



Psychosocial representations of fatherlessness in Indonesian patriarchal culture: A critical discourse analysis of online media narratives

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ABSTRACT

Background: In Indonesian patriarchal culture, fathers are traditionally positioned as economic providers, while emotional caregiving is often associated with mothers. At the same time, public discussions of fatherlessness increasingly incorporate psychosocial themes related to emotional security, identity, and family relationships. Examining media representations of fatherhood is therefore important for understanding how paternal roles are socially constructed. **Methods:** This study employed a qualitative approach using 18 online news articles published by Indonesian media outlets and institutional platforms between 2024 and 2025. Data were analyzed through thematic analysis and subsequently interpreted using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Wodak and Meyer's framework. The analysis focused on how media discourse constructs meanings related to fatherhood, father absence, and their perceived psychosocial implications. **Findings:** The analysis reveals a discursive shift from provider-centered fatherhood toward representations emphasizing emotional engagement, relational involvement, and shared parenting responsibilities. Media narratives construct fatherlessness as a psychosocial and sociocultural issue shaped by emotional absence, structural constraints, changing family dynamics, and digital spaces that influence father-child relationships. **Conclusion:** Indonesian online media actively shape public understandings of fatherhood and fatherlessness through psychosocial, cultural, and structural narratives. These representations reflect ongoing negotiations between patriarchal expectations and emerging relational models of fatherhood. This study focuses on media representations and does not directly examine family experiences or children's psychosocial outcomes. Future studies may integrate media analysis with empirical family-based research. **Novelty/Originality of this article:** This study provides a novel understanding of how Indonesian online media construct psychosocial meanings of fatherhood and fatherlessness within a patriarchal cultural context.

KEYWORDS: Critical Discourse Analysis; fatherhood; fatherlessness; media discourse; patriarchal culture; psychosocial representation.

1. Introduction

Father involvement plays an important role in children's emotional, social, and psychological development. In recent years, research on paternal involvement has

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increasingly expanded across developmental psychology, family sociology, and educational studies. Fathers are no longer understood solely as economic providers or authority figures within the family but are increasingly recognized as emotional caregivers who contribute to children's psychosocial well-being and social development. Previous studies have shown that high-quality father involvement is associated with children's emotional regulation, sense of security, self-esteem, empathy, and social competence (Cabrera et al., 2018; Kuo & Volling, 2022). Fathers who actively participate in caregiving and maintain emotionally supportive relationships with their children tend to contribute positively to children's emotional stability and psychosocial adjustment.

Several studies have further emphasized the developmental significance of paternal involvement. Father involvement has been associated with emotional regulation, identity formation, empathy, and psychological adjustment across developmental stages (McLanahan et al., 2014; Papaleontiou-Louca & Omari, 2020). Conversely, limited paternal involvement has been linked to emotional insecurity, lower self-esteem, relational difficulties, and psychosocial vulnerability among children and adolescents (Puglisi et al., 2024). Children raised in families characterized by harsh paternal interactions or limited emotional closeness may also experience higher levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, and social difficulties (Thompson-Walsh et al., 2021). Longitudinal findings further indicate that reduced paternal involvement during childhood may continue to influence psychological adjustment into later developmental periods (Culpin et al., 2022).

Cross-cultural studies suggest that paternal involvement contributes positively to children's social-emotional development across different sociocultural contexts. Zheng et al. (2025) found that paternal warmth, responsiveness, and emotional engagement significantly support children's psychosocial development, particularly within Asian societies characterized by stronger patriarchal norms and gender-role expectations. Similarly, Diniz et al. (2021) reported that father involvement was associated with emotional regulation and psychosocial development, while Honda et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of parental emotional support and mental health in promoting children's social-emotional outcomes. These findings indicate that paternal involvement should be understood not only as an individual parenting practice but also as a sociocultural phenomenon shaped by broader cultural contexts.

Within patriarchal societies such as Indonesia, paternal roles are often constructed through traditional gender expectations that position fathers primarily as economic providers and authority figures, while caregiving and emotional responsibilities are frequently associated with mothers. Such constructions may influence the quality of father-child relationships and contribute to the emergence of psychological fatherlessness, a condition in which fathers are physically present within the household but remain emotionally disengaged from their children (Ashari, 2017). In the Indonesian context, fatherlessness therefore does not always refer to physical absence but may also reflect limited emotional involvement and relational distance between fathers and children.

Previous studies in Indonesia have predominantly examined father absence from developmental, psychosocial, and family perspectives, focusing on children's emotional outcomes, attachment processes, psychological adjustment, and family functioning (Ashari, 2017; Diniz et al., 2021). Although these studies provide important insights regarding the psychosocial implications of father absence, they primarily examine fatherlessness at the individual or family level. Comparatively less attention has been given to how fatherlessness is represented, communicated, and socially constructed within public discourse, particularly through online media narratives.

This gap is important because media narratives do not merely reflect social realities but also shape public understanding regarding parenting, gender roles, and family relationships. Media discourse actively constructs meanings through lexical choices, narrative framing, and ideological positioning. In the context of fatherlessness, online media may influence how paternal absence is interpreted, whether as an individual problem, a family issue, or a broader sociocultural phenomenon related to patriarchal values and changing family dynamics.

Online media are particularly important because they serve as accessible and widely consumed platforms through which public discourse is produced and circulated. Compared with traditional media, online media allow faster dissemination of social narratives and may influence public perceptions regarding parenting, gender expectations, and family relationships more broadly. Therefore, examining online media discourse may provide insight into how fatherlessness is framed and socially negotiated within Indonesian society.

The increasing circulation of online media narratives concerning fatherlessness in Indonesia reflects broader social transformations related to parenting, gender expectations, and family roles. Consequently, media discourse becomes an important arena for understanding how fatherhood and father absence are framed within Indonesian patriarchal culture. Rather than directly demonstrating psychosocial outcomes among children, media narratives depict how psychosocial implications, paternal roles, and family relationships are publicly understood and communicated.

This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it shifts the discussion of fatherlessness from an individual psychosocial perspective toward media discourse and social construction. Second, the study integrates thematic analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how online media construct fatherhood and father absence. Third, the study provides a culturally grounded understanding of how Indonesian online media construct fatherlessness within a patriarchal context, an area that remains underexplored in Indonesian fatherhood and family studies.

Therefore, this study aims to examine how fatherlessness and paternal roles are represented within Indonesian patriarchal culture through online media discourse. Specifically, this study explores how paternal roles are constructed and redefined within Indonesian patriarchal culture, how psychosocial consequences associated with father absence are represented in online media narratives, and how structural and contextual challenges are portrayed in efforts to strengthen father–child relationships in Indonesia.

2. Methods

2.1 Data sources and article selection

This study employed a qualitative research approach using secondary media texts to examine how father absence and paternal roles are represented within the context of Indonesian patriarchal culture. Media texts were selected because they function as cultural artifacts that reflect and shape public discourse regarding social issues, including family roles and gender expectations. The use of secondary textual data allows researchers to analyze social constructions embedded in media narratives without direct interaction with participants while maintaining contextual authenticity (Pederson et al., 2022). Qualitative research assumes that social reality is constructed through language, social interaction, and sociocultural context (Erciyes, 2020). Therefore, this study did not aim to verify the factual accuracy of media reports or directly examine psychosocial outcomes among children. Instead, the analysis focused on how online media construct and represent fatherhood, father absence, and their perceived psychosocial implications within Indonesian society.

