

# Holistic Recovery: Integration of Emotional, Social, and Spiritual Support Extended Family for Parentless Children at HKBP Pardamean

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## Abstract

Parentless is a condition of parental absence that significantly impacts children's emotional, social, and spiritual development. Data shows 20.9% of children in Indonesia live without father presence, with 408,347 divorce cases in 2024. This study aims to describe the impact of parentless conditions and explore the role of extended family as a holistic recovery strategy for parentless children at HKBP Pardamean. A qualitative method with descriptive approach was employed through literature study and interviews with 6 parentless children. Research findings indicate that parentless conditions cause prolonged trauma, emotional regulation difficulties, excessive anxiety, social interaction problems, societal stigma, and spiritual identity crisis. Extended family proved to provide support in four dimensions: emotional-psychological, parental figure substitution, financial-material, and social status recovery. All respondents confirmed receiving comprehensive support from their extended family. Extended family plays a vital role as an effective alternative support system addressing parentless impacts. This integration model successfully helps children recover from trauma and remain connected to social-spiritual values, providing practical contributions to alternative parenting strategies within Indonesian cultural context.

**Keywords:** *Children, Extended Family, HKBP Pardamean, Parentless, Holistic Recovery*

## Introduction

Parentless is a condition when a child experiences parental absence in their life journey, whether emotionally, socially, or spiritually. This condition has significant negative impacts on child development and affects their ability to develop optimally and control emotions well. This condition becomes an increasingly complex problem in Indonesian society, considering its multidimensional impact on children's lives. Consistent with this, statistical data shows that 20.9% of children in Indonesia live without a father's presence. On its website, the Supreme Court explains that in 2018, an estimated 850,000 children were affected by their parents' divorce.<sup>1</sup> Divorce rates have

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<sup>1</sup>Badan Pusat Statistik (Statistics Indonesia), "Jumlah Perceraian Menurut Provinsi dan Faktor Penyebab Perceraian (perkara), 2023," *Badan Pusat Statistik*, accessed December 28, 2025, <https://www.bps.go.id/id/statistics->

soared even higher where in 2022 approximately 900,000 to 1,000,000 children were affected by divorce in one year. This figure continues to increase, based on reports from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2024 there were 408,347 divorce cases in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>

The causes of divorce are very diverse, ranging from continuous quarrels to economic problems within the family. The high number of divorce cases has negative impacts on children, ranging from mild to more serious effects. This becomes even more burdensome when both parents choose their own life paths and both remarry with new wives or husbands, leaving their children behind. Certainly this becomes a negative impact on a child, because they will not be with their parents and will not experience care from both parents.

Parentless conditions are not only caused by divorce, but can also occur when both parents are not present in the child's life due to the death of both parents. This also results in a child not feeling their parents' love directly.

Children who become victims of the absence of one or both parents often experience various negative impacts, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Parentless children are very likely to experience deep emotional wounds, which then affect the child's ability to trust that there is a reliable figure in their life. This condition makes it difficult for children to build trust in others and tends to develop feelings of insecurity. This condition is often accompanied by feelings of anxiety and insecurity about the future, because children lose the figure who should be a protector and provider of security in the family. Children in this condition experience difficulties in managing their own emotions, and often show unstable or excessive emotional reactions to certain situations.<sup>3</sup>

In social life, children experiencing parentless conditions will also likely face significant difficulties in forming healthy relationships with others. They often show resistance to rules or guidance from teachers or other adults, because of the experiences of loss or disappointment they have experienced. This is very possible to happen because parents play a role as models of social behavior and as agents of social behavior formation.<sup>4</sup>

Problems in developing self-discipline also become a significant challenge for parentless children. Without consistent parental example and guidance, children can experience difficulties in developing self-control and personal responsibility. This

[table/3/YVdoU1IwVmlTM2h4YzFoV1psWkViRXhqTIZwRFVUMDkjMw==/jumlah-perceraian-menurut-provinsi-dan-faktor.html?year=2023](https://www.pta-jakarta.go.id/content/1193-artikel-upaya-memberi-perlindungan-bagi-anak-korban-perceraian-orang-tuanya-di-pengadilan-agama-dalih-effendy)

<sup>2</sup>Dalih Effendy, "Upaya Memberi Perlindungan Bagi Anak Korban Perceraian Orang Tuanya di Pengadilan Agama," *Pengadilan Tinggi Agama Jakarta*, written March 13, 2025, accessed December 28, 2025, <https://www.pta-jakarta.go.id/content/1193-artikel-upaya-memberi-perlindungan-bagi-anak-korban-perceraian-orang-tuanya-di-pengadilan-agama-dalih-effendy>

<sup>3</sup>Fatma Ratu Shifa and Asep Suherman, *Dampak Tidak Adanya Peran Ayah Terhadap Perkembangan Anak Di Indonesia*, 2, no. 1 (2024): 265.

