

UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF BROKEN HOMES ON STUDENTS: FAMILY STRUCTURE, PARENTING PATTERNS, AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the effects of broken-home conditions on students' socio-emotional development and educational achievement through a literature review approach. Family instability, including parental divorce, prolonged conflict, emotional neglect, and dysfunctional parenting, has become an increasingly significant issue in contemporary education because it influences students' psychological well-being, social adaptation, and academic performance. This research employed a qualitative library research method by analyzing recent scholarly publications indexed in reputable databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar. The selected literature primarily focused on studies published within the last 2 years that examined family structure, parenting patterns, social support, socio-emotional development, and educational achievement among students from broken-home families. The findings indicate that broken-home conditions negatively affect students through increased emotional distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, reduced learning motivation, and declining academic engagement. Parenting quality was identified as a crucial factor influencing students' adaptation, as supportive, emotionally responsive parenting can strengthen resilience and reduce the adverse effects of family disruption. In addition, social support from teachers, peers, schools, and communities serves as an important protective factor, enhancing students' emotional stability and educational persistence. The review also reveals that educational outcomes among students from broken homes are multidimensional and influenced by interactions among psychological, social, and economic factors. This study contributes to educational literature by providing an integrative understanding of the relationships among family structure, parenting patterns, social support, and educational achievement. The study emphasizes the importance of inclusive educational environments, socio-emotional learning, and school-based counseling interventions to support vulnerable students. Therefore, collaborative efforts among families, schools, communities, and policymakers are essential to promote students' emotional well-being and academic success despite family instability.

Keywords: broken home, family structure, parenting style, social support, socio-emotional development, academic achievement, educational psychology.

Introduction

The family is widely recognized as the primary social institution shaping children's emotional, psychological, and educational development. In the educational context, family stability plays an essential role in supporting students' motivation to learn, emotional security, and academic achievement. However, rapid social transformation, increasing divorce rates, parental conflict, and domestic instability have contributed to the

growing phenomenon of broken homes across many countries. Students raised in disrupted family environments frequently experience emotional distress, reduced parental supervision, and weakened educational support systems, which ultimately influence their socio-emotional adjustment and school performance. Recent educational studies indicate that family dysfunction has become an increasingly important issue in contemporary educational discourse because it affects not only psychological well-being but also students' long-term academic trajectories (Amato & Kane, 2023; Zhao et al., 2024). The phenomenon of broken homes has become more visible in the post-pandemic educational era. Economic pressure, unemployment, parental stress, and changing family dynamics after the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified household conflicts and family separation in many societies. As a result, schools are facing growing numbers of students who demonstrate anxiety, low self-esteem, behavioral problems, poor concentration, and declining academic motivation. Research conducted in several educational settings found that students from broken homes tend to experience higher emotional vulnerability compared to students from intact families, particularly regarding stress management, classroom participation, and social interaction (Kaur & Arora, 2023; Martínez & López, 2024). This phenomenon indicates that family disruption is no longer merely a private domestic issue but has become an educational and social challenge requiring serious academic attention.

From an educational psychology perspective, parenting patterns in broken-home families significantly shape students' developmental outcomes. Inconsistent parenting, lack of emotional warmth, weak communication, and limited parental involvement often contribute to students' emotional insecurity and academic difficulties. Conversely, supportive parenting and positive social support can reduce the negative impacts of family instability. Recent studies highlight that authoritative parenting and strong teacher-peer support systems can strengthen students' resilience despite adverse family conditions (Rahman et al., 2023; Lee & Kim, 2024). Nevertheless, the complexity of relationships between family structure, parenting style, social support, and educational achievement remains insufficiently understood in contemporary educational literature.

Several previous studies have mainly focused on the psychological consequences of broken homes, such as depression, anxiety, trauma, and juvenile delinquency. Other studies focused solely on academic achievement indicators such as grades, attendance, and school engagement. Although these studies provide important insights, they often examine variables separately rather than holistically integrating socio-emotional development, parenting patterns, social support, and educational achievement into one comprehensive framework. Consequently, the multidimensional educational impacts of broken homes remain fragmented in the existing literature (Nguyen et al., 2023; Alsubaie, 2024). This condition limits understanding of how various internal and external factors interact simultaneously to shape students' educational outcomes.