The dataset consisted of 18 online news articles published between 2024 and 2025 by Indonesian media outlets and institutional platforms discussing father involvement, father absence, and the phenomenon of fatherlessness in Indonesia. Articles were retrieved using the Google search engine and internal search features within media websites. The search employed combinations of Indonesian keywords such as *“peran ayah,”* *“fatherless,”* *“ayah tidak hadir,”* *“peran ayah dalam keluarga,”* and *“pengasuhan ayah.”* The article selection process followed several steps to ensure transparency and relevance. First, an initial pool of articles discussing fatherhood and parenting was identified. Second, the articles were screened based on inclusion criteria: (1) the article discusses paternal roles, father absence, or father involvement in parenting; (2) the article is published by an Indonesian media outlet or institutional platform; (3) the article contains narrative or explanatory content regarding father–child relationships; and (4) the full text is accessible online. Articles that

only mentioned fatherhood briefly or lacked substantive discussion of paternal roles were excluded. In addition, articles consisting primarily of short announcements, advertisements, duplicated content, or unrelated parenting discussions were excluded from the dataset. After this screening process, 18 articles met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final dataset. A list of the selected articles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Online media articles included in the analysis

Media source	Type of source	Year	Focus discussion
DetikEdu	National online media	2024	Father involvement and parenting roles
DetikHealth	National online media	2024	Fatherlessness and shared parenting responsibilities
Detik Jabar	Regional online media	2024	Redefinition of paternal roles
DetikHealth	National online media	2024	Representations of fatherlessness and psychosocial issues
DetikHealth	National online media	2024	Relational and psychosocial representations
Tagar.co	Online news platform	2024	Patriarchy and fatherlessness
Pikiran-Rakyat.com	National online media	2024	Father involvement in child development
Kompasiana	Public discourse platform	2024	Public understanding of fatherlessness
Universitas Gadjah Mada	Institutional platform	2024	Limited father involvement in parenting
Jawa Pos	National online media	2024	Emotional absence of fathers
LLDIKTI Wilayah V	Institutional platform	2024	Social discourse on fatherlessness
Fimela	Lifestyle and online media platform	2024	Emotional disengagement and absent fathers
Winnicode	Community information platform	2024	Media discourse on fatherlessness
CNN Indonesia	National online media	2024	Solutions and interventions for fatherlessness
Universitas Airlangga	Institutional platform	2024	Fatherlessness and child-related challenges
DetikEdu	National online media	2025	Parenting education and paternal involvement
Koran Jakarta	National online media	2025	Strengthening fathers' roles
CNN Indonesia	National online media	2025	Father figure crisis in Indonesia

The number of articles included in this study was determined based on discursive representation and thematic sufficiency rather than statistical representativeness. During the iterative reading and coding process, recurring themes and discourse patterns repeatedly emerged across the selected media texts. Additional articles did not generate substantially new themes, narrative constructions, or discourse strategies related to fatherhood and fatherlessness. Therefore, the dataset was considered sufficient to capture dominant media representations of fatherhood and father absence within the Indonesian patriarchal context.

2.2 Unit of analysis and data analysis

The unit of analysis consisted of meaningful textual segments within the news articles, including headlines, leads, paragraphs, and key sentences that represented paternal roles, father absence, and family dynamics. These textual elements were analyzed as discursive units through which meanings about fatherhood and patriarchal expectations are constructed in media narratives.

The analysis was conducted in two stages: thematic analysis followed by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Thematic analysis served as the initial stage to identify patterns of meaning across the dataset. Following Braun & Clarke's (2006) framework, the analysis

involved several phases. First, all articles were read repeatedly to become familiar with the narratives' content and context. Second, initial coding was conducted by identifying relevant textual segments on fatherhood, parenting roles, and representations of the psychosocial implications of father absence. Coding was organized using Microsoft Excel to systematically record excerpts and categorize emerging patterns.

Third, similar codes were grouped into broader categories and preliminary themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency with the data. Finally, the themes were defined and interpreted in relation to the research questions. During this process, a preliminary codebook was developed to maintain consistency in coding and interpretation. The codebook documented coding labels, category definitions, representative excerpts, and analytical notes generated throughout the coding process.

Following the initial coding process, individual codes were systematically compared to identify conceptual similarities and recurring patterns across the dataset. Rather than treating each textual segment as an isolated finding, the analysis emphasized the relationships among codes to reveal broader meanings embedded within media representations of fatherhood and father absence. This iterative comparison enabled the researchers to distinguish between descriptive labels and higher-order analytical categories, thereby ensuring that the resulting themes reflected consistent discourse patterns rather than isolated textual occurrences. The categorization process remained flexible throughout the analysis, allowing themes to be refined as new interpretations emerged during repeated readings of the selected articles.

The development of themes was guided by conceptual coherence and relevance to the research objectives. Each theme was required to capture a recurring representation that appeared across multiple media sources rather than being derived from a single article. Consequently, the analytical process progressed from raw textual extracts to initial codes, broader conceptual categories, and, finally, overarching themes that describe dominant patterns of media discourse on fatherhood in Indonesia. This hierarchical coding structure enhances analytical transparency by demonstrating how interpretations were systematically grounded in the textual evidence collected from the selected news articles.

After the thematic structure was established, the analysis proceeded with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how language in media texts constructs and reproduces social meanings and power relations. The CDA framework was guided by Wodak and Meyer (2015), which emphasizes the relationship between text, discourse practices, and broader social structures. The purpose of CDA in this study was not to verify the factual validity of media narratives but to examine how media discourse constructs meanings and cultural understandings related to fatherhood and father absence. CDA allows researchers to explore how media discourse reflects and reinforces social ideologies such as patriarchy. Examples of coding categories and themes derived from the analysis are presented in Table 2.

The transition from thematic analysis to CDA was conducted iteratively, with emerging themes continuously compared against the textual evidence to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the dataset. The analysis moved from specific textual expressions to initial codes, broader categories, and overarching themes, while CDA was subsequently used to examine how these patterns were linguistically constructed and connected to broader cultural meanings and power relations surrounding fatherhood and father absence. Particular attention was given to recurring representations of fathers as providers, authority figures, caregivers, or absent figures, as well as the meanings attached to these representations within Indonesian media discourse. Representative excerpts were selected based on their relevance to the research questions and their ability to illustrate recurring discourse patterns across multiple articles. This process helped distinguish recurring discursive constructions from isolated statements and strengthened the consistency of the interpretation across the dataset. Table 2 presents examples of this coding development, demonstrating how textual evidence was systematically transformed into analytical categories and themes.

