Psychological Development and Children's Academic Achievement: A Study of the Impact of Broken Homes

Syamsidar[1], Rabiah Al'Adawiya[2], Melda Rahmadani Putri[3]
[1, 2, 3] Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu, Indonesia

Article Info

ABSTRACT

This study aims to deeply understand the impact of broken homes on children's psychological development and academic achievement and to identify various factors contributing to the condition. The method used in this study is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. This research was conducted in Kampung Beru Hamlet, Balangloe Village, South Sulawesi Province. The subjects in this study consisted of seven children (students) from broken homes, each with different backgrounds and experiences. The results indicate that most children from broken homes experience various negative psychological impacts, such as deep loneliness, low self-esteem, excessive anxiety, a tendency to be aggressive, and social withdrawal. These children generally have difficulty establishing healthy and stable social relationships. However, there are also some children who show high resilience or mental toughness and maintain a favorable spirit of learning despite being in a disharmonious family environment. The main factors causing broken homes in the cases studied included unresolved domestic conflict, poor communication, differences in principles between husband and wife, economic and emotional stress, neglect due to work commitments, and the loss of a spouse through death. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reflection and reference for parents, educators, and the community in creating a healthy, supportive, and child-friendly environment to ensure optimal psychological development.

Corresponding Author:

Syamsidar,
Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palu, Indonesia
Email: sidar9178@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The family is the primary social institution that serves as the foundation for shaping a child's personality, morals, and psychological health (Garbarino, 2017; Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024). However, not all families function optimally. When unresolved domestic conflicts lead to disharmony or discord, a condition known as a "broken home" arises. Children growing up in broken homes are vulnerable to various psychological developmental disorders, such as anxiety, depression, feelings of insecurity, and difficulties socializing (Jannah et al., 2023; Haq & Khan, 2024). The term "broken

home" does not always refer to formal divorce but encompasses various forms of disharmony, such as prolonged conflict, emotional neglect, or the loss of a parent through death.

This situation becomes even more complex when affected children lack emotional support or a healthy environment for their growth and development. In the Indonesian context, particularly in rural areas like Balangloe Village, South Sulawesi, the phenomenon of broken homes is a social problem that requires serious attention. Economic pressures, changing cultural values, and a lack of access to counseling or psychological services often lead to children experiencing broken homes not receiving appropriate care (Lewig et al., 2010; Bacon et al., 2023). They tend to show symptoms such as withdrawing from social environments, losing motivation to learn, and experiencing obstacles in building healthy interpersonal relationships.

Families experiencing family breakdown can impact student learning outcomes (Sanders & Turner, 2018; Guetto & Panichella, 2019). An unstable family situation can trigger various emotional and psychological problems in students, which can ultimately negatively impact their motivation, concentration, and academic achievement.

The Impact of a Broken Home on Student Learning Outcomes: Students from broken homes may feel less motivated to learn due to a lack of emotional support and attention from their parents (Wulandari et al., 2023). Family breakdown can lead to anxiety, stress, and other emotional disturbances, making it difficult for students to concentrate in class (Laletas & Khasin, 2021). Due to this lack of motivation and difficulty concentrating, the academic performance of students from broken homes tends to decline. Some students may exhibit negative behaviors such as skipping school, not doing assignments, or even engaging in juvenile delinquency to escape family problems. A disharmonious family environment can trigger psychological problems such as anxiety and depression in students, which can hinder their ability to learn and achieve (Rayan et al., 2022; Halimah & Darmayanti, 2024; Li et al., 2025).

Although the impact of a broken home can be negative, support from family, teachers, and peers can help students overcome the challenges they face. Parents who continue to provide emotional attention and support can help students feel more secure and motivated. Teachers and schools can provide special attention, guidance, and counseling to students from broken homes to help them overcome problems and improve their academic achievement (Daulay, 2024). Furthermore, supportive peers can encourage and motivate students from broken homes to continue achieving (Irawan et al., 2024; Sarnoto et al., 2024). Therefore, broken homes can significantly impact student learning outcomes (Abrantes & Casinillo, 2020; Mayowa, 2021). It is crucial for parents, teachers, and the community to provide the support students need to overcome challenges and achieve optimal performance.