<sup>4</sup>Andika Putra, *DAMPAK PERAN ORANG TUA TERHADAP PERKEMBANGAN SOSIAL DAN EMOSIONAL ANAK*, n.d., 1.

impacts their ability to adapt to social environments and follow prevailing norms in society. These children also experience obstacles in developing social skills necessary for interacting with peers. They may show behavior inappropriate to social situations or difficulty understanding healthy interpersonal relationship dynamics.

Parents are the primary educators for their children's spirituality. Parents play a strong role in their children's faith growth.<sup>5</sup> When a child who does not have parents, this opens opportunities for the child to experience spiritual identity crisis. Without consistent spiritual guidance from parents, the child will experience confusion in building their spiritual identity because they cannot find an exemplary figure to know God. This condition becomes crucial considering that from an early age parents usually teach their children to pray and know God and instill spiritual values in their lives. Without consistent guidance and direction from parents, children will experience difficulties in developing their faith and building spiritual relationships with God.

The negative impacts that are so complex experienced by parentless children, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects, emphasize the need for the presence of substitute figures who can play the role of parents in caring for, guiding and supporting the life of the child. Therefore, this research pays attention to the role of extended family as an alternative and solution that has the potential to provide positive impacts in nurturing and instilling emotional, social, and spiritual values to parentless children.

In this research, there are 2 terms that refer to the same meaning, namely extended family and extended family. However, in this writing, the term extended family will be used consistently, except in the interview section where the term "extended family" will be used to further concretize the understanding of the object being studied.

Literally, extended family can be defined as a kinship network that extends beyond the nuclear family, including grandparents, uncles-aunts, cousins, nephews/nieces, and other family members who have blood ties. In the context of Indonesian culture, the concept of extended family has a very fundamental role in the social system of society. Extended family not only functions as a social network, but also as an economic, emotional, and spiritual support system that are interconnected and have collective responsibility for the welfare of each family member.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the extended family referred to is a group larger than the nuclear family, which has kinship relationships, both through blood ties and marriage, with the nuclear family. So naturally extended family has moral and social responsibility to participate in the process of nurturing and child development.

There are various previous studies that have discussed the phenomenon of parentless

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<sup>5</sup>Semuel Ruddy Angkouw and Simon Simon, "Peranan Orang Tua Dalam Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Pertumbuhan Rohani Anak," *SHAMAYIM: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 1, no. 1 (January 2021): 1, <https://doi.org/10.51615/sha.v1i1.3>.

<sup>6</sup>Deborah Copaken, *The ABCs of Parenthood: An Alphabet of Parenting Advice*, with Randy Polumbo (Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar: Chronicle Books LLC, 2017), 45.

comprehensively along with its impacts. However, this research offers a new perspective that has not been much touched upon, namely by highlighting the role of extended family as a substitute for parental roles. The novelty of this research lies in the recommendation of using extended family as a strategic solution in overcoming challenges faced by parentless children, thus providing alternative contributions in their holistic recovery efforts.

The parentless condition or absence of parental figures in children's lives is a phenomenon that has significant impact on various aspects of child development, particularly in emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. At HKBP Pardamean, there are a number of children who experience this condition and require special attention in their recovery and development process. The presence of extended family or extended family in the context of Batak culture becomes one of the potential alternative support systems to replace parental roles in providing guidance and accompaniment to these children.

However, it is not yet deeply known how the specific impact of parentless conditions on the holistic development of children at HKBP Pardamean, nor is there a clear model of how extended family can play an optimal role as parental substitute figures. Therefore, comprehensive research is needed to understand these dynamics and develop effective recovery strategies through extended family integration systems.

This research aims to gain deep understanding of the impact of parentless conditions on the emotional, social, and spiritual development of children at HKBP Pardamean, as well as explore the strategic role of extended family as parental substitute figures in providing holistic support to parentless children. Furthermore, this research also intends to design and develop an extended family integration model that can be implemented as a comprehensive and effective recovery strategy for parentless children at HKBP Pardamean, with the hope of making positive contributions to the welfare and optimal development of these children in the long term.

## **Method**

This research was conducted using qualitative research methods with a descriptive approach. Theories and explanations about parentless and extended family were collected through literature studies from various sources such as books and journals. The theories found will be elaborated and confronted with reality, particularly in the context of HKBP Pardamean congregation. In this research, interviews were also conducted with parentless children and connected to the explanations that had been obtained.

