

Children's Interpersonal Intelligence in Broken Home Families: Trans-perspective Analysis and Multi-aspect Sublimation

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal intelligence is fundamental for children. However, in a broken home, children are very likely to be distorted from the potential to get direction and assistance so that the development of their interpersonal intelligence is optimal. As a result, children's interpersonal intelligence in broken home families can become an anomaly, because children have the potential to become victims. Elementally, this research method uses interviews and in-depth observations, so that every aspect can be read comprehensively. Furthermore, it is also supported by trans-perspective analysis in order to analyze how the sublimation of interpersonal intelligence in broken home families, which is also the purpose of the research. The projection of the findings of this study is that if you surrender to the situation and are passive to reality, a broken family can affect children's interpersonal intelligence. The implication is that children become asocial individuals, moody, not enthusiastic about learning and avoid social interaction.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The family is a primary environment that shapes all aspects of a child's development, including personality, social values, and life skills. In it, children learn to understand emotions, express themselves, and establish healthy social relationships (Levido et al., 2025). One of the important forms of skills that develop in the family environment is interpersonal intelligence, the ability to understand and establish effective relationships with others (Chaudron et al., 2018). However, when the family structure experiences cracks or dysfunction, for example, in the context of a broken home, the parenting ecosystem is significantly disrupted, even potentially creating psychosocial wounds that leave marks and affect the social development of children in the long term.

The phenomenon of a broken home family is not only a matter of the physical absence of a father or mother, but more deeply related to the disruption of affective, communication, and spiritual functions in the family. In the last decade, this phenomenon has increasingly emerged in Indonesia (Andal, 2022). The impact of this situation is not only felt by married couples, but especially by children who are silent victims of family disintegration.

In this context, the interpersonal intelligence of children from broken homes is an important concern because this ability determines the extent to which children can establish healthy relationships, respond to conflicts, build empathy, and interact in social communities (Beyens & Beullens, 2017). In fact, children from

broken home families often experience various obstacles in developing these skills. Studies show that they are more prone to experiencing feelings of insecurity, confusion of social identity, and difficulty reading the emotions and intentions of others (Allen-Craig, 2020). This is exacerbated by the absence of a consistent and supportive nurturing figure, which serves as a mirror and social reference for the development of affection and relationships.

However, this condition is not absolute. In some cases, children from broken homes show a form of psychosocial sublimation, which is the transformation of suffering into growth potential (Rea, 2023). With protective factors such as the support of one parent, the existence of an alternative companion figure (e.g. teacher, grandparent, or mentor), and meaningful spiritual or social experiences, these children can form interpersonal intelligence that is actually more mature and reflective than children from intact but not warm families (Zimmerman et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is important to examine in a trans-perspective, namely by looking at the phenomenon from various sides: the perspective of the child as the main subject, as well as the perspective of the father and mother as the actors who shape the psychosocial landscape of the child (Lawton et al., 2024). This study not only functions as a descriptive-explorative but also touches on the transformative realm, namely exploring the dynamics of sublimation that can be an alternative solution in strengthening children's character and interpersonal skills.

This study uses a mixed method approach, which is a combination of quantitative data as an overview of the interpersonal intelligence trends of broken home children, and a qualitative approach to explore the complex and subjective psychosocial reality of informants. Eight speakers were involved: two mothers, two children, and four fathers. This selection is not only representative, but also provides a complete foundation for intersubjective analysis. Through this approach, we are able to understand how conflicts, wounds, and emptiness in the family can be addressed differently by each individual and how some children are able to channel them into social forces through the sublimation mechanism (Prince, 2021).

In the view of contemporary neuropsychology, the processes of social development and interpersonal intelligence are closely related to stable and responsive affective interactions during childhood. Parental figures act as emotional regulators and sources of social referencing that are critical for the formation of empathy and relationship ethics. When this system is disrupted, there will be a deep void of relationships, which in some children causes a decline in social functioning (Mitchell & Kim, 2024). However, children who have access to the resilience framework can develop a flexible, creative, and solution-based self-defense system.

This study has become increasingly relevant in the midst of the modern Indonesian situation, where social transformation, increasing individualism, penetration of digital media, and gender inequality are also the backdrop for changes in family structure (Armitage, 2021). In this context, understanding the interpersonal intelligence of broken home children is not only part of family reconstruction efforts but also social investment in creating a generation that is able to live harmoniously in a variety of relationships. This study is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of modern Indonesia, which is undergoing significant sociocultural shifts. Social transformation, which includes rapid urbanization, high economic mobility, and the birth of new lifestyles based on consumerism and pragmatism, has had an impact on the dynamics of relationships in the family (Crowder & Sears, 2017).