Several previous studies, such as those conducted by Erviana (2022), have shown that children from broken homes tend to experience behavioral changes, low self-esteem, and decreased academic achievement. Erlik et al. (2022) emphasized that family factors significantly influence children's psychological development, and disharmony within the household can lead to long-term psychological trauma. Furthermore, Ardilla

and Cholid (2021) added that the loss of parental attention and affection has a significant impact on children's mental health, especially during their school years and adolescence. This study aims to describe the impact of broken homes on children's psychological development in Balangloe Village and identify the factors contributing to them within the local social and cultural context. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study seeks to provide a more profound understanding of the psychological conditions and learning outcomes of children living in broken families, while also providing a basis for more effective psychological and social interventions in the future.

2.   METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to deeply understand the impact of broken homes on children's psychological development. This approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the subjects' experiences, feelings, and perceptions directly through natural social interactions and provided space for in-depth interpretation of the realities faced by children (students) from broken homes. The study was conducted in Balangloe Village, South Sulawesi. Data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the research subjects, namely seven children (students) from broken homes, aged 15–18 years. Secondary data were obtained from literature reviews, supporting documents, and previous research relevant to this research theme.

Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, direct observation in the children's residential and school environments, and documentation in the form of photographs and audio recordings during the interviews. Interviews were used to explore the children's personal experiences and the perceptions of those around them. Observations were conducted to watch the children's behavior and social interactions in the context of everyday life. Documentation was used to strengthen the validity of the data through visual and audio evidence.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model from Miles et al. (2014), which includes three main stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data condensation was carried out by reducing raw data to relevant and structured information. The condensed data were then presented in a descriptive narrative to comprehensively describe the observed phenomena. The final stage was drawing conclusions based on patterns emerging from the data, while still considering the social and psychological context underlying the conditions of the children studied. The following presents the interactive analysis model from Miles et al. in Figure 1.
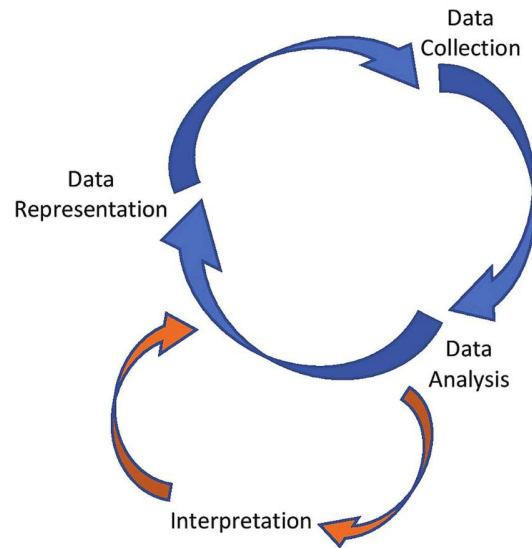
Figure 1. Interactive Analysis Model

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

This study reveals that broken homes significantly impact the psychological development of children in Balangloe Village, Tarowang District, Jeneponto Regency. Of the seven subjects interviewed, most showed significant emotional and social disturbances, although one or two children demonstrated psychological resilience. These findings support the statement by Maghfiroh et al. (2022) that children from broken homes generally experience difficulties adapting emotionally and socially due to the loss of family stability. The following is an interview with an informant.

> P : *How do you feel about your family situation?*
> Inf : *I feel sad and have difficulty accepting the fact that my parents are divorced. I feel like I've lost the warmth of family.*
> P : *What impact has a broken home had on your daily life?*
> Inf : *The impact of a broken home on my daily life is that I've become more introverted and have difficulty trusting others. I also find it difficult to focus on my studies.*
> P : *How do you cope with the difficulties faced by a broken home?*
> Inf : *I cope with the difficulties faced by a broken home by trying to focus on my studies and extracurricular activities. I also seek support from friends and family who still care about me.*
> P : *What do you need from others to help you overcome these difficulties?*
> Inf : *I need support and attention from others to help me overcome these difficulties. I want others to understand my feelings and give me the opportunity to talk about my problems.*
> P : *How do you see your future?*
> Inf : *I look forward to my future with hope. I want to prove that I can be successful and happy even though I come from a broken home.*

In general, the children affected by broken homes in this study exhibited symptoms such as loneliness, loss of self-confidence, excessive anxiety, and a tendency to withdraw from social interactions. One informant, a 16-year-old child with the initials SW, revealed that since his parents separated, he felt he had no one to talk to and became more withdrawn. This aligns with the theory proposed by Ardilla and Cholid (2021),

which states that children from broken homes tend to exhibit behavioral changes and personality disorders due to the loss of an intact parental figure.