In order to understand the experiences and impacts of parentless conditions, researchers will pose a series of questions designed to explore informants' understanding of the concept and their personal experiences. The first question will ask whether informants know and understand the term parentless, then continue to explore their personal experiences regarding the absence of both parents in their lives. If informants have experienced such conditions, researchers will ask them to provide concrete examples and explain how they responded to and overcame the situations faced. Furthermore, the interview will explore the roles of other figures outside both parents

who became main supporters in the informants' emotional, social, and spiritual growth. The final part of the interview will focus on the role of extended family in providing support and their contribution to building emotional, social, and spiritual relationships of informants, by requesting concrete examples from their experiences to provide deeper insights into the dynamics of extended family support in the context of recovery from parentless conditions.

### **Respondent Selection Criteria**

The selection of respondents in this study employed purposive sampling techniques with strictly established criteria to ensure data relevance to the research objectives. The main criteria used were:

**Parentless Status:** Respondents must be children who have lost both parents (orphans) or experienced significant loss of parental role from one or both parents. This condition may be caused by death, divorce, or physical and emotional absence of parents in the child's life.

**Extended Family Involvement:** Respondents must have direct experience receiving support from extended family in emotional, social, spiritual, and financial aspects. This criterion is essential to address the research questions about the role of extended family.

**HKBP Pardamean Congregation Membership:** Respondents were selected from members of the HKBP Pardamean congregation to provide specific context aligned with the research focus on understanding extended family dynamics within this church community context.

**Willingness to Participate:** Respondents must voluntarily agree to participate in the research and be able to provide factual and comprehensive information about their experiences.

### **Data Collection Stages**

The data collection process was conducted through several systematic stages as follows:

#### **Stage One: Respondent Identification and Recruitment**

The initial stage began with identifying potential respondents who met the research criteria. After potential respondents were identified, the researcher conducted preliminary outreach to explain the research objectives, expected benefits, and data confidentiality aspects. Respondents who expressed willingness were then asked to provide formal consent through informed consent.

#### **Stage Two: Interview Scheduling and Implementation**

After obtaining consent, the researcher scheduled interviews considering respondents' comfort and time availability. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by respondents to ensure they felt comfortable and safe in sharing personal experiences. Each interview session lasted between 45-90 minutes, with duration adjusted based on response depth and respondents' comfort level in sharing their stories.

### **Interview Protocol**

To understand the experiences and impacts of parentless conditions, the researcher posed a series of questions designed to explore informants' understanding of the concept and their personal experiences.

### **Question Structure:**

The first question aimed to determine whether informants understood the term "parentless." Subsequently, the interview explored their personal experiences regarding the absence of both parents in their lives. If informants had experienced such conditions, the researcher asked them to provide concrete examples and explain how they responded to and coped with the situations they faced. The interview then explored the roles of figures other than both parents who became primary supporters in the informants' emotional, social, and spiritual development. The final part of the interview focused on the role of extended family in providing support and their contributions to building the informants' emotional, social, and spiritual relationships. Respondents were asked to provide concrete examples from their experiences to offer deeper insights into the dynamics of extended family support in the context of recovery from parentless conditions.

### **Interview Approach:**

The interview protocol was structured as semi-structured, allowing flexibility in information gathering while maintaining focus on the main research themes. Questions were posed gradually, starting from general ice-breaking questions to more in-depth and personal questions. The researcher used probing techniques to obtain further elaboration when respondents provided answers requiring deeper exploration.

### **Interview Method**

Interviews were conducted using in-depth interview methods that enabled the researcher to comprehensively explore respondents' life experiences. During the interview process, the researcher created an empathetic and non-judgmental atmosphere to build rapport and trust with respondents. This was crucial given the sensitivity of the topics discussed. Each interview was recorded using an audio recorder after obtaining respondents' consent, to ensure data accuracy and facilitate the transcription process. In addition to audio recordings, the researcher also made field notes to record non-verbal

observations such as emotional expressions, body language, and situational context not captured in the audio.

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

After interviews were completed, audio recordings were transcribed verbatim (word for word) to preserve the authenticity of respondents' expressions. These verbatim transcripts were then analyzed using thematic analysis methods, where the researcher identified main themes emerging from respondents' experiences. A coding process was conducted to categorize data based on categories relevant to the research questions, namely emotional-psychological aspects, parental substitute figures, financial-material support, and social status. Through this process, the obtained data could be systematically analyzed to answer research questions about the role of extended family in supporting parentless children.

## **Discussion**

### **A. Impact of Parentless on Children**

Literally, parentless comes from two words, namely parent which means parents and less meaning little/lacking or even absence. So simply parentless can be translated as a situation of minimal or even lost parental roles in a child's life. Parentless is a condition when a child loses their parental role, either permanently or temporarily. This loss can occur due to various causes such as death, divorce that leads to loss of parental figures, abandonment because parents leave children without proper care, parental inability due to mental disorders or addiction, to emergency situations such as natural disasters or wars that separate families.<sup>7</sup> Parentless does not always refer to physical loss of parents, but also includes loss of emotional, social, and spiritual presence that should be provided by parents in a child's daily life. This condition creates a large void in the child's life that can affect all aspects of their development.