Table 2. Examples of coding development and theme construction

Example extracts from news texts	Initial codes	Category	Theme
"A father's role is not limited to financial provision but also includes accompanying children's development and providing emotional support."	Father beyond financial provider; emotional involvement; active paternal role	Patriarchal expectations and changing paternal roles	Redefinition of Fathers' Roles in Indonesian Patriarchal Culture
"Children growing up without paternal involvement are portrayed as experiencing emotional distance, feeling neglected, and facing relational difficulties."	Emotional distance; perceived neglect; relational difficulties; psychosocial vulnerability	Media representations of psychosocial implications	Psychosocial Representations of Father Absence in Indonesian Online Media Discourse
"Work demands, patriarchal culture, and the perception that caregiving is primarily the mother's responsibility limit fathers' involvement."	Work demands; patriarchal norms; gendered parenting expectations	Structural and cultural barriers	Structural Barriers and Sociocultural Challenges in Strengthening Fathers' Roles
"Digital media and social communication platforms can help maintain emotional closeness between fathers and children."	Digital communication; online interaction; mediated relationships	Technology-mediated family interaction	Digital Technology as a Discursive Space for Father-Child Relationships
"Parenting education and shared parental responsibility are needed to strengthen father involvement."	Parenting education; shared parenting; strengthening paternal involvement	Family intervention and awareness strategies	Strengthening Fatherhood as a Collective Social Responsibility

Note: The example extracts presented in this table are English translations of the original Indonesian media texts. The original texts were retained during coding and Critical Discourse Analysis to maintain contextual accuracy and discursive meaning.

As shown in Table 2, the coding process traces the progression from individual textual excerpts to broader analytical interpretations across multiple levels of abstraction. Similar expressions identified across different media sources were consolidated into common conceptual categories before being synthesized into overarching themes. This analytical procedure ensured that the identified themes were supported by recurring discourse patterns rather than isolated statements, thereby strengthening the consistency and credibility of the thematic findings.

The coding framework presented in Table 2 also served as the foundation for the subsequent Critical Discourse Analysis. While thematic analysis identified what dominant representations appeared within the media texts, Critical Discourse Analysis was subsequently employed to examine how these representations were linguistically constructed and ideologically framed. The transition from thematic coding to discourse analysis enabled the study to move beyond descriptive categorization toward a more critical interpretation of how Indonesian online media reproduce, negotiate, and legitimize patriarchal understandings of fatherhood and father absence within broader sociocultural contexts.

In this study, CDA focused on identifying several discourse strategies within the news narratives. These strategies included nominalization, where actions are presented as abstract conditions (e.g., "fatherlessness" as a social phenomenon), dramatization, where emotional narratives emphasize the seriousness of father absence, moralization, where paternal roles are framed as moral obligations, and blame attribution, where responsibility for father absence is assigned either to individuals or structural conditions. These strategies

were examined through lexical choices, narrative framing, and rhetorical patterns within the articles.

Following Fairclough (1995), discourse was treated as a form of social practice that both shapes and is shaped by social structures. Similarly, van Dijk (1993) argues that discourse analysis can reveal how ideology and power relations are reproduced through language use. In this study, CDA enabled a deeper interpretation of how media narratives frame paternal roles and how patriarchal cultural assumptions are embedded in representations of fatherhood in Indonesia.

To enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of the analysis, several qualitative validation procedures were implemented. Credibility was strengthened through repeated reading of the articles, iterative coding cycles, and comparison across multiple media sources to ensure consistency of interpretation. Dependability was supported through the development of a preliminary codebook and systematic documentation of coding decisions throughout the analytical process. Confirmability was enhanced through analytic memos and reflective notes, which minimized interpretive bias and maintained alignment between textual evidence and thematic interpretation. Transferability was addressed by providing transparent inclusion criteria, detailed descriptions of data sources, and explicit analytical procedures to facilitate contextual interpretation by future researchers. These procedures are consistent with the principles of trustworthiness in thematic analysis, which emphasize systematic and transparent analytical processes to support the credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of qualitative findings (Nowell et al., 2017). Because the study focused on media representations rather than direct observations of family experiences, these procedures were intended to enhance the transparency, consistency, and trustworthiness of textual interpretation across the analyzed media sources.

Given the interpretive nature of Critical Discourse Analysis, the researcher-maintained reflexivity throughout the study. The researchers continuously reflected on how prior assumptions and theoretical perspectives related to patriarchy, fatherhood, and psychosocial discourse might shape the interpretation of media texts. Reflexive notes were used during coding and interpretation to reduce subjective bias and ensure that the findings remained grounded in the textual data. Furthermore, interpretations were continuously compared across media sources and themes to ensure that analytical conclusions were supported by recurring textual patterns rather than isolated examples.

3. Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis identified five dominant themes that collectively illustrate how Indonesian online media construct and communicate the phenomenon of fatherlessness. Rather than emerging as isolated issues, these themes represent interconnected dimensions of media discourse that explain how paternal roles are framed, challenged, and reconstructed within the broader context of Indonesian patriarchal culture. The themes were developed through an iterative coding process and subsequently refined using Critical Discourse Analysis to capture both recurring patterns and the underlying ideological assumptions embedded in media narratives. The conceptual relationship among these themes is summarized in Figure 1, which illustrates the overarching framework of media representations of fatherlessness derived from the analyzed dataset.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Media Representations of Fatherlessness functions as the overarching discourse encompassing five interrelated thematic dimensions. The first theme, Redefinition of Fatherhood, reflects changing expectations regarding paternal responsibilities beyond the traditional role of economic provider. The second, Psychosocial Representation, captures media portrayals of the emotional and developmental consequences associated with father absence. The third theme, Structural Barriers, highlights sociocultural and institutional constraints that limit fathers' active participation in childrearing. Meanwhile, Digital Fatherhood emphasizes the growing role of digital communication technologies in sustaining father-child relationships despite physical

separation, whereas Collaborative Fatherhood represents media narratives advocating shared parenting responsibilities between fathers, mothers, and broader social institutions.

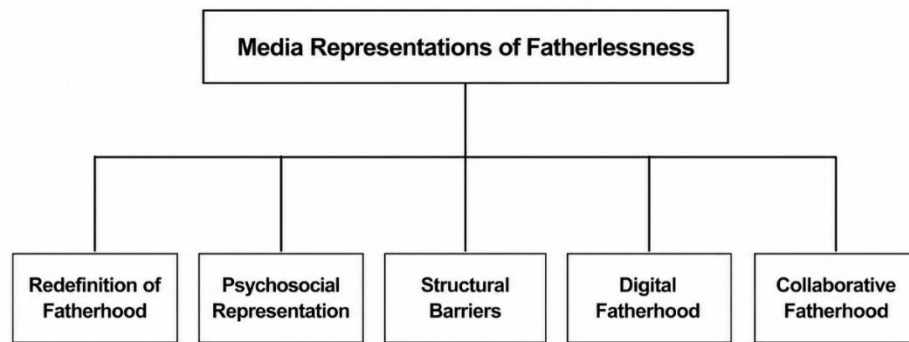


Fig. 1. Thematic framework of media representations of fatherlessness

Taken together, these 5 themes demonstrate that Indonesian online media do not portray fatherlessness solely as the absence of a father figure, but rather as a multidimensional social phenomenon shaped by cultural norms, institutional structures, technological developments, and evolving family expectations. Consequently, the subsequent sections examine each theme in greater detail to explain how specific discursive strategies construct meanings of fatherhood and father absence, and how these representations contribute to the reproduction or transformation of patriarchal understandings in contemporary Indonesian society.