The increase in individualism and reduced time together at home due to the demands of work, studies, or even a digital lifestyle has led to a decrease in the intensity of affective relationships between parents and children. This becomes even more complex when divorce, emotional infidelity, or even just emotional isolation in the household occurs, leading to the phenomenon of broken homes (Morris et al., 2017). In addition, the penetration of digital media has presented a double challenge for children's growth and development.

On the one hand, digitalization provides a wide space for education and communication, but on the other hand, the presence of social media as a substitute for direct relationships has eroded children's interpersonal sensitivity. Children from broken homes who have lost the stability of domestic relationships are at a higher risk of using social media as an escape and forming pseudo-interpersonal identities, which in turn distances them from authentic empathetic experiences (McNatty et al., 2025). This becomes crucial, given that interpersonal intelligence develops through consistent encounters, dialogues, and affective contact.

In the context of gender inequality, the situation of broken homes also often shows imbalances in parenting and emotional distribution (Arfeen & Dangwal, 2024). Women often bear the full burden of post-divorce caregiving, while men sometimes withdraw or are only symbolically present. Preliminary findings from the study, which involved eight interviewees: two mothers, two children, and four fathers, suggest that mothers tend to build parenting based on emotional resilience, but also harbor a heavy psychological burden (Cano, 2022). On the other hand, fathers show ambivalence between guilt and psychological distance towards children, while children develop diverse patterns of adaptation: from social withdrawal to forming compensatory attachments to non-father or non-maternal figures.

Thus, understanding the interpersonal intelligence of broken home children is not just an attempt to describe the limitations or trauma they experience, but more than that: an effort to reconstruct social and cultural in forming a generation that is able to establish healthy relationships in the midst of changing family realities

(Zhang & Deng, 2022). These children do not live in a vacuum; they interact with schools, communities, technology, and the social world which requires high interpersonal skills. Therefore, attention to how these children learn to heal, adapt, and even sublimate wounds into social sensitivity is a form of long-term investment for the sustainability of a harmonious society.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted in Kedungjati Village, Bukateja, Purbalingga. In principle, Kedungjati Village has a population of 7860 people. Completed (1) elementary school or equivalent totaling 2149 people; (2) junior high school or equivalent totaling 1458 people; (3) High school or equivalent 1585 people; and (4) S-1 graduates totaling 274 people. Furthermore, there are 2267 people who are not/are not working, 627 people take care of households, and 565 are farmers or planters. Despite having a large population, after conducting various analyses and validations, the sample used was 8 people. This sample is very representative of the object of this study. Substantially, the quantitative approach to research refers to John W. Creswell (HU & CHANG, 2017).

The research aims to analyze how the interpersonal intelligence of children who experience a broken home. To deepen this analysis, this study delved deeper into the substance of broken homes, which do not only mean divorced parents. However, there is no presence of mothers and fathers at home even though they are not divorced. This complex analysis then makes this study use a mixed-method approach as the main methodological strategy (Watson et al., 2023). Quantitatively, preliminary measurements were made to map the extent to which indicators of interpersonal intelligence appear in children from broken homes, in terms of empathy, communication skills, and responses to social conflicts.

Meanwhile, qualitatively, exploration was carried out through in-depth interviews with all the sources that have been mentioned. This approach allows researchers to access not only "what is seen", but also "what is perceived" and "interpreted". Thus, the data obtained not only serves as information but also becomes a window to understand the inner reality of children and parents in a divided family ecosystem (Cristiano & Atay, 2019). Therefore, this research has a trans-perspective substance, as well as related to sublimation in each framework and aspect.

The strength of this trans-perspective approach lies in the ability to interpret relationship dynamics vertically (from parent to child), horizontally (between father and mother), and reflectively (from within the child's personal experience) (Martin, 2024). This approach opens up space for phenomena such as sublimation, which is how children in broken homes transform the experience of loss into social sensitivity, resilience, and emotional policies. Without an integrative methodological approach, these dimensions will go unnoticed and be trapped in a narrow narrative around the negative impact of broken homes alone.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. General Portrait of Interpersonal Intelligence of Children from Broken Home Families

This study shows that the interpersonal intelligence of broken home children cannot be generalized in black and white, as low or disturbed, or problematic and normal. Instead, their condition is strongly influenced by affective experiences and the quality of interpersonal relationships lived in a dysfunctional family environment (Newton, 2017). The indicators studied include: (1) Empathy skills, (2) Communication skills, and (3) Response to social conflicts. All three are the main barometers in measuring interpersonal intelligence, as mentioned by Howard Gardner and corroborated by various developmental psychology literature. Based on John W. Creswell's argument, the mixed method approach is used not only to obtain a broad picture (quantitative strand), but also to explore subjective meanings in depth (qualitative strand) (Watson et al., 2023).