The research problem addressed in this study arises from the increasing number of students experiencing family disruption while educational institutions still lack

comprehensive approaches to addressing their socio-emotional and academic needs. Many schools continue emphasizing cognitive achievement without adequately considering students' family backgrounds and psychological conditions. Furthermore, educators often have a limited understanding of how parenting patterns and social support systems mediate the effects of broken-home conditions on students' learning experiences. This gap between educational practice and students' psychosocial realities may worsen educational inequality and reduce opportunities for vulnerable students to achieve optimal academic development (Hassan et al., 2024).

The research gap in recent literature demonstrates that most contemporary studies remain context-specific, focusing either on psychological adaptation or educational performance independently. Limited review studies comprehensively synthesize findings regarding the interconnected influence of family structure, parenting patterns, and social support on students' socio-emotional and academic development. Moreover, recent educational research tends to emphasize quantitative associations without deeply discussing the educational implications and intervention strategies necessary for schools, teachers, and policymakers. Therefore, there remains a significant theoretical and practical gap in understanding broken-home phenomena from an integrated educational perspective (Chen & Huang, 2023; Widodo et al., 2024).

The novelty or incremental newness of this study lies in its integrative literature review approach that combines three important dimensions simultaneously: family structure, parenting patterns, and social support systems in explaining students' socio-emotional development and educational achievement. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on either psychological or academic outcomes, this study aims to develop a broader conceptual understanding of how broken-home conditions influence students holistically. In addition, this review emphasizes recent empirical findings from the past two years to provide updated perspectives on the educational challenges faced by students in unstable family environments. This integrative perspective is expected to contribute to the development of more inclusive and student-centered educational policies and interventions.

The urgency of this research becomes increasingly important because the prevalence of family instability continues to rise globally, while educational systems are expected to create equitable learning environments for all students. Without proper understanding and intervention, students from broken homes may experience prolonged emotional difficulties, reduced academic opportunities, and weakened social development. Educational institutions, teachers, counselors, and policymakers need evidence-based insights to design supportive educational environments that strengthen students' resilience and learning motivation despite adverse family conditions. Therefore, understanding the effects of broken homes on students is not only academically relevant but also socially urgent, as it supports sustainable educational development and student well-being in contemporary society.

Literature Review

Broken Home and Family Structure in Educational Context

The concept of a broken home generally refers to a family condition characterized by parental separation, divorce, prolonged conflict, domestic violence, emotional neglect, or the absence of one or both parents in children's developmental processes. In educational studies, broken-home conditions are frequently associated with instability in children's emotional and social environments, which may negatively affect learning processes and academic adaptation. According to recent literature, family structure significantly shapes students' psychological security, emotional attachment, and educational opportunities because the family serves as the first environment where children develop behavioral patterns, discipline, and learning motivation (Zhao et al., 2024). Students raised in unstable family environments often experience inconsistent emotional support and reduced supervision, leading to increased vulnerability in both social and academic domains.

Contemporary educational research also emphasizes that broken-home conditions should not only be interpreted structurally through divorce or parental absence, but also functionally through unhealthy communication, persistent family conflict, and weak emotional bonding among family members. Even within intact families, dysfunctional parenting interactions may create emotional stress comparable to parental separation. Martínez and López (2024) explained that continuous exposure to family conflict contributes to emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and behavioral withdrawal among students, thereby influencing their classroom participation and educational engagement. This perspective broadens the understanding that family quality is as important as family structure in determining students' developmental outcomes.

Parenting Patterns and Student Development

Parenting style is one of the most influential variables affecting children's socio-emotional and academic development. Baumrind's parenting theory remains widely used in contemporary educational studies, categorizing parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting. Among these patterns, authoritative parenting—characterized by warmth, responsiveness, and balanced control—is consistently associated with positive academic achievement and emotional adjustment. In contrast, neglectful and inconsistent parenting patterns are more frequently observed in broken-home families and often contribute to emotional insecurity, poor self-regulation, and low academic motivation (Rahman et al., 2023).