Building on the thematic structure presented in Figure 1, the analysis was extended through Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how these themes are linguistically constructed and ideologically framed in Indonesian online media. While thematic analysis identifies the dominant patterns of meaning across the dataset, CDA provides a deeper understanding of the discursive strategies through which particular representations of fatherhood and fatherlessness are produced, legitimized, and circulated. This integrated analytical approach enables the study to move beyond identifying recurring themes to explaining how language shapes public perceptions of paternal roles within a patriarchal social context.

To facilitate interpretation, Table 3 synthesizes the relationships among the five identified themes, their dominant media representations, and the principal discourse strategies observed across the analyzed news articles. The table provides an analytical overview that links the descriptive findings of thematic analysis to the interpretive perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, thereby providing a conceptual map for the detailed discussion in the following subsections.

Table 3. Summary of themes, media representations, and CDA strategies

Theme	Main media representation	Dominant CDA strategy
Redefinition of Fathers' Roles	Fathers as emotionally engaged caregivers	Normalization, metaphor
Psychosocial Representation	Emotional insecurity and relational vulnerability	Medicalization, crisis framing
Structural Barriers	Patriarchal norms and work demands	Structural framing
Digital Technology	Digitally connected fatherhood	Discursive ambivalence
Collective Responsibility	Collaborative fatherhood	Collectivization

As shown in Table 3, each thematic category is associated with a distinct pattern of media representation and a corresponding discourse strategy. The findings indicate that media narratives do not merely describe fatherhood and fatherlessness as social phenomena but actively construct meanings through particular linguistic and rhetorical choices. These strategies shape how audiences understand paternal responsibilities, family

relationships, and the consequences of father absence, revealing the ideological dimensions embedded in seemingly objective news reporting.

The synthesis presented in Table 3 also demonstrates that the identified discourse strategies vary according to the focus of each theme. Representations of changing paternal roles tend to emphasize normalization and metaphorical framing, whereas psychosocial issues are frequently constructed through crisis-oriented narratives and medicalized language. Structural barriers are commonly framed as consequences of broader social and cultural conditions, while discussions of digital fatherhood and collaborative parenting introduce more nuanced representations that acknowledge technological adaptation and shared social responsibility. The following sections examine each theme in detail by integrating thematic findings with Critical Discourse Analysis to explain how these discursive patterns shape contemporary media representations of fatherhood and fatherlessness in Indonesia.

3.1 Redefinition of fathers' roles in Indonesian patriarchal culture

The analyzed media texts indicate that paternal roles in Indonesian society continue to be strongly influenced by patriarchal cultural norms that position fathers primarily as economic providers rather than emotional caregivers. Within this cultural framework, childcare responsibilities are predominantly associated with mothers, whereas fathers are expected to fulfill financial responsibilities and maintain authority within the family. Consequently, fatherhood is frequently constructed around breadwinner expectations, in which paternal responsibility is evaluated primarily by economic contribution rather than emotional engagement.

This pattern reflects the persistence of a breadwinner-centred masculine identity, in which masculinity is socially associated with productivity, authority, and financial provision (Diniz et al., 2021). Several Indonesian media narratives reinforce this representation. One article states that:

"Many people still believe that fathers who work to provide for the family no longer need to be involved in childcare" (Kautsar, 2024).

Similarly, another report explains that:

"Patriarchal culture has embedded the belief that a 'good father' is someone who works hard, earns money, and provides for the family" (Fatoni, 2025).

These narratives indicate that emotional caregiving remains secondary within dominant constructions of fatherhood. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, these representations reflect a discursive normalization strategy, in which limited paternal emotional involvement is portrayed as culturally acceptable within patriarchal social structures (Fairclough, 2013). Through this discourse, the emotional distance between fathers and children becomes normalized, while caregiving remains primarily associated with mothers. As a result, paternal identity is reproduced through a provider-oriented discourse rather than through relational and emotional engagement. This discourse consequently reinforces gendered divisions of caregiving within the family.

However, the findings also reveal an emerging discursive shift within Indonesian online media. Media narratives increasingly challenge traditional representations of fatherhood by emphasizing fathers' emotional presence, relational closeness, and psychosocial contributions to children's development. Fathers are no longer represented solely as breadwinners but increasingly portrayed as emotionally involved figures who actively participate in children's psychosocial growth. This transition becomes visible in media narratives emphasizing emotional engagement between fathers and children. Such representations indicate a gradual redefinition of fatherhood toward a more relational and emotionally engaged model. This shift reflects broader changes in social expectations, in

which paternal involvement is increasingly understood as an essential component of children's emotional well-being and overall development. For example, an article published by *DetikEdu* states that:

"Fatherhood is not merely about taking children to school, but about planting roots" (Prasetyo, 2025).

The metaphor *planting roots* symbolically reconstructs fatherhood as a long-term emotional investment involving attachment, emotional security, guidance, and psychosocial support. Within CDA, metaphorical expressions function as discursive devices that shape social meanings and reconstruct public understanding regarding social roles (van Dijk, 2015).

3.1.1 Psychosocial fatherhood as a new representation of paternal identity

An important finding emerging from this study is the discursive transition from provider-centered fatherhood toward psychosocial fatherhood within Indonesian online media narratives. Rather than positioning fathers exclusively as financial providers, media discourse increasingly reconstructs paternal identity through representations of emotional engagement, empathy, communication, relational closeness, and active involvement in family relationships. In this study, psychosocial fatherhood refers to a media representation of fatherhood characterized by emotional availability, responsive interaction, empathy, and relational involvement beyond economic provision. This representation reflects an expanded construction of paternal identity in which fatherhood is interpreted not only through financial responsibility but also through emotional connectedness and relational quality.

Media narratives increasingly frame emotional presence as an important component of fatherhood. This representation aligns with psychological literature emphasizing the significance of emotionally engaged father-child relationships within children's psychosocial development. Previous studies indicate that paternal emotional engagement is associated with emotional regulation, social competence, self-esteem, and psychosocial adjustment (Kuo & Volling, 2022; Cabrera et al., 2018). Research has also highlighted the importance of paternal responsiveness, emotional support, and relational closeness within father-child interactions (Puglisi et al., 2024). Cross-cultural studies further suggest that paternal warmth and emotional responsiveness are increasingly recognized as important dimensions of fatherhood, particularly in societies with stronger patriarchal norms and gender-role expectations (Zheng et al., 2025). Within Indonesian online media discourse, these psychological perspectives are reflected in narratives that emphasize fathers' emotional presence and relational participation rather than their economic functions alone. This shift suggests a broader redefinition of paternal roles beyond material provision. It also indicates growing recognition of emotional caregiving as a legitimate dimension of responsible fatherhood.

The findings therefore suggest that Indonesian online media do not merely criticize traditional patriarchal constructions of fatherhood but actively reconstruct paternal identity through psychosocial discourse. Emotional presence, empathy, communication, and relational closeness increasingly emerge as media representations of contemporary fatherhood. Overall, the findings demonstrate that paternal roles within Indonesian media discourse are constructed through an ongoing negotiation between traditional breadwinner expectations and emerging psychosocial narratives of emotionally engaged fatherhood. A novel finding of this study is the identification of psychosocial fatherhood as a new media representation of paternal identity within Indonesian patriarchal culture. This representation indicates a discursive transition in which fatherhood is increasingly framed as a psychosocial and relational role rather than solely an economic function. This shift also suggests that media discourse can help redefine socially acceptable expectations of paternal involvement. However, the coexistence of traditional and emerging representations

indicates that this transformation remains gradual and contested. This contested transformation highlights the dynamic nature of fatherhood discourse, where traditional masculine expectations continue to coexist with emerging ideals of emotional involvement and relational responsibility.