#### **Emotional Impact of Parentless on Children**

Children experiencing parentless conditions often get trapped in circles of deep and prolonged sadness. They will likely experience complex trauma, because feelings of loss can emerge unexpectedly at any time. Parentless conditions also disrupt children's ability to balance their emotions. Parents who should serve as co-regulators who help children learn to manage emotions intensively, so when parental figures are lost, children will lose external support sources that play a role in organizing their emotions.<sup>8</sup>

Children experiencing emotional disorders will find it difficult to control their feelings. This makes them vulnerable to sudden mood swings and difficulty coping with

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<sup>7</sup> Anna Qurrotul A'yuni and Diana Rahmasari, *GAMBARAN KETIADAAN PERAN ORANGTUA PADA REMAJA PELAKU BULLYING DI SMP NEGERI 1 PALANG*, 06 (2019): 3.

<sup>8</sup> Allison Gilbert, *Parentless Parents: How the Loss of Our Mothers and Fathers Impact the Way We Raise Our Children* (New York: Hyperion, 2011), 50–51.

various situations around them, which can ultimately cause emotional deterioration. The absence of one or both parents as a place for children to tell stories also affects their emotional development, so children become reluctant to tell stories or socialize with others. They are forced to be independent before their time, but at the same time still very much need emotional dependence on parents. Thus, children appear mature outwardly, but emotionally are still very vulnerable and need parental care.<sup>9</sup>

One of the main impacts of the absence of this emotional support is anxiety experienced by children, because parents serve as figures who can eliminate or control anxiety for children. Therefore children who do not have parents will tend to live in fear of losing people around them, which can trigger overthinking. Regarding this condition, it can be ascertained that children who do not get support from parents become more vulnerable to experiencing depression. This can cause loss of interest in things previously enjoyed, drastic changes in sleep and eating patterns, even very deep feelings of despair.<sup>10</sup>

Losing parents is a traumatic and difficult experience for someone, especially for children and adolescents. This certainly makes their emotions gradually decrease, even often showing reduced self-confidence. Most of them feel worthless because they often feel marginalized. This condition causes children to experience difficulties in forming healthy relationships, because they do not understand how to trust others fully.<sup>11</sup>

### **Social Impact of Parentless on Children**

In social environments, parentless children often feel they have no place. They have difficulty making friendships because of stigma and barriers from within and outside themselves. One thing that often happens is when their friends share stories about family, they will very likely only be able to remain silent or look for reasons to avoid such conversations. This situation is certainly very painful and makes them feel as if they have no family that can provide social support for them.<sup>12</sup>

Studies show that socially, children exposed to parentless impacts experience drastic behavioral changes. Some become very quiet and withdraw from social interactions, others become aggressive or break rules as ways to express anger or seek attention. Not infrequently these children also experience decreased academic performance due to difficulty concentrating.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Shifa and Suherman, *Dampak Tidak Adanya Peran Ayah Terhadap Perkembangan Anak Di Indonesia*, 265.

<sup>10</sup> Welda Wulandari, Zikra Zikra, and Yusri Yusri, "Peran Orangtua Dalam Disiplin Belajar Siswa," *Jurnal Penelitian Guru Indonesia* 2, no. 1 (2017): 10.

<sup>11</sup> Fedaa kiedan and Rana Khalil, "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PARENTLESS OF ADOLESCENTS AND RISK BEHAVIORS," *Journal Plus Education XXIV*, no. Special issue (2019): 1.

<sup>12</sup> Allison Gilbert, *Parentless Parents: How the Loss of Our Mothers and Fathers Impact the Way We Raise Our Children* (New York: Hyperion, 2011), 44.

<sup>13</sup> Wanda Erza Widyaswara, Latipun Latipun, and Nandy Agustin Syakarofath, "Memotret Peran Keberfungsian Keluarga Terhadap Regulasi Emosi Remaja Yang Diasuh Oleh Ibu Tunggal," *Gajah Mada Journal of Psychology (GamaJoP)* 8, no. 2 (October 2022): 166, <https://doi.org/10.22146/gamajop.68791>.

In addition, they must face social stigma that often becomes a heavy burden. Society often looks at them with one eye and labels them as children who "need to be pitied." Another negative stigma is the label "broken home child" that sticks and makes them feel different from other children. This discrimination can occur in various environments, from around the house, school, to broader scope.