Recent studies reveal that parenting quality can mediate the negative effects of family disruption on students. Even in broken-home conditions, students who receive emotional warmth, constructive communication, and educational support from parents tend to demonstrate stronger resilience and better academic performance than those experiencing emotional neglect. Chen and Huang (2023) found that supportive parenting practices help students develop adaptive coping mechanisms, emotional stability, and higher self-confidence in educational settings. Therefore, parenting patterns play a crucial

role not only in emotional development but also in shaping students' academic persistence and educational aspirations.

Furthermore, inconsistent parenting commonly found in unstable families often creates confusion regarding discipline, responsibility, and emotional expression among adolescents. Students exposed to inconsistent rules or emotional hostility at home may struggle with concentration, classroom behavior, and interpersonal relationships in school environments. This condition may eventually decrease students' academic engagement and increase the likelihood of absenteeism, low achievement, and social withdrawal (Kaur & Arora, 2023). Consequently, parenting practices become a central dimension in understanding how family instability influences students' educational experiences.

Social Support and Student Resilience

Social support is recognized as an important protective factor that can reduce the negative impacts of broken-home conditions on students' socio-emotional well-being and academic achievement. Social support includes emotional, informational, and instrumental assistance obtained from parents, teachers, peers, counselors, and the surrounding community. Educational psychology literature explains that supportive social relationships help students build emotional resilience, self-esteem, and adaptive coping strategies during stressful life experiences (Lee & Kim, 2024). In the context of broken homes, external social support becomes increasingly essential because students may experience limited emotional support within their families.

Teacher support is particularly important in helping students from broken homes maintain educational engagement and emotional stability. Positive teacher-student relationships can create feelings of safety, belonging, and motivation in the learning environment. Recent studies indicate that empathetic teachers who understand students' family backgrounds are more capable of fostering inclusive classroom environments and strengthening students' confidence in academic participation (Hassan et al., 2024). In addition, peer support also contributes significantly to students' social adaptation by reducing feelings of isolation and emotional distress.

Community and school counseling services further function as institutional support systems for vulnerable students. Guidance counseling programs, mentoring activities, and socio-emotional learning interventions have been shown to improve students' coping abilities and psychological well-being. According to Widodo et al. (2024), schools that integrate psychosocial support into educational systems tend to produce better educational outcomes among students from disadvantaged family backgrounds. Therefore, social support systems are fundamental components in mitigating the adverse effects of family instability on educational development.

Socio-Emotional Development in Students from Broken Homes

Socio-emotional development refers to students' abilities to manage emotions, establish interpersonal relationships, develop self-awareness, and adapt to social environments. Students from broken homes frequently face challenges in emotional regulation because family instability often creates feelings of insecurity, rejection, anger, and sadness.

Emotional disturbances experienced during childhood and adolescence may affect students' self-esteem, motivation, and social interaction patterns within school environments (Nguyen et al., 2023). Consequently, socio-emotional difficulties may hinder both academic achievement and long-term personal development.

Recent educational studies have identified several socio-emotional problems commonly experienced by students from broken homes, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, aggression, and behavioral problems. Kaur and Arora (2023) found that adolescents from disrupted families often demonstrate higher stress levels and lower emotional resilience compared to peers from stable family environments. Emotional stress may reduce concentration, impair memory processes, and decrease students' participation in learning activities. In severe cases, prolonged emotional distress may contribute to school dropout risks and antisocial behavior.

However, socio-emotional outcomes are not universally negative because individual resilience and environmental support significantly influence students' adaptation processes. Students who receive strong emotional support from caregivers, teachers, and peers are more likely to develop adaptive coping strategies despite experiencing family instability. This finding suggests that socio-emotional development is shaped not solely by family conditions but also by broader ecological and educational factors.

Educational Achievement and Family Instability

Educational achievement is one of the most frequently discussed consequences of broken-home conditions in educational research. Academic achievement includes students' grades, learning motivation, attendance, cognitive performance, and school engagement. Many studies indicate that students from broken homes tend to experience academic difficulties due to emotional stress, reduced parental supervision, economic instability, and limited educational support at home (Amato & Kane, 2023). These conditions often reduce students' ability to focus on learning activities and maintain consistent academic performance.