Some children also exhibit aggressive behavior, are angered, and frequently experience conflict with peers. For example, a child with the initials MA (18 years old) frequently becomes involved in fights at school and admits to having difficulty controlling his emotions. This phenomenon aligns with Harahap's (2023) opinion that family instability triggers negative emotional reactions in children that can lead to deviant or antisocial behavior. However, two subjects in this study, MI (16 years old) and RD (17 years old), demonstrated quite satisfactory adaptive responses. They maintained their enthusiasm for learning, were actively involved in school activities, and strove to become emotionally independent. This supports Agustina's (2022) argument that broken homes do not always have negative impacts, due to differences in the level of psychological resilience between individuals. The following is an interview with an informant.

P	:	*What do you think was the main cause of your parents' divorce?*
Inf-1	:	*I think the main cause of my parents' divorce was a lack of communication and unresolvable disagreements. They often fought and couldn't reach an agreement.*
P	:	*How would you describe your parents' relationship before the divorce?*
Inf-1	:	*My parents' relationship before the divorce was very strained. They often fought and couldn't solve problems together. I felt uncomfortable and sad seeing them like that.*
P	:	*Were there any external factors that influenced your parents' relationship?*
Inf-1	:	*I think external factors such as the influence of others and financial pressures also affected my parents' relationship. They were often stressed and couldn't work through problems together.*
P	:	*How did you feel about your role in the family before the divorce?*
Inf-1	:	*I felt that I didn't have a significant role in the family before the divorce. I felt that I couldn't help my parents solve their problems.*
P	:	*What do you think could have been done to prevent your parents' divorce?*
Inf-1	:	*I think if my parents had communicated better and sought professional help, perhaps divorce could have been prevented. They need to learn to solve problems together and not let disagreements destroy their relationship.*

The factors that cause broken homes in the families of the research subjects include six main things: (1) unresolved conflict in the household; (2) poor communication between husband and wife; (3) sharp differences in life principles; (4) economic and emotional pressure; (5) neglect of children due to busy parents; and (6) the loss of one parent due to death. Each child in this study experienced a combination of these factors in various forms. A child with the initials NL (15 years old), for example, had to live with his father after his mother died and his father was busy working. This created deep emotional emptiness and gave rise to long-term anxiety, as described by Idris et al. (2023), that the loss of a primary caregiver figure can disrupt a child's emotional stability and create a sense of insecurity in social relationships.

The impact of broken homes is also evident in learning motivation. Some children experience decreased concentration and interest in education, driven by unstable mental health at home. This aligns with Gadallah et al. (2016), who explain that low self-esteem

due to family conflict can impact a child's academic performance. However, on the other hand, some children use this situation as a driving force to become more independent and successful. The following is an interview with an informant.

> P   :   *What kind of support do you need from others to help you overcome the difficulties of a broken home?*
> Inf-2   :   *I need emotional support and attention from others to help me overcome the difficulties of a broken home. I want others to understand my feelings and give me the opportunity to talk about my problems.*
> P   :   *How do you feel about the support provided by family, friends, or teachers?*
> Inf-2   :   *I feel that support from family and friends is very important to me. They can help me feel better and give me the courage to move on.*
> P   :   *What do you think schools or other institutions can do to help students from broken homes?*
> Inf-2   :   *I think schools can help students from broken homes by providing counseling and emotional support. Teachers and counselors can help students overcome emotional difficulties and provide them with coping strategies.*
> P   :   *How do you cope with the emotional difficulties faced by a broken home?*
> Inf-2   :   *I cope with the emotional difficulties faced by a broken home by trying to focus on activities I enjoy and seeking support from others. I also try not to think too much about family problems and focus on my future.*
> P   :   *What message would you like to convey to others about your experience as a student from a broken home?*
> Inf-2   :   *My message to others is that a broken home isn't the end of the world. I still could achieve my dreams and become a successful person. I want others to understand and support students from broken homes.*

Based on the analysis of interview data, it was found that social support from the environment, such as teachers, friends, and family, is crucial in a child's adaptation process. Children who receive emotional support and positive encouragement from outside the nuclear family are more likely to survive and demonstrate healthy psychological development. Therefore, a community-based and educational approach is essential to help children from broken homes face their psychological challenges.