### **Spiritual Impact of Parentless on Children**

In previous research, discussion about the spiritual impact of parentless on parentless children has not been found, however it is very possible that parentless conditions can shake the foundation of beliefs and life philosophy within children. Parents are not only protectors and supporters, but also the first intermediaries in introducing spiritual and religious values. Without parental figures, children often experience difficulties in knowing and feeling God's presence concretely, because parents usually become reflections of God's love for children.<sup>14</sup>

The absence of parents makes children vulnerable to experiencing spiritual crisis, so they feel they lose grip or meaning of life. Children will likely begin to question God's existence, and why they have to face the reality of such great loss. This can trigger feelings of confusion, inner loneliness, and even cause feelings of regret or anger toward the life they live. In addition, without strong spiritual guidance from parents, children are at risk of falling into misunderstandings about religious and moral values, so they may experience difficulties in building inner peace and spiritual self-confidence. They may feel disconnected from spiritual communities and from sources of spiritual strength usually obtained through family.

### **B. The Role of Extended Family for Parentless Children**

Extended family is a social unit consisting of a nuclear family of husband, wife, and children as well as other family members who still have blood or kinship relationships such as grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, and other distant relatives. The extended family structure has a clear hierarchy, where each member has specific roles and responsibilities based on age, status, and position in the family lineage. Extended family usually involves three or more generations that interact actively and support each other in various aspects of life, including child care, caring for sick family members, and helping with financial problems. The concept of extended family is very important especially in societies that rely on family cooperation to achieve mutual welfare.<sup>15</sup>

Extended family functions as a comprehensive support system for parentless children, who have lost parental figures as the main source of love and care. Extended family is

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<sup>14</sup> Kalis Stevanus and Maria Setiarini, "Perkembangan Emosional Remaja Yatim Piatu," *MAGENANG: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 3, no. 1 (April 2022): 52, <https://doi.org/10.51667/mjtpk.v3i1.723>.

<sup>15</sup> Mads Meier Jæger, "The Extended Family and Children's Educational Success," *American Sociological Review* 77, no. 6 (December 2012): 6–7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412464040>.

able to provide emotional stability through the presence of family members who care and consistently provide attention. This is important to help overcome loss trauma and provide the sense of security that children need.

Parentless children often face significant emotional and social control deficits due to losing parental figures who should be the main source of support and security for children. In addressing this, substitute figures are needed who can provide support for children. In this case, extended family has great potential to fill this void by providing an environment full of love and support for them. Extended family can become a safe place for children to express their feelings. Extended family also has the potential to provide approaches for parentless children, in the form of support, to prevent risks of mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and difficulties in managing emotions often experienced by parentless children. Extended family also helps strengthen children's identity and emotional attachment that is very much needed for their psychological well-being.<sup>16</sup>

Extended family not only provides emotional support but also plays an active role in aspects of education and child self-development. Through moral guidance and continuous support, extended family can motivate children to learn and develop their academic and non-academic potential. As substitutes for parents, extended family can provide concrete examples of discipline, responsibility, and hard work values that contribute to the formation of strong and independent child character.<sup>17</sup>

Extended family is present as substitute figures who fulfill children's emotional, social, and spiritual needs, by becoming reliable sources of support and guidance. Figures such as grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles, or aunts can take roles as primary caregivers or supporters who ensure children receive adequate and consistent attention. With this support, children are better able to overcome loss trauma and reduce risks of negative psychological impacts. Extended family also helps children to grow independently and empowered, while becoming a bridge so children still feel warmth and sense of belonging essential for healthy development.

The extended family system enables transfer of care from parents to extended family and provides a multiple parenting model when childcare responsibilities are not only on biological parents, but also distributed to other family members. This care transfer will make children still feel they have parents who love and support them even though there are no biological parents accompanying their development.<sup>18</sup>

### **C. Biblical Foundation**

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<sup>16</sup> Sergio D. Mahinay et al., "Closer Look on the Plights of the Parentless College Students: A Convergent Parallel Analysis," *Psych Educ*, 2022, 2.

<sup>17</sup>Mads Meier Jæger, "The Extended Family and Children's Educational Success," *American Sociological Review* 77, no. 6 (December 2012): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122412464040>.

<sup>18</sup>James Georgas et al., "Functional Relationships in the Nuclear and Extended Family: A 16-culture Study," *International Journal of Psychology* 36, no. 5 (October 2001): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207590143000045>.