3.2 Psychosocial representations of father absence in Indonesian online media discourse

3.2.1 Emotional insecurity and relational vulnerability

The analyzed media texts consistently represent father absence not merely as physical separation but as a psychosocial condition associated with emotional and relational vulnerability among children. Across the analyzed narratives, fatherlessness is frequently portrayed as emotional absence, referring to situations in which fathers remain physically present within the family while demonstrating limited emotional engagement and relational involvement (Akhtari, 2025).

Several media narratives construct father absence as being associated with emotional insecurity, loneliness, low self-esteem, feelings of neglect, and difficulties in establishing interpersonal relationships (Kautsar, 2024; Kurniawan, 2025; Rajwa, 2025). One report states that:

“The absence of a father figure may influence children’s emotional development and their ability to establish relationships later in life” (DetikHealth, 2024).

Through such representations, online media position paternal involvement not merely as supportive parenting behavior but as an important psychosocial resource within children’s developmental experiences. These media representations align with psychological literature emphasizing the importance of emotionally engaged father–child relationships in psychosocial development. McLanahan et al. (2014) argue that paternal involvement contributes significantly to emotional regulation and psychological adjustment. Similarly, Cabrera et al. (2018) suggest that fathers’ emotional engagement supports emotional security, social competence, and self-regulation among children. Robinson et al. (2021) further found that positive father–child interaction through shared activities contributes to children’s social–emotional functioning, whereas limited paternal engagement is associated with greater emotional difficulties.

Research also indicates that paternal emotional involvement may function as a protective factor in children’s psychological well-being. Jiang et al. (2024) reported that higher levels of father involvement were associated with lower levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms among children and adolescents. Likewise, Puglisi et al. (2024) found that emotional involvement in early childhood positively contributes to emotional regulation and psychosocial stability. Rather than demonstrating these outcomes directly, the present findings indicate how Indonesian online media construct father involvement through psychosocial meanings related to emotional security and relational support.

3.2.2 Identity development and social meanings of fatherhood

The analyzed media texts also represent fathers as important figures in children’s identity formation and social orientation. Fathers are frequently portrayed as sources of emotional security, discipline, guidance, and moral values within family life (Lestari, 2025; Prasetyo, 2025). One article explains that:

“Fathers function not only as protectors but also as role models who demonstrate responsibility and discipline” (DetikHealth, 2024).

Such narratives construct paternal involvement as contributing to broader psychosocial meanings regarding children’s development. Media discourse further

associates father absence with identity-related challenges. Several narratives represent boys experiencing father absence as potentially encountering difficulties related to masculine identity and social-role understanding, whereas girls are portrayed as being more vulnerable regarding self-worth and interpersonal relationships (Alemu, 2025). One article notes that:

“Children need both male and female parental figures because each contributes differently to children’s understanding of social roles” (DetikHealth, 2024).

Psychological literature provides support for these representations. Branje (2021) argues that identity formation during adolescence is strongly influenced by emotionally significant relationships, including parental relationships. Thompson-Walsh et al. (2021) further report that limited paternal emotional closeness may be associated with social-emotional difficulties among children. Longitudinal findings by Culpin et al. (2022) additionally indicate that reduced paternal involvement during childhood may continue to influence psychological adjustment into adulthood.

Cross-cultural evidence also highlights the importance of paternal warmth and responsiveness in psychosocial development. Zheng et al. (2025) found that emotionally engaged fatherhood contributes positively to children’s social-emotional development, particularly within Asian cultural contexts characterized by stronger patriarchal norms and gender-role expectations. These findings strengthen the interpretation that media narratives do not merely discuss father absence structurally but also construct psychosocial meanings related to identity, emotional security, and social development.

3.2.3 Discursive construction of fatherlessness as a psychosocial issue

Another important finding concerns the ways Indonesian online media construct fatherlessness through psychological and developmental language. The analyzed narratives frequently employ terms such as *emotional wounds*, *psychological vulnerability*, *identity crisis*, *emotional instability*, and *developmental risks* when discussing father absence. This representation is also evident in an institutional media article published by Universitas Airlangga, which discusses fatherlessness in relation to challenges experienced by children when paternal roles are absent or limited (Andri, 2024). From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this pattern reflects a process of medicalization, in which social experiences are interpreted through psychological vocabulary to emphasize their seriousness (Fairclough, 2013). Through this discursive strategy, father absence is reconstructed not merely as a family issue but as a psychosocial phenomenon requiring broader social concern.

The analysis also identified nominalization and crisis framing strategies within media discourse. The repeated use of the term *fatherless* transforms diverse family experiences into a single conceptual category, elevating father absence from private family matters to a broader societal issue. Media narratives reinforce this construction through urgency framing and statistical representation. For example, one report states that:

“Around 25 percent of Indonesian children grow up without adequate paternal involvement” (CNN Indonesia, 2025).

A novel finding of this study is that Indonesian online media do not merely portray fatherlessness as physical paternal absence but reconstruct it as a psychosocial representation characterized by emotional insecurity, relational vulnerability, identity-related meanings, and developmental concerns embedded within Indonesian patriarchal culture. This finding extends previous studies that primarily examined father absence at the individual and family levels by demonstrating how online media actively shape public understanding of fatherlessness through psychosocial discourse.

Overall, the findings indicate that Indonesian online media represent father absence as a multidimensional psychosocial issue encompassing emotional security, relational closeness, identity development, and psychological well-being. Through discursive strategies such as medicalization, nominalization, and crisis framing, media narratives position fatherlessness not only as a private family experience but also as a broader social issue embedded within Indonesian patriarchal culture.

3.3 Structural barriers and sociocultural challenges in strengthening fathers' roles

The analyzed media texts indicate that limited paternal involvement in Indonesian families is frequently represented not as an individual failure but as a consequence of broader structural and sociocultural conditions. Across the analyzed narratives, online media construct father absence as being closely associated with patriarchal expectations, economic pressures, work-related demands, and limited institutional support for emotionally engaged fatherhood.

Several news reports emphasize that a substantial number of Indonesian children experience limited paternal involvement. Media narratives frequently present statistical representations to construct fatherlessness as a broader social issue. One report estimates that approximately 15.9 million children in Indonesia experience limited paternal involvement, including children growing up without a father figure and those whose fathers work more than 60 hours per week (CNN Indonesia, 2025). Through these statistical representations, media discourse frames father absence as a structural phenomenon embedded within labor systems and family arrangements rather than merely an individual parenting problem.

3.3.1 Patriarchal breadwinner expectations and gendered parenting roles

Media discourse consistently associates limited paternal involvement with patriarchal cultural expectations that position fathers primarily as economic providers rather than emotional caregivers. One report explains that:

"Many fathers still believe that their primary responsibility is to work and provide financially, while caregiving is considered the mother's role" (Ika, 2023).

