical foothold for further discussion of the implications of the father's wound on the child's psychological well-being, and the development of a family counseling intervention that emphasizes the restoration of the father-child relationship, as well as the healing of emotional wounds caused by the father's wound.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine father wound as a relational and developmental risk factor and to clarify its implications for children's psychological well-being across the life span. Father wound was conceptualized not merely as physical father absence, but as a broader constellation of relational disruptions, including emotional rejection, neglect, low warmth, harsh involvement patterns, and limited emotional responsiveness. The synthesis of empirical evidence demonstrates that exposure to father wound, particularly during early childhood constitutes a persistent psychological risk that increases vulnerability to depressive symptoms, anxiety, emotional and behavioral problems, and disturbances in psychological well-being from adolescence into early adulthood. Importantly, the findings indicate that the quality and pattern of father involvement are more decisive than mere physical presence. Fathers who are emotionally distant, rejecting, or inconsistently involved may produce psychological outcomes comparable to, or even more detrimental than, complete father absence.

From a theoretical standpoint, the integration of Attachment Theory, Interpersonal Acceptance-Rejection Theory (IPARTheory), and the Family Stress Model offers a comprehensive explanatory framework. Attachment Theory explains how early emotional bonds with the father shape internal working models. IPARTheory strengthens this explanation by highlighting paternal acceptance-rejection as a universal predictor of children's emotional and behavioral adjustment. Meanwhile, the Family Stress Model contextualizes father wound within broader structural pressures, demonstrating that economic stress and family conflict often exacerbate paternal withdrawal, emotional unavailability, or negative parenting behaviors. The

convergence of these three frameworks avoids psychological reductionism and positions father wound as a multidimensional phenomenon embedded within relational, emotional, and socio-structural contexts.

When interpreted through Ryff's psychological well-being framework, the findings substantiate that father wound undermines all six core dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Father wound is not limited to affective disturbances but represents a fundamental disruption to optimal psychological functioning across the life course. These findings confirm the central proposition of this study: father wound is a real, enduring, and systemic developmental risk that significantly shapes children's psychological well-being. At the same time, the evidence also highlights the protective potential of emotionally responsive and warm father involvement, underscoring that fatherhood can function either as a source of psychological vulnerability or as a powerful resilience factor.

In terms of future directions, this study opens several important avenues for further research. Longitudinal and mixed-method studies are needed to explore the dynamic processes of father wound and healing across developmental stages. Future research may also examine culturally grounded models of fatherhood, differential impacts across gender, and the role of therapeutic or counseling interventions aimed at repairing father and child relational wounds. Practically, these findings provide a strong foundation for the development of family- and father-focused counseling models that prioritize emotional presence, relational repair, and the restoration of secure father and child bonds as a pathway to enhancing psychological well-being.

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