The results of this study emphasize the crucial role of parents, educational institutions, and the community in creating a strong support system for children from broken homes. When the family cannot fully function, others outside the home must step in to fill the gap. Teachers, counselors, and village officials can play a crucial role in providing a safe space and open communication for affected children while also developing intervention strategies that are sensitive to local social and cultural conditions.

Discussion

This study revealed that children growing up in broken homes experience various psychological impacts, ranging from emotional and social problems to academic achievement. The analysis shows that individuals' experiences in dealing with disharmonious family situations are greatly influenced by the level of social support they receive, as well as each child's personal characteristics.

The first finding suggests that most children encounter psychological symptoms like anxiety, loneliness, anger, and low self-esteem. This confirms the theory of Ardilla and Cholid (2021), which states that the emotional and physical absence of parental figures can lead to identity disorientation and emotional disturbance in children. The family should be a source of love and security, but in broken homes, these functions are disrupted or completely absent, leading to psychological instability in children.

The withdrawn behavior, irritability, and even aggression exhibited by some subjects, such as MA (18 years old) and SW (16 years old), are forms of maladaptive defense mechanisms. From a developmental psychology perspective, adolescents who lack emotional attachment from their parents are at risk of experiencing difficulties in managing their emotions and building healthy social relationships (Harahap, 2023). This study demonstrates that broken homes are not simply a family issue but can also have a broad impact on the development of a child's character and personality in the long term.

This study also found that some children can demonstrate positive responses amidst difficult situations. MI (16 years old) and RD (17 years old) maintained a passion for learning, social engagement, and optimism for the future. They perceived their family circumstances as challenges to overcome, not barriers. These findings support Agustina's (2022) argument that not all children from broken homes experience negative impacts; personal resilience and support from outsiders, such as teachers or siblings, can help them develop positively.

The causal factors of broken homes in this study also demonstrate a close link between structural and emotional aspects within the family. Unresolved conflict and poor communication create prolonged tension that directly impacts children. Families with open and warm communication patterns tend to be more resilient in dealing with problems. Conversely, families with closed and conflict-ridden communication increase the risk of psychological instability in children. In the context of this study, poor communication between parents also contributed to the breakdown of relationships, which then directly impacted children.

Differences in principles within the household, economic pressure, and the loss of a parent were also significant causes of broken homes in Balangloe Village. Failure to balance stressors with appropriate support and adaptation can result in family crises. For example, NL's child (15 years old), who lost her mother and received no attention from her father due to his busy work schedule, experienced severe emotional distress and showed a tendency to withdraw from social circles.

This study also found that economic pressure often exacerbates conflict within the household. When basic needs are not met, parental anxiety about financial conditions can spill over into interpersonal relationships, increasing tension and leading to child neglect. This work supports the findings of Hadi et al. (2020), who found that economic and emotional instability within the family is a dangerous combination for the continuity of family functioning and children's well-being. Furthermore, the importance of external support from schools and the community is a key consideration in this study. Children who receive attention from teachers, peers, and family are better able to manage their feelings and stay connected to positive social activities. This social support serves as a

form of protection that can mitigate the negative impacts of less-than-ideal family conditions. Therefore, in dealing with cases of broken homes, interventions must not only be carried out at the nuclear family level but also include a community approach through education and ongoing social services.

The results and discussion of this study reinforce the conclusion that the impact of broken homes is not uniform but is strongly influenced by the interaction between individual and environmental factors. This study's contribution lies in mapping the psychological impacts based on the real-life experiences of children from broken homes in rural areas, which tend to have minimal access to psychosocial services. This emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral roles in addressing the issue of broken homes, not only as a domestic problem but also as an issue of social development and children's mental health.

This study illustrates the importance of external support, including educators, classmates, and the community, in assisting children from fractured families in confronting their psychological difficulties. These findings establish a crucial foundation for the development of psychological and educational intervention programs that more effectively meet the needs of children in these familial circumstances.

4. CONCLUSION

The research findings show that broken homes significantly impact children's psychological development, including emotional, social, and academic aspects, as well as learning outcomes. Children (students) living in disharmonious families tend to experience loneliness, low self-esteem, anxiety, and even aggressive behavior or social withdrawal. Nevertheless, some children (students) demonstrate psychological resilience by maintaining a passion for learning and a positive attitude toward their future.