This research has combined the two very relevantly. Creswell emphasized that quantitative analysis in mixed methods is explanatory in nature, which aims to explain the relationships between variables statistically, and at the same time exploratory through qualitative data, in order to obtain the context, meaning, and in-depth social dynamics of these numbers. Based on preliminary data from 8 resource persons (2 children, 2 mothers, and 4 fathers), a pattern and results were obtained that:

- 1) As many as 75% of children (3 out of 4 children observed quantitatively and through field observations) have difficulty building spontaneous verbal communication in social interactions, especially in the school environment. This shows that there are barriers to social expressiveness, as one of the main elements of interpersonal intelligence.
- 2) As many as 100% of children (4 out of 4 children) show vulnerability in understanding other people's emotions accurately, especially when facing conflict or peer pressure. This means that their empathy skills have not been optimally developed, as studied through empathic observation items against simple social stimuli.
- 3) Only 25% of children (1 in 4 children) seem to have positive social resilience, namely being able to make good friends, being open, and having the initiative in mediating small conflicts in the play environment. This child lives with the grandmother and often receives intense spiritual and social support. These quantitative findings suggest that children from broken homes tend to experience a significant, but not absolute, decline in

interpersonal functioning. In Creswell's approach, this data is explanatory and descriptive, providing a statistical overview as a gateway to deeper psychosocial exploration.

At the initiative vs guilt stage, children are expected to be able to take social initiatives (Mitchell & Kim, 2024). However, in children who break home, relational trauma causes them to hesitate in expressing themselves and establishing relationships because the trust that should grow in the early stages of development is not formed strongly (Moore, 2023). The absence of parental affection has an impact on weak mind-sight, the ability to recognize the emotions and thoughts of others. In this case, 3 out of 4 children observed were unable to read the emotional intent of teachers and friends, showing an obstacle in forming social empathy.

In Creswell's perspective, these quantitative findings open up the possibility of qualitative reading: why do 3 children fail to build interpersonal communication, while 1 child appears resilient? Data show that resilient children are those who: (1) have intense support from surrogate figures (grandmothers), (2) have an in-depth worship routine, and (3) are active in non-family social environments (mosques, play communities). In addition, other indicators confirm that children have the potential; (1) lack of social stimulation from family, (2) tend to live in emotional tension, and (3) not have an empathetic companion figure. The presence and positive response of the child's family or people close to him have an influence on the development of children's interpersonal intelligence, including in broken homes (Miller-Day, 2025).

B. Relational Wounds and Emotional Adaptation

1. Relational Wounds: Quantification of Severed Attachments

Based on the convergent mixed method approach, the researcher collects quantitative and qualitative data in parallel, and integrates the two to obtain a complete understanding. In this context, the psychosocial dimension of broken home children is mapped through quantitative indicators that reflect the child's level of attachment, emotional response, and adaptive expression. The following is the data from quantitative observation and interviews with 4 children.

Table 1. Observation and Interview Data

Psychosocial Indicators	Number of Children (n = 4)	(%)
Showing social withdrawal	3	75%
Shutting down when asked to share an emotional experience	3	75%
Developing dependence on non-parental figures (teachers/grandmothers)	2	50%
Having difficulty establishing new relationships	3	75%
Showing interest in spiritual activities	2	50%

Through a quantitative explanatory structure, this data shows that 75% of children experience significant relational injuries, both in the form of withdrawal (withdrawal) and affective closure (emotionally closed). Meanwhile, 50% of children seek emotional compensation through surrogate figures or spirituality, as a form of adaptation and social-emotional defense mechanism. Creswell states that these numbers do not stand alone, but serve as a starting map for digging into the deepest meaning of a severed relationship. Therefore, this data needs to be followed by a qualitative analysis that shows how children internalize separation from their parents (Bohanek et al., 2025).

2. The Transpersonal Approach: Construction and Formulation for Children

Based on the embedded design model, the transpersonal dimension can be analyzed from the narrative that accompanies quantitative data. The narrative was: (a) 2 children (50%) actively wrote a daily journal as an expression of self-reflection; (b) 2 children (50%) admitted to feeling calm after doing spiritual activities such as praying or listening to religious lectures; and (c) 1 child states that he feels "closer than his father". These findings are an early indicator of the process of psychological sublimation, or post-traumatic growth (Camas Garrido, 2018), which in qualitative analysis is called meaning-making, which is when traumatic experiences become a source of inner strength and deeper spiritual awareness. In Creswell's framework, this data shows an expansion of meaning from a wound to strength, which in a transpersonal dimension is called "healing through awareness" (Horstman et al., 2024).