Family instability may also influence students' educational aspirations and long-term academic persistence. Students experiencing chronic family conflict frequently encounter psychological burdens that interfere with concentration and motivation in school settings. Zhao et al. (2024) explained that emotional insecurity and family stress contribute to lower academic self-efficacy, which subsequently affects educational achievement and future educational opportunities. In addition, economic difficulties following parental separation may reduce access to educational resources, extracurricular activities, and supportive learning environments.

Nevertheless, contemporary literature also demonstrates that educational outcomes among students from broken homes vary depending on parenting quality, resilience, and social support availability. Some students are capable of maintaining strong academic achievement despite adverse family conditions because they possess adaptive coping mechanisms and receive adequate external support. Therefore, educational achievement should be understood as a multidimensional outcome influenced by interactions among

family structure, parenting practices, socio-emotional conditions, and social support systems rather than being determined solely by family disruption itself.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using the library research method to examine the effects of broken homes on students' socio-emotional development and educational achievement. Library research was selected because it allows researchers to systematically analyze, compare, and synthesize various scholarly findings related to family structure, parenting patterns, social support, and academic outcomes. The data used in this study were obtained from secondary sources, including international journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and scientific reports indexed in reputable databases such as Scopus, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar. To ensure the relevance and novelty of the discussion, the study prioritized publications from the last two years (2023–2024) focusing on educational psychology, family studies, and student development. Keywords used during the literature search included “broken home,” “family structure,” “parenting style,” “social support,” “student socio-emotional development,” and “academic achievement.”

The collected literature was analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques through several stages, namely literature identification, data classification, content evaluation, interpretation, and synthesis of findings. Relevant studies were categorized based on major themes such as family instability, parenting patterns, emotional development, educational resilience, and academic performance. The analysis process emphasized identifying similarities, differences, research gaps, and emerging educational issues discussed in contemporary studies. Furthermore, this study applied a critical review approach to evaluate how previous research explained the relationships among family conditions, psychosocial factors, and educational outcomes. Through this method, the study aimed to construct a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional impacts of broken homes on students and provide updated theoretical insights for future educational research and policy development.

Results and Discussion

The findings of this literature review indicate that broken-home conditions significantly influence students' socio-emotional development and educational achievement through interconnected psychological, social, and educational mechanisms. Recent studies consistently demonstrate that family instability contributes to emotional insecurity, reduced academic motivation, and difficulties in social adaptation among students. Family disruption often creates unstable emotional environments characterized by parental conflict, inconsistent communication, and weakened emotional attachment, which negatively affect students' psychological well-being and learning processes. According to Educational Psychology research conducted by Zhang and Wei (2025), adolescents from broken-home families showed higher levels of anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and

classroom disengagement compared to students raised in stable family environments. These emotional disturbances directly influence concentration, participation, and academic persistence within educational settings.

Recent literature also reveals that parenting patterns remain one of the strongest determinants in shaping students' adaptation to broken-home conditions. Students who continue receiving emotional warmth, supervision, and constructive communication from parents demonstrate better resilience and academic stability despite family disruption. Conversely, neglectful and inconsistent parenting patterns frequently increase emotional vulnerability, behavioral problems, and learning difficulties. A study by Ibrahim et al. (2025) found that supportive parenting significantly mediates the relationship between family instability and educational outcomes because emotionally supportive parents help students develop adaptive coping mechanisms and self-regulation skills. This finding confirms that the negative impact of broken homes is not solely determined by family structure itself, but also by the quality of parenting interactions experienced by students. Another important finding concerns the role of social support systems in reducing the adverse educational effects of broken homes. Teacher support, peer relationships, and school counseling services were identified as protective factors that strengthen students' emotional resilience and school engagement. Recent educational studies emphasize that students from disrupted families who receive positive teacher-student interactions tend to demonstrate stronger learning motivation and greater emotional security in classroom environments. Research by Kim and Park (2025) explained that empathetic teacher behavior and inclusive classroom climates significantly reduce stress levels and improve academic confidence among vulnerable students. Similarly, peer support contributes to students' sense of belonging and social acceptance, helping them cope with emotional challenges caused by family instability.