### **The Narrative Story of Timothy's Care**

The story of Timothy in the Pastoral letters provides strong biblical foundation for the extended family concept. In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul mentions "faith in your grandmother Lois, and in your mother Eunice." This narrative reveals that although Timothy's father is not explicitly mentioned, the presence of extended family in Timothy's family (grandmother Lois and mother Eunice) was able to provide a solid foundation of faith. This shows that the absence of a biological father figure does not hinder the formation of Timothy's healthy spiritual identity when extended family functions optimally in providing emotional support through consistent love, social support through communal identity formation, and spiritual support through authentic faith transmission.<sup>19</sup>

Timothy's model also demonstrates how extended family can integrate various dimensions of recovery holistically. Paul, as a spiritual mentor, takes the role of spiritual father figure for Timothy by calling him "my true son in faith" (1 Timothy 1:2), which shows that spiritual support can be provided through mentoring relationships full of love and acceptance. The spiritual aspect is reflected in Timothy's character formation and theological competence that enabled him to become a mature church leader. The integration of these dimensions creates recovery that is not partial but comprehensive, where parentless children not only survive but develop into individuals who are productive and meaningful to the community.<sup>20</sup>

### **Acts 2:42 as Communal Framework for Extended Family**

Acts 2:42 states "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer," this statement provides theological framework for extended family function as a holistic recovery community for parentless children. The four pillars (teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer) create communal structure capable of compensating for education experienced by parentless children through systematic and continuous approaches. The apostles' teaching provides stable intellectual and spiritual foundation, replacing parental function in value and knowledge transmission. Fellowship creates strong relational networks where children get emotional support through sense of belonging and acceptance in the larger community. Breaking of bread is not only symbolic but also practical in meeting physical needs and creating communal rituals that provide stability and predictability in the lives of children experiencing loss trauma. Prayer together forms spiritual dimensions that provide hope, meaning, and transcendent connection essential for deep psychological recovery.<sup>21</sup>

This framework shows that extended family in biblical context is not only informal structure but organized community with clear goals to build and restore each other. In the context of parentless children, implementation of Acts 2:42 model through extended

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<sup>19</sup>Paulus Kunto Baskoro, "Konektifitas Peran Orang Tua Dalam Memuridkan Anak: Biografi Timotius Menurut 2 Timotius 1:5," *Veritas Lux Mea* 6, no. 1 (2024): 104.

<sup>20</sup>Tri Astuti Yeniretnowati, Yonatan Alex Arifianto, and Yakub Hendrawan Perangin Angin, "KAJIAN TEOLOGIS MURID YANG MEMURIDKAN BERDASARKAN 2 TIMOTIUS 2:1-2," *Jurnal Teologi Amreta (ISSN: 2599-3100)* 5, no. 1 (December 2021),9-10. <https://doi.org/10.54345/jta.v5i1.64>.

<sup>21</sup>Baskoro, "Konektifitas Peran Orang Tua Dalam Memuridkan Anak: Biografi Timotius Menurut 2 Timotius 1:5," 104.

family means creating recovery ecosystem where every community member has collective responsibility to ensure that the holistic needs of these children are met. This changes paradigm from individualization of problems to communalization of solutions, where recovery is not only the responsibility of professionals or formal institutions, but calling of the entire faith community to actively participate in transformation process. Integration of emotional, social, and spiritual support in this framework creates synergy that cannot be achieved through fragmentary approaches, so parentless children can experience recovery that not only overcomes trauma but also prepares them to become positive contributors to the community and next generation.

#### **D. The Role of Church as Spiritual Community for Parentless Children**

The church as a spiritual community can play an active role in the lives of parentless children through developing comprehensive and continuous formation programs that include spiritual accompaniment, mentoring, and character formation integrated in daily life. The church can create spiritual adoption family systems where mature congregation members voluntarily take roles as spiritual parents who provide guidance, love, and consistent emotional support to children who have lost biological parental figures. Through specially designed children and youth ministries, the church can provide safe spaces for identity exploration, talent development, and formation of life skills essential for healthy psychosocial development, because parentless children generally have minimal protection in their lives.<sup>22</sup>

Analysis of the church's role in the lives of parentless children shows that the church has comparative advantages over other institutions because of its continuous communal nature, clear values, and long-term commitment to member welfare. The church does not only function as temporary service provider, but as community that can provide sense of belonging and stable identity throughout the life journey of these children. The church's organizational structure based on personal relationships enables more personal and adaptive approaches to specific needs of each child, different from institutional approaches that tend to be bureaucratic and impersonal. The church's presence at various community levels, from grass-root to regional levels, enables wide reach and continuous support even when these children move locations or experience life transitions. The spiritual dimension offered by the church provides framework of meaning and hope essential for psychological resilience, where children can find purpose in their lives despite experiencing traumatic loss. The church community also provides alternative healthy family models, where children can observe and internalize positive relational patterns through interactions with various congregation members from various ages and backgrounds.<sup>23</sup>

The church has moral and theological obligations to be actively involved in the lives

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<sup>22</sup>Gavin Hanli Lim and Suwandi Supatra, "RUANG HUNIAN DAN KREATIF ANAK-ANAK YATIM PIATU," *Jurnal Sains, Teknologi, Urban, Perancangan, Arsitektur (Stupa)* 5, no. 2 (October 2023): 601, <https://doi.org/10.24912/stupa.v5i2.24209>.