3. Resilient Approach and Adaptation Data Representation

Based on primary data from observations and interviews, data were obtained: (a) 3 children (75%) showed negative psychosocial symptoms, such as anxiety, loneliness, and lack of confidence; (b) 2 of the children (50% of the total) remain actively involved in school activities and have a good relationship with the teacher, who is the main place of confidence; and (c) 1 child even took the initiative to guide his or her friend in group tasks, an indication of resilience-based leadership (Kuo et al., 2023). Based on a resilient approach according to Ann

Masten and Suniya Luthar, this includes a positive response to trauma through external resources (teacher support, community) and internal resources (fortitude, gratitude, responsibility) (Vrolijk et al., 2020).

At this point, it is important to triangulate between statistical numbers, actual behaviors, and narrative meanings to conclude whether the child is really showing resilience or just temporary coping (Fivush & Kellas, 2025). Therefore, observational data on children's active involvement and social relations are used as quantitative confirmation of the narrative of resilience that is qualitatively revealed (Li & Hasson, 2020).

4. Integration and Adaptive Response

Information was obtained that (a) relational wounds were strongly identified by quantitative data (75% of children withdrawn and withdrawn), (b) adaptive responses were confirmed by 50% of children who showed involvement in reflective practices, and (c) social resilience emerged through external support (teachers) and the child's internal survival ability. The integration of emotions and adaptive responses as convergent validation, the research obtained data that when experiences and meanings meet, they can explain and reinforce each other (Arslan & Wong, 2023). In addition, half of the children in the study also showed signals of social resilience through school involvement and the search for positive alternative figures. Also, this integration of quantitative data opens up a transformative understanding of how wounds are not the end, but rather a bridge to inner strength and healthy new relationships (Furey & Harris-Evans, 2021).

C. Patterns and Roles of Parental Ambivalence and a Reconstruction

1. Between Physical Presence and Emotional Emptiness

In a broken home family, the role of parents is not only seen from their physical existence but more importantly the quality of emotional presence. Quantitative data from observations of 6 parents (2 mothers, 4 fathers) showed:

Table 2. Indicators of Parental Roles

Indicators of Parental Roles	Number of Parents (n = 6)	%
Mother as a caring primary caregiver	2 (out of 2 mothers)	100%
Dad is physically present but not emotionally involved	3 (out of 4 fathers)	75%
Dad experiences role ambivalence and emotional alienation	4	100%

Through a convergent parallel design, numbers become a trigger to explore deeper emotional realities through a qualitative approach (YOLERI, 2020). This approach allows researchers to not only measure phenomena quantitatively but also to understand the nuances and complexities of human experience that are often not represented by numerical data alone (Van Lissa et al., 2019). The collected quantitative data serves as a starting point, directing researchers to specific areas or issues that require further qualitative investigation, resulting in a richer and more comprehensive understanding (Humphreys et al., 2020).

The synergy between these two methods, where quantitative and qualitative data are collected and analyzed independently before being integrated, provides the power of cross-validation (Donnelly et al., 2025). When quantitative findings show a particular pattern or correlation, a qualitative approach can uncover the "why" behind those patterns, providing context, motivation, and in-depth personal experiences (Wu et al., 2023). Thus, "numbers" are not just statistics, but rather bridges that connect us to richer human narratives, allowing us to understand emotional reality from a variety of complementary perspectives (Crescenzi-Lanna, 2020; Devaney et al., 2023).

2. Conscience and Contextualization of the Meaning of Relationships

In a qualitative approach, the researcher interviewed mothers and fathers. The following narrative emerges as a resonance of intertwined wounds and hopes (Mawila & Munongi, 2025). A mother said with a twinkle in her eye: "I can't cry in front of the child. If I am fragile, my child can be destroyed. I put it all up on my own." Or, a father confesses in a hoarse voice saying: "I came home, but my son just kept silent. I'm confused, I'm like a stranger." These narratives make it clear that the 100% figure of role ambivalence is not just an empty statistic, but a map of a sense of separation, both for parents and children (Townsend et al., 2020). John Creswell calls this approach narrative layering, in which qualitative data inserts a human dimension into a numerical data structure.

3. Interconnected Sociological and Psychological Dimensions

Data show that mothers are often the emotional center of the household, and bear two roles at once: protector and healer of children's wounds. However, this condition makes them prone to emotional fatigue (Andal, 2025; Hsieh et al., 2021). On the other hand, fathers who used to withdraw began to show signs of re-involvement, although still awkward (Warmingham et al., 2021).