In addition, the literature highlights that socio-emotional problems experienced by students from broken homes frequently manifest through anxiety, loneliness, aggression, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal. These emotional difficulties may impair cognitive functioning and academic performance because emotional stress affects memory retention, concentration, and problem-solving abilities. According to research by Al-Mutairi and Hassan (2025), prolonged emotional distress among adolescents from broken homes often leads to reduced classroom participation and declining educational achievement. The study further explained that students experiencing chronic family conflict are more likely to demonstrate absenteeism, academic disengagement, and lower educational aspirations than their peers from supportive family environments.

The results also indicate that economic instability associated with broken-home conditions contributes indirectly to educational inequality. Parental separation or family dysfunction often reduces financial stability, limiting students' access to educational resources, extracurricular activities, and supportive learning environments. Recent evidence presented by Rodríguez et al. (2025) showed that students from economically unstable broken-home families face higher risks of academic underachievement due to inadequate

educational facilities and increased psychological stress. Economic hardship may additionally force students to assume family responsibilities prematurely, reducing their focus on academic development and long-term educational planning.

Despite these challenges, recent studies demonstrate that not all students from broken homes experience negative educational outcomes. Some students develop strong resilience, independence, and adaptive coping abilities due to supportive external environments and positive personal characteristics. Educational resilience emerges when students receive adequate emotional support from teachers, peers, extended family members, and community institutions. Research by Nurhayati et al. (2025) found that school-based socio-emotional learning programs and counseling interventions effectively improve self-confidence, emotional regulation, and academic engagement among students from disrupted family backgrounds. This finding suggests that educational institutions possess a strategic role in minimizing the negative consequences of family instability.

The discussion further reveals that contemporary educational systems still tend to prioritize academic achievement without fully integrating psychosocial support into educational practices. Many schools continue focusing predominantly on cognitive performance indicators while overlooking the emotional and family-related difficulties experienced by students. This condition creates educational environments that may unintentionally marginalize vulnerable learners. Recent educational discourse emphasizes the importance of trauma-informed education, emotional literacy programs, and inclusive counseling systems to support students from unstable family backgrounds. According to Williams and Carter (2025), schools that integrate socio-emotional support into teaching practices demonstrate better student engagement, lower dropout risks, and improved academic resilience among disadvantaged students.

Overall, the findings of this study confirm that the effects of broken homes on students are multidimensional and interconnected across emotional, social, and educational domains. Family structure alone cannot fully explain students' educational outcomes because parenting quality, social support, resilience, and school environments significantly mediate these relationships. Therefore, addressing the educational impacts of broken homes requires collaborative efforts among families, schools, counselors, communities, and policymakers to create supportive educational ecosystems that promote both emotional well-being and academic success for vulnerable students.

Conclusion

This literature review concludes that broken-home conditions have substantial impacts on students' socio-emotional development and educational achievement. Family instability, parental conflict, divorce, emotional neglect, and inconsistent parenting patterns contribute to various psychological and academic challenges experienced by students. The findings reveal that students from broken homes are more vulnerable to anxiety, low self-esteem, emotional stress, social withdrawal, and decreased academic motivation, all of

which negatively influence their learning performance and educational engagement. However, the effects of broken homes are not determined solely by family structure, but are strongly influenced by parenting quality, emotional support, and the availability of positive social environments.

The study also demonstrates that supportive parenting patterns and strong social support systems play essential roles in minimizing the negative consequences of family disruption. Emotional warmth from parents, positive teacher-student relationships, peer support, and school counseling services can strengthen students' resilience, emotional regulation, and academic persistence. In this context, schools and educational institutions are not only responsible for academic instruction but also for creating inclusive and emotionally supportive learning environments for vulnerable students. Educational approaches that integrate socio-emotional learning, counseling interventions, and trauma-informed practices are increasingly important in contemporary education.

Furthermore, this review highlights that the phenomenon of broken homes should be understood through a multidimensional perspective involving psychological, social, economic, and educational factors. The study contributes to the literature by integrating discussions on family structure, parenting patterns, social support, and educational achievement into a comprehensive framework. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore intervention models, longitudinal impacts, and culturally specific educational strategies to better support students from broken-home families. Collaborative efforts among families, schools, communities, and policymakers are necessary to ensure that all students, regardless of family background, have equal opportunities to achieve emotional well-being and academic success.

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