Similarly, another article notes that:

"Patriarchal culture often places fathers as breadwinners who spend most of their time outside the home, leaving limited opportunities for emotional interaction with their children" (Shafira, 2025).

These narratives demonstrate how paternal roles are socially constructed through gendered expectations prioritizing economic productivity over emotional engagement. Within this representation, caregiving remains culturally associated with mothers, whereas fathers are discursively positioned as providers and authority figures. From a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) perspective, these representations reflect a process of depersonalization, in which responsibility for father absence is shifted from individual fathers toward broader sociocultural structures (Fairclough, 2013). Through this discourse, paternal disengagement is framed not solely as a personal choice but as an outcome shaped by patriarchal norms and institutionalized gender expectations.

Psychological literature strengthens these media representations by suggesting that emotionally engaged fatherhood is often constrained by sociocultural expectations surrounding masculinity and caregiving roles. Papaleontiou-Louca & Omari (2020) argue that fathers are frequently positioned as authority figures rather than emotionally expressive caregivers within traditional family systems. Similarly, Zheng et al. (2025) found that patriarchal gender norms in Asian societies significantly shape paternal warmth,

responsiveness, and emotional involvement in children's psychosocial development. These findings support the interpretation that media discourse constructs father absence not only as an individual parenting issue but also as a consequence of broader patriarchal structures shaping fatherhood practices.

3.3.2 Economic pressures and work-family conflict

Another dominant representation within media discourse concerns the influence of economic pressures and employment demands on father-child relationships. Several media narratives portray fathers as experiencing structural barriers that limit opportunities for emotional engagement with their children. For example, one article published by Tagar.co states that:

"Economic pressures in large cities force many fathers to work overtime or migrate for employment, making regular interaction with their children increasingly difficult" (Fatoni, 2025).

Another report similarly explains that:

"Long working hours, commuting distance, and financial responsibilities often prevent fathers from being fully present in family life" (Savitri, 2025).

These representations frame father absence not simply as emotional neglect but as a condition linked to labor structures, urban economic demands, and work-related exhaustion. Within CDA, this pattern reflects a structural framing strategy in which social problems are interpreted through institutional and socioeconomic contexts rather than individual intentions (Fairclough, 2013).

Psychological and family studies support this representation. Borgmann et al. (2020) found that work-family conflict significantly reduces parental psychological well-being and may negatively affect relational quality within families. Similarly, Shahidi et al. (2025) reported that unstable employment conditions and excessive work demands may reduce parents' emotional availability and weaken family interaction patterns. McLanahan et al. (2014) additionally suggest that limited paternal involvement may influence children's emotional regulation and psychosocial adjustment. Although the present study does not directly examine children's psychological conditions, these studies strengthen the interpretation that Indonesian online media represent economic pressures as factors associated with reduced paternal emotional engagement. Research by Thompson-Walsh et al. (2021) also indicates that paternal psychological distress and emotional exhaustion may influence family interaction quality and children's social-emotional experiences. In this context, media discourse constructs work-related absence not merely as physical unavailability but as reduced emotional presence within family relationships.

3.3.3 Limited parenting literacy and institutional support

Another important representation identified within the analyzed media texts concerns limited parenting literacy among fathers. Media discourse frequently portrays paternal disengagement as being associated with insufficient parenting knowledge, lack of emotional communication skills, and limited access to father-oriented parenting education. One psychologist cited in a media report explains that:

"Fatherlessness may occur because many fathers do not know how to be involved in childcare and lack role models to guide their parenting practices" (Ika, 2023).

Such narratives frame paternal disengagement not merely as behavioral indifference but as a consequence of restricted social learning opportunities and limited institutional

support for father involvement. From a CDA perspective, this representation reflects a structural problematization strategy in which parenting difficulties are linked to broader educational and institutional limitations rather than solely to individual responsibility. Through this discourse, media narratives open space for policy-oriented discussions concerning father-inclusive parenting programs and family support systems.

Existing psychological literature similarly emphasizes the importance of parenting knowledge and emotional responsiveness in strengthening father-child relationships. Cabrera et al. (2018) argue that fathers' emotional engagement and responsive interaction contribute positively to children's emotional regulation and social competence. Likewise, Kuo & Volling (2022) highlight that high-quality paternal involvement supports emotional security and psychosocial adjustment. These findings reinforce the media representation that strengthening fathers' parenting literacy may contribute to more emotionally engaged fatherhood.

Scholarly literature also highlights the importance of structural interventions in strengthening paternal engagement. Diniz & Veríssimo (2023) emphasizes that father mentoring programs, parenting education, and community-based support initiatives may help increase paternal participation in childcare. Pizarro & Gartzia (2024) additionally found that paid paternity leave policies contribute positively to emotional bonding, communication quality, and fathers' participation in daily caregiving activities.

3.3.4 Structural representation of fatherlessness as a sociocultural issue

An important finding emerging from this study is that Indonesian online media increasingly reconstruct fatherlessness as a structural and sociocultural issue rather than merely an individual parenting problem. Media discourse consistently links paternal disengagement with patriarchal gender norms, labor demands, economic pressures, and institutional limitations that restrict emotionally engaged fatherhood.

Rather than directly claiming psychological consequences among children, the findings demonstrate how online media represent fatherlessness through psychosocial and structural narratives concerning emotional absence, work-family imbalance, and limited paternal engagement within Indonesian patriarchal culture.

This finding extends previous studies that primarily examined father absence at the individual and family levels by demonstrating how online media actively construct public understanding of fatherlessness through structural and psychosocial discourse. Rather than positioning fathers solely as individually responsible actors, media narratives increasingly frame father involvement as dependent upon broader social systems shaping parenting opportunities and emotional engagement. Overall, the findings indicate that Indonesian online media represent fatherlessness as a multidimensional structural issue embedded within patriarchal culture, economic systems, and institutional arrangements. Through discursive strategies such as depersonalization, structural framing, and problematization, media narratives position father absence not only as a private family matter but also as a broader sociocultural issue requiring collective attention, institutional reform, and cultural transformation.

3.4 Digital technology as a discursive space for father-child relationships

The analysis revealed an additional theme concerning the representation of digital technology as a new space for negotiating father-child relationships in contemporary Indonesian society. Across the analyzed media texts, digital technology is not portrayed merely as a communication tool but as a social and relational arena through which paternal involvement is maintained, challenged, and redefined. Media narratives frequently construct technology through a dual discourse, portraying it simultaneously as an opportunity for strengthening father-child relationships and as a potential source of relational distance within families.

Several media reports represent digital technology as a mechanism that enables fathers to remain involved in their children's lives despite physical absence. This representation commonly appears in discussions of fathers who experience work-related constraints, long working hours, or geographical separation from their families. One article explains that

"The presence of a father figure can still be maintained through communication through gadgets" (Savitri, 2025).

Through this narrative, digital communication platforms are represented as alternative spaces where fathers can sustain interaction, emotional connection, and parental presence despite limited face-to-face contact. From a discursive perspective, media narratives construct technology as an extension of paternal presence rather than a replacement for it. Fathers are represented as remaining emotionally available through digital communication practices such as messaging, video calls, and online interaction. This representation reflects a broader redefinition of fatherhood in contemporary society, where paternal involvement is no longer understood solely through physical proximity but increasingly through relational accessibility and continuous communication.