<sup>23</sup>Reinhard Jeffray Berhita, "Peran Gembala Jemaat Terhadap Pengembangan Pelayanan Holistik Di Gereja Kemah Injil Indonesia Jemaat Yegar Sahaduta Jayapura," *Jurnal Jaffray* 12, no. 2 (October 2014): 7, <https://doi.org/10.25278/jj71.v12i2.19>.

of parentless children because this is a concrete manifestation of Christ's teachings about love for neighbors, especially for those who are most vulnerable and in need. This involvement is not only a form of charity but expression of church identity as God's inclusive family, where every individual has equal place and value before God.<sup>24</sup> Practically, churches that are not involved in this issue lose opportunities to be relevant in real social contexts, thus reducing their credibility and impact in wider society. Parentless children often face high risks of being involved in various forms of destructive behavior or exploitation, and proactive church involvement can be a significant protective factor in preventing such negative outcomes. From the perspective of church mission, ministry to parentless children is a strategic opportunity to demonstrate God's love tangibly, which can be powerful witness to surrounding communities about Christian values. Churches actively involved in this issue also create culture of empathy and social concern in their communities, which contributes to forming more mature and compassionate congregation member character.<sup>25</sup>

### **E. Negative Impacts of Extended Family**

Although extended family has great positive potential, there are several negative impacts that need to be watched for in its implementation, especially related to potential conflicts of interest and inconsistencies in parenting patterns that can confuse parentless children. Extended family that is not well coordinated can create unhealthy competition among members in providing direction to children, thus producing contradictory and confusing messages that can actually hinder healthy identity development.<sup>26</sup> The risk of over-protection from multiple caregivers can hinder development of children's independence and resilience, where they become too dependent on external support and do not develop coping skills necessary to face life challenges. Potential emotional manipulation can also occur when extended family members use their positions to fulfill their own emotional needs or project unrealistic expectations onto these children.

Unbalanced power dynamics in extended family can create situations where children's voices and preferences are not heard or valued, so they lose agency in their own lives. Lack of professional training in child development and trauma recovery among extended family members can result in inappropriate handling of complex psychological issues, which potentially worsen trauma or create secondary trauma. Extended family that is too close-knit can create insularity that hinders children from developing relationships outside that community and adapting to diverse social contexts they will face later in life.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Enos Januarinto Fina, Nelci Nafalia Ndolu, and Catur Purnomo, "Memorisasi Kasih Allah Bagi Remaja Yatim Piatu Berdasarkan Teks Ulangan 6:4-9 Di GMT Polycarpus Atambua," *Matheteuo: Religious Studies* 1, no. 2 (2021): 63.

<sup>25</sup>Kalis Stevanus and Maria Setiarini, "Konsep Diri Remaja Kristen Yatim Piatu: Studi Fenomenologi," *Ra'ah: Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 1, no. 2 (November 2021): 4, <https://doi.org/10.52960/r.v1i2.53>.

<sup>26</sup>Susan Susyanti, Imam Tabroni, and Siti Rabiatul, "Pola Asuh Extended Family Terhadap Tumbuh Kembang Anak," *Al-Madrasah: Jurnal Pendidikan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah* 6, no. 3 (April 2022): 524, <https://doi.org/10.35931/am.v6i3.1017>.

<sup>27</sup>Mary Nuriko Tresia Sucipto and Yanuar Luqman, "PROSES KOMUNIKASI PADA EXTENDED FAMILY DALAM MEMBANGUN KONSEP DIRI ANAK," *Interaksi Online* 10, no. 1 (2021): 11.11

Therefore, interviews need to be conducted to find identification that relates to the conditions of parentless children at HKBP Pardamean. Through interview results, greater negative or positive impacts can be found and developed into an answer in the conclusion.

### F. Interview Results

In this research, interviews have been conducted with 6 children who do not have both parents or one parent. These interviews aim to find out the actual facts whether extended family truly supports children who have lost parents (parentless) as well as children who have lost the role of one of their parents. All informant identities interviewed are kept confidential to maintain their privacy, so names will be disguised as initials.

The following are the results of interviews conducted with parentless children. Verbatim from these interview results will be placed in the appendix section.

<b>Child Initial</b>	<b>No.,</b>	<b><i>Parentless Children?</i></b>	<b>Extended Family Role</b>
Child (A.B.)	1	Yes	Their extended family supports in the form of attention and emotional support. Their extended family also helps financially for their living needs.
Child (C.D.)	2	Yes	Their extended family is a place for them to tell stories and provides full support. Their extended family also always calls to make sure they are doing well.
Child (E.F.)	3	Yes	Their uncle has become a substitute parental figure, especially presenting a father figure for them. This makes them more confident in their social environment.
Child	4	Yes	Their namboru (father's older brother) becomes substitute parental

(G.H.)			figure, and has become mother's extension for them and their siblings.
Child (L.J.)	5	Yes	Their extended family supports all life and study costs for them and their sibling. Their extended family also raises their social status and makes them feel like having parents.
Child (A,P.)	6	Yes	Their aunt becomes figure who presents their mother's love. She supports them financially and emotionally. This action embraces their fragility when they feel empty for not having parents.