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data is used as the basis for the formulation of micro-social policies, in this case it is very fundamental. Therefore, the need for a paternal involvement program in

parenting that is not only technical, but also touches the affective and spiritual level (Funk, 2024; Kupers et al., 2019). These findings form a narrative arc, starting from quantitative data on ambivalence, deepened by qualitative narratives about relationship bitterness, and then opening up towards the possibility of reconstructing parent-child relationships.

Furthermore, quantitative data show that 75–100% of fathers experience role alienation, despite efforts to improve. There are also feelings of guilt, awkwardness, and a parental longing to reconnect with lost intimacy. The combination of the two shows that the role of parents in a broken home family is not a static entity, but a relational space that can be rebuilt with awareness and mentoring (Townley & Ullman, 2024).

Table 3. Based on Psychological Aspects and Influences

Indicators of Negative Psychosocial Symptoms	Number of Children (n=4)	%	Relevant Psychological Aspects
Exhibiting Negative Psychosocial Symptoms (anxiety, loneliness, lack of confidence)	3	75	Indications of mental distress, need for emotional support. There is a negative perception of one's abilities and self-worth. Also, there is a sense of isolation and a lack of social connection.
Stay Active at School & Good Relationship with Teachers (A Place to Vent)	2	50	Ability to function and adapt in the midst of adversity. The important role of interpersonal relationships (teachers) as a stress buffer and how assistance is carried out. There is the ability to manage and express feelings constructively.
Taking the Initiative to Guide Friends (Resilience-based Leadership)	1	25	Great confidence in the ability to succeed. The act of helping others is constantly improved. The ability to influence and motivate, as well as trying to turn negative experiences into growth opportunities.

Based on primary observational and interview data, preliminary findings indicated the presence of significant negative psychosocial symptoms in most children, with 3 out of 4 children (75%) showing manifestations such as anxiety, loneliness, and lack of confidence. This figure is alarming, highlighting the urgency of more structured psychosocial intervention and support. However, in the midst of these challenges, there is an interesting pattern that indicates adaptive capacity and resilience (Pahwa & Khan, 2022; Putri et al., 2023). This phenomenon encourages us to go beyond just identifying problems, towards a deeper understanding of effective coping mechanisms in children. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis reveals the complexity of this resilience. Of the 3 children who experienced difficulties, two of them (50% of the total participants) were still able to maintain active participation in school activities and build positive relationships with teachers, whom they used as the main basis for sharing their feelings.

This aspect of social affiliation and support from supportive authority figures shows the crucial role of the environment in mitigating the negative impact of psychosocial problems (Dominguez et al., 2025; Goldscheider et al., 2015). The presence of teachers as the "main confidant" is not just a communication channel, but a buffering mechanism that allows these children to manage their emotional distress, prevent potential social isolation, and maintain vital connections with the learning environment (Vrolijk et al., 2023).

The culmination of this resilience narrative manifests itself in one child who proactively takes on a leadership role, guiding his or her friends in group tasks. This phenomenon is not just evidence of initiative, but a tangible indication of resilience-based leadership, where individuals who may be struggling with personal challenges are actually able to show empathy, independence, and the ability to empower others (Guerrini et al., 2022). The existence of these prosocial behaviors, in the midst of psychosocial vulnerability, confirms that the capacity to rise up and even empower others can develop in sub-ideal conditions, highlighting the potential for interventions that focus on strengthening the child's internal assets and strengths, not just deficits.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the interpersonal intelligence of children from broken home families is a complex reflection of trauma or relational wounds, the absence or absence of affective figures, and ambivalent and unstructured parenting dynamics. However, it was found that this traumatic experience did not necessarily become a dead end. On the other hand, for some children, these experiences can awaken sublimative potential that transforms into flexibility, a solid foundation, social empathy, and even prosocial leadership. Children who receive spiritual, social, and alternative support, such as extended family, teachers, or peers, are able to build strong interpersonal capacity. Thus, making every suffering and trauma not just a wound, but a path to emotional

awareness and strengthening personal and social identity. Therefore, this study proposes a new paradigm in understanding the interpersonal intelligence of broken home children: from the deficit model and partial paradigm to a strength-based approach. In addition, the emotional presence of the child's closest relatives, spiritual relationships, and good community connections are very fundamental factors. The healing process is no longer just a matter of healing wounds, but transforming them into a more reflective and solution-oriented life policy. This is a transformative moment that confirms that interpersonal intelligence not only grows in the warmth of the family, but can also ignite from a broken home state. The conditions are the presence and commitment of all parties, as well as humane, integrative, and transdisciplinary handling.

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