Psychological literature cited within media discussions supports this representation. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of emotionally engaged father-child relationships for children's psychosocial development (Cabrera et al., 2018; Kuo & Volling, 2022; Puglisi et al., 2024). Within media discourse, these findings are frequently mobilized to reinforce the argument that maintaining emotional connection remains important even when fathers cannot always be physically present. Thus, psychological knowledge functions not as direct evidence within this study but as a discursive resource used by media narratives to legitimize the importance of paternal engagement in the digital era.

However, the analyzed texts also construct technology as a potential challenge to family relationships. Several reports express concerns that increasing dependence on digital devices may reduce meaningful family interaction and weaken emotional communication between parents and children. Such narratives highlight the tension between technological convenience and the preservation of meaningful family relationships. One article notes that:

"Children today are increasingly close to gadgets and often receive 'digital parenting' from platforms such as YouTube and TikTok" (Fatoni, 2025).

Through such narratives, digital platforms are represented as competing sources of guidance, socialization, and emotional influence that may challenge traditional parental roles. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, this pattern reflects discursive ambivalence. Technology is simultaneously represented as a bridge and a barrier. On the one hand, it enables communication and relational continuity. On the other hand, it is portrayed as a competing influence that may reduce parental authority, emotional intimacy, and direct interaction within families. Through this dual construction, media discourse reflects broader societal anxieties regarding the consequences of digital transformation for family life.

Media narratives further emphasize the importance of fathers' active involvement in children's digital environments. Rather than depicting fathers solely as supervisors of technology use, several reports represent paternal roles as involving guidance, communication, and participation in children's online experiences. Fathers are portrayed as needing not only emotional literacy but also digital literacy in order to remain relevant figures in children's lives. In this representation, paternal involvement extends beyond traditional caregiving practices toward engagement with children's digital worlds.

Psychological literature is again employed within media narratives to support this representation. Studies discussing family communication and digital environments suggest that the quality of parent-child interaction remains important in shaping children's experiences with technology (Everri et al., 2021; Çalhan & Göksu, 2024; Foulds, 2022). Media discourse draws upon these findings to construct digital engagement as a

contemporary dimension of parenting, emphasizing the importance of communication, guidance, and shared interaction in digital contexts. Importantly, these studies are referenced here as knowledge resources circulating within public discourse rather than as direct evidence regarding the children represented in the media texts.

A notable finding emerging from this study is that Indonesian online media increasingly reconstruct fatherhood through the concept of digitally connected fatherhood. Rather than framing paternal involvement exclusively in terms of physical presence, media discourse represents fathers as maintaining relational engagement through continuous communication, emotional accessibility, and participation in children's digital experiences. This representation expands existing discussions of fatherhood by illustrating how technological developments reshape public understandings of paternal roles within contemporary family life.

Overall, the findings indicate that Indonesian online media construct technology as an ambivalent but increasingly important component of father-child relationships. Through narratives emphasizing communication, emotional accessibility, digital guidance, and parental engagement, media discourse presents digital technology as a new arena in which fatherhood is negotiated and performed. At the same time, concerns about excessive technology use and reduced family interaction highlight ongoing tensions over the role of digital media in contemporary parenting. These findings suggest that within Indonesian media discourse, contemporary fatherhood is increasingly represented not only through emotional presence but also through the capacity to remain relationally connected in an increasingly digitalized social environment.

3.5 Strengthening fatherhood as a collective social responsibility

The analysis revealed that Indonesian online media not only describe the phenomenon of fatherlessness and paternal disengagement but also actively propose solutions to strengthen fathers' involvement in family life. Across the analyzed texts, recommendations are framed not only as individual responsibilities but also as collective efforts involving families, communities, educational institutions, workplaces, and government agencies. Consequently, media discourse positions fatherhood as a social responsibility that extends beyond the private sphere of the family.

Media narratives frequently emphasize the importance of increasing fathers' emotional involvement in everyday family interactions. Several reports encourage fathers to engage more actively in communication, emotional support, and daily caregiving practices. One article explains that:

"Simple interactions such as listening to children's stories before bedtime or having regular conversations about daily experiences can strengthen father-child relationships" (Fatoni, 2025).

Through such narratives, media discourse constructs paternal involvement not merely as physical presence but as emotional availability and relational engagement. Psychological literature frequently cited within public discussions similarly emphasizes the importance of emotionally engaged father-child relationships. Previous studies suggest that paternal emotional involvement is associated with emotional security, psychosocial adjustment, and positive developmental outcomes (Cabrera et al., 2018; Kuo & Volling, 2022). In the context of media discourse, these findings function as scientific resources that legitimize calls for greater paternal engagement. Importantly, the present study does not directly evaluate these developmental outcomes; rather, it examines how psychological knowledge is mobilized in media narratives to construct ideal forms of fatherhood.

In addition to emotional engagement, media discourse increasingly highlights the importance of parenting education and learning opportunities for fathers. Several articles encourage fathers to participate in parenting programs, educational workshops, and father-support communities. One report recommends that fathers should:

“Learn parenting strategies through educational platforms, participate in parenting training, and build supportive networks with other parents” (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2024).

Through this representation, fatherhood is constructed as a role that requires continuous learning and skill development rather than as a natural consequence of biological parenthood.

The analyzed media texts also emphasize the growing role of digital platforms in supporting paternal involvement. Online parenting resources, educational content, and virtual communities are often presented as tools that help fathers access parenting knowledge and share experiences with other parents. Similar to the findings presented in Theme 4, digital technology is represented not only as a communication medium but also as a resource for strengthening paternal competence and engagement. Media discourse therefore frames digital literacy as an increasingly important component of contemporary fatherhood.

Beyond individual and family-level efforts, media narratives consistently highlight the importance of structural support. Several reports argue that paternal involvement cannot be strengthened solely through personal motivation because broader socio-cultural and institutional barriers often limit fathers’ participation in childcare. One article states that:

“Strengthening the role of fathers requires collaboration between families, educational institutions, workplaces, communities, and the state.” (Fatoni, 2025)

Such representations shift responsibility away from individual fathers alone and position fatherhood within a broader social and institutional context. From a Critical Discourse Analysis perspective, these narratives reflect a process of collectivisation, whereby responsibility for addressing fatherlessness is distributed across multiple social actors rather than assigned exclusively to fathers or families. Through this discourse, paternal involvement is reconstructed as a shared social project requiring support from various institutions and policy systems.

This perspective is further reinforced through media discussions of public policy. Several texts highlight the importance of family-friendly workplace policies, parenting education programs, and government initiatives supporting parental involvement. References to Law No. 4 of 2024 concerning Maternal and Child Welfare during the First Thousand Days of Life are frequently used to demonstrate growing institutional recognition of fathers’ roles in child development. Through such narratives, media discourse constructs paternal involvement not only as a family concern but also as a matter of public policy and social welfare.

3.5.1 Collaborative fatherhood as an emerging media narrative

A notable finding emerging from this study is the construction of collaborative fatherhood within Indonesian online media discourse. Rather than portraying responsible fatherhood solely as the outcome of individual commitment, media narratives increasingly represent paternal involvement as dependent upon collaboration among fathers, families, communities, educational institutions, workplaces, and government systems.