### Analysis

Interview results confirm that extended family or extended family holds crucial role in supporting parentless children comprehensively. All respondents stated that they receive support from extended family, which shows how family systems become the main foundation in supporting their lives.

Extended family support is visible in four main aspects that complement each other. First, from emotional and psychological aspects, extended family functions as empathetic listeners and sources of mental strength for children who are vulnerable to facing trauma, feelings of loss, and emotional instability due to absence of parental figures. This role becomes important in maintaining their psychological balance and providing the sense of security they desperately need.

Second, extended family takes roles as substitute parental figures, both father and mother. This substitution not only fulfills physical needs, but also helps form identity and increase children's confidence. The presence of substitute figures contributes greatly to children's psychosocial development, so they can interact with social environments more confidently and healthily.

Third, financial and material support aspects are important parts of extended family commitment in maintaining the survival and education of parentless children. The assistance provided is not merely temporary, but in the form of long-term responsibility that includes fulfillment of daily needs and education funding, ensuring these children have adequate access to grow and develop.

Fourth, extended family also helps restore and maintain the social status of parentless children. In society, children who lose parents often face stigma and decreased social

status. With social legitimacy provided by extended family, these children still feel accepted and valued by the environment, thus helping them maintain self-esteem and build healthy social relations.

Through this multidimensional role of extended family, parentless children not only receive material support, but also fundamental emotional and social protection. This enables them to develop holistically, overcome challenges arising from parental absence, and build better futures with strong and loving environmental support.

Holistic growth provides very important positive impacts for children's comprehensive development. Although these children are not with their biological parents, the presence of substitute figures from family or adoptive parents can be crucial support to help reduce and avoid various risks they might face due to absence of original parents. This holistic growth not only functions as protection against negative impacts of biological parent absence, but also contributes to optimizing child development to become more emotionally and socially mature. Additionally, consistent accompaniment from extended family or extended family provides sense of security essential for children, so they are able to build healthy relationships and interact with peers confidently and develop in supportive social environments.

Furthermore, holistic growth supported by substitute figures and extended family also strengthens children's character and identity foundations. With consistent guidance, children not only gain practical and emotional support, but also learning of moral, spiritual, and social values important for forming complete personalities. Warm and attentive interactions from substitute family environments help children overcome feelings of loneliness or loss, and provide positive role models to be emulated. This is very important in preventing emergence of psychological and social problems often experienced by children who experience lack of parental figures. Thus, this holistic support not only fills the void due to absence of biological parents, but also creates fertile growth spaces for children, so they can develop optimally and be ready to face various life challenges in the future with confidence and emotional balance.

### **Conclusion**

Extended family needs to build awareness that parentless children are shared responsibility requiring active care from all extended family members. Each extended family is expected to understand that absence of biological parents does not mean the child loses the right to get love, support, and consistent guidance. Extended family needs to actively identify and play roles as substitute parental figures, both as father and mother figures, who have commitment in nurturing and guiding children. These substitute figures are expected to be able to provide emotional stability, consistency in parenting, and become examples in character formation and moral values that will help children avoid prolonged trauma and identity crisis.

Support provided by extended family includes emotional aspects by creating safe environments for children to express their feelings and concerns, social aspects by

integrating children in extended family activities and protecting them from societal stigma, and spiritual aspects by providing consistent religious and moral guidance. Extended family also needs to ensure children's financial and material needs are met through fair responsibility sharing according to each family member's capacity, and facilitate open and continuous communication that enables children to feel heard and understood. By providing space for independence development while still ensuring children feel they are integral parts of extended family, extended family can create strong foundations for parentless children to grow into individuals who are emotionally, socially, and spiritually healthy despite absence of biological parents.

Through active roles of extended family, opportunities for negative impacts from parentless conditions can be effectively addressed, so parentless children can still develop optimally without experiencing prolonged trauma, emotional disorders, social isolation, or spiritual identity crisis commonly experienced by children in similar conditions. The author provides full support for further research on extended family impacts for parentless children, considering the importance of deeper understanding about extended family dynamics in alternative parenting contexts. Further research is needed to explore long-term effectiveness of extended family integration models, approach variations based on different cultural and socioeconomic characteristics, and development of evaluation instruments that can measure extended family intervention success comprehensively. Longitudinal studies tracking development of parentless children raised by extended family will provide significant contributions to child protection policy development and alternative parenting strategies in Indonesia, thus optimizing extended family roles as continuous and effective support systems in restoring lives of children experiencing parentless conditions.

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