In this representation, successful fatherhood is no longer defined exclusively by personal effort or economic provision but by the availability of social, cultural, educational, and institutional support that enables fathers to participate actively in family life. This finding extends previous discussions of fatherhood by demonstrating how Indonesian media increasingly frame paternal involvement as a collective social responsibility rather than a purely private family matter.

Overall, the findings indicate that Indonesian online media construct solutions to fatherlessness through interconnected emotional, educational, digital, and structural narratives. Through these representations, media discourse promotes a broader

understanding of fatherhood in which paternal involvement is supported not only by individual fathers but also by wider social institutions. Consequently, strengthening the role of fathers is represented as a collective social agenda aimed at fostering more engaged, relational, and socially supported forms of fatherhood within contemporary Indonesian society.

Beyond identifying individual themes, this study synthesizes the findings into a conceptual model that illustrates the relationships among the major discursive dimensions identified through thematic analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. Rather than operating independently, the five themes form an interconnected process through which Indonesian online media construct and negotiate meanings of fatherhood and fatherlessness. The conceptual model integrates the dominant patterns observed across the dataset and demonstrates how broader sociocultural structures shape media discourse while simultaneously influencing evolving representations of paternal roles. The resulting model provides an interpretive framework for understanding fatherlessness as a multidimensional phenomenon situated within the broader context of Indonesian patriarchal culture.

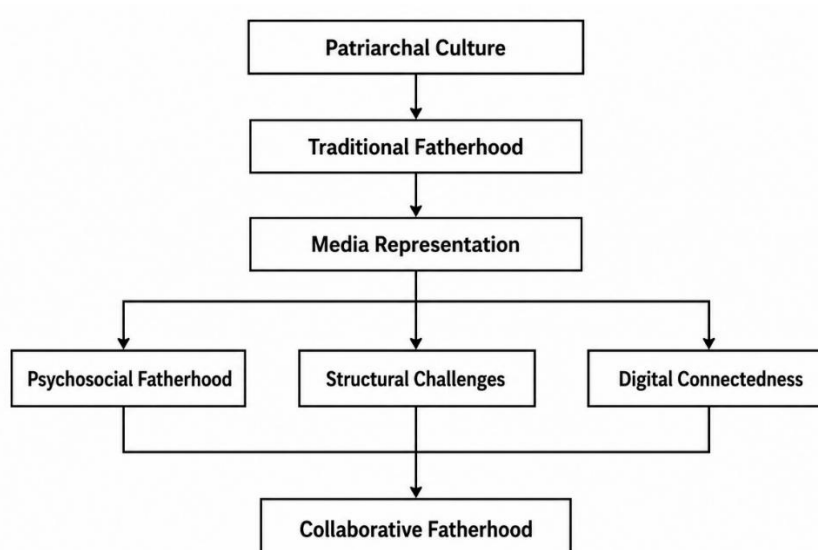


Fig. 2. Conceptual model of the findings

As illustrated in Figure 2, media representations of fatherlessness originate from the broader influence of patriarchal culture, which establishes traditional expectations regarding paternal authority, masculinity, and family responsibilities. These cultural norms shape conventional understandings of traditional fatherhood, where fathers are primarily positioned as economic providers rather than emotionally engaged caregivers. Indonesian online media subsequently reproduce, reinforce, and occasionally challenge these traditional assumptions through various forms of media representation, creating diverse narratives concerning paternal roles and father absence.

The model further demonstrates that these media representations develop into three interconnected dimensions: psychosocial fatherhood, structural challenges, and digital connectedness. The psychosocial dimension emphasizes the emotional and relational consequences associated with father absence, whereas structural challenges reflect the influence of patriarchal norms, employment demands, and institutional constraints on paternal involvement. At the same time, digital connectedness illustrates how communication technologies create alternative opportunities for maintaining father-child relationships despite physical separation. Rather than functioning as isolated domains, these dimensions interact dynamically and collectively contribute to a broader transformation in public understandings of fatherhood.

Ultimately, the convergence of these three dimensions leads to the emergence of collaborative fatherhood, which represents the principal conceptual contribution of this study. The model suggests that contemporary media discourse increasingly frames fatherhood as a shared social responsibility involving fathers, mothers, families, communities, workplaces, and public institutions. Consequently, fatherhood is represented not merely as an individual paternal obligation but as a collaborative process shaped by cultural change, institutional support, and evolving social expectations. This conceptual model therefore summarizes how Indonesian online media simultaneously reproduce traditional patriarchal values while opening discursive space for more inclusive and participatory understandings of fatherhood.

4. Conclusions

This study explored how Indonesian online media represent fatherhood and fatherlessness within the context of contemporary patriarchal culture. The findings indicate that media narratives increasingly move beyond traditional constructions of fathers as economic providers and authority figures by emphasizing emotional presence, communication, empathy, and relational involvement within family life. While patriarchal expectations continue to shape dominant understandings of fatherhood, Indonesian online media simultaneously promote alternative representations that highlight the psychosocial dimensions of paternal involvement. A key finding of this study is the emergence of psychosocial fatherhood, a representation of paternal identity that emphasizes emotional availability, relational closeness, and active engagement in family relationships. In addition, media narratives frequently represent fatherlessness not merely as the physical absence of fathers but as a psychosocial issue associated with emotional insecurity, relational vulnerability, identity-related concerns, and developmental challenges. These representations are often supported by psychological and developmental literature cited within media reports, reflecting the growing influence of psychological discourse in shaping public understandings of paternal involvement. Rather than demonstrating direct psychological outcomes among children, the findings show how national online media frame fathers as important psychosocial resources within children's emotional, relational, and developmental experiences.

The study also demonstrates that Indonesian online media increasingly position fatherhood within broader social, technological, and institutional contexts. Limited paternal involvement is frequently represented as being influenced by patriarchal gender expectations, economic pressures, work-family conflict, limited parenting literacy, and insufficient structural support. At the same time, digital technology is portrayed as an important medium through which fathers can maintain communication and emotional connection with their children despite physical distance. This finding contributes to the identification of digitally connected fatherhood, a representation that reflects changing patterns of paternal involvement in the digital era. Furthermore, media narratives consistently emphasize that strengthening fathers' roles requires support not only from individual fathers but also from families, communities, educational institutions, workplaces, and public policies. This representation gives rise to collaborative fatherhood*, which positions paternal involvement as a shared social responsibility. Collectively, the findings contribute to the literature by identifying three emerging representations of contemporary fatherhood- psychosocial fatherhood, digitally connected fatherhood, and collaborative fatherhood- that illustrate how Indonesian online media are redefining paternal roles within a changing patriarchal society. Future studies may examine how these media representations influence public perceptions of fatherhood and how they are negotiated within everyday family practices and diverse sociocultural contexts.

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Author Contribution

The author was responsible for the conceptualization, methodology, analysis, writing, review, and editing of this manuscript and has approved the final published version.

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The data supporting the findings of this study were obtained from publicly accessible online news articles published by Indonesian national media and are available from the corresponding sources.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors state no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and DeepSeek to assist in improving sentence structure, clarity, and overall academic coherence. Following the use of these tools, the authors carefully reviewed, revised, and edited all content and take full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.

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