Factors contributing to broken homes in Balangloe Village include unresolved domestic conflict, poor communication between parents, differences in opinions/principles, economic and emotional stress, neglect due to work commitments, and loss due to death. These conditions undermine children's emotional stability and hinder their healthy personality development. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of support from outside the family, such as teachers, peers, and the community, in helping children from broken homes face their psychological challenges. These findings provide an important basis for developing psychosocial and educational intervention programs that better address the needs of children in these family situations.

REFERENCES

Abrantes, L. F., & Casinillo, L. F. (2020). The impact of broken homes on students' academic performance. *Indonesian Journal of educational Research and review*, *3*(3), 113-122. https://doi.org/10.23887/ijerr.v3i3.28592

Agustina, D. F. (2022). *Komunikasi Interpersonal Orang Tua dan Anak Dalam Memotivasi Anak Broken Home Untuk Berprestasi di Desa Duduk sampeyan Gresik* (Doctoral dissertation, IAIN Kediri).

Ardilla, A., & Cholid, N. (2021). Pengaruh Broken Home Terhadap Anak. *Studia: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Mahasiswa*, *6*(1), 1-14. https://doi.org/10.32923/stu.v6i1.1968

Bacon, G., Sweeney, A., Batchelor, R., Grant, C., Mantovani, N., Peter, S., ... & Lever Taylor, B. (2023). At the edge of care: A systematic review and thematic synthesis of parent and practitioner views and experiences of support for parents with mental health needs and children's social service involvement. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, *2023*(1), 6953134. https://doi.org/10.1155/2023/6953134

Daulay, N. (2024). The Role of Guidance and Counseling Teachers in Optimizing Learning Motivation for Broken Home. *JP (Jurnal Pendidikan): Teori dan Praktik*, *9*(2), 105-112. https://doi.org/10.26740/jp.v9n2.p105-112

Erlik, E. S., Cahyono, H., & Rusdiani, N. I. (2024). Dampak Broken Home Terhadap Perkembangan Sosial Emosional Anak Usia Dini. *Jurnal Kajian Anak (J-Sanak)*, *6*(01), 161-172.

Erviana, I. (2022). *Dampak Broken Home Terhadap Perkembangan Psikologi Anak Di Desa Tri Rejomulyo Kecamatan Penawartama* (Doctoral dissertation, IAIN Metro).

Gadallah, M. A., Hassan, A. M., Kotb, S. A., & Abd EL-Hameed, N. A. (2016). Parent-Adolescents conflicts and its relation with their school achievement and Self-esteem. *Assiut Scientific Nursing Journal*, *4*(9), 186-196.

Garbarino, J. (2017). *Children and families in the social environment: Modern applications of social work*. Routledge.

Guetto, R., & Panichella, N. (2019). Family arrangements and children's educational outcomes. *Demographic Research*, *40*, 1015-1046. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26727024

Hadi, S., Putri, D. W. L., & Rosyada, A. (2020). Disharmoni keluarga dan solusinya perspektif family therapy (studi kasus di Desa Telagawaru Kecamatan Labuapi Lombok Barat). *TASAMUH: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam*, *18*(1), 114-137. https://doi.org/10.20414/tasamuh.v18i1.1761

Halimah, H., & Darmayanti, N. (2024). Overview of Student's Mental Health with Broken Home Background. *JMKSP (Jurnal Manajemen, Kepemimpinan, dan Supervisi Pendidikan)*, *9*(2), 1412-1425. https://doi.org/10.31851/jmksp.v9i2.16713

Haq, E. U., & Khan, S. (2024). The influence of broken homes on students' academic performance in schools. *Journal of Political Stability Archive*, *2*(4), 339-361. https://doi.org/10.63075/bnk5qv41

Harahap, T. S. S. (2023). *Upaya orang tua broken home dalam membina kepribadian remaja di Desa Perkebunan Air Batu I/II Kecamatan Air Batu Kabupaten Asahan* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Syekh Ali Hasan Ahmad Addary Padangsidimpuan).

Idris, D. N. T., Mahanani, S., & Wahyuningsih, A. (2023). Peningkatan Derajat Kesehatan Melalui Kegiatan Observasi Psikologi Perkembangan Anak dengan Metode Terapi Bermain. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat Indonesia*, *2*(2), 99-111.

Irawan, D., Handayani, I. P., & Wardiastuti, F. (2024). Improving learning motivation of broken home students by creed and morals teachers at mts. *At Turots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 929-944. https://doi.org/10.51468/jpi.v6i2.760

Jannah, M., Hariastuti, R. T., & Nursalim, M. (2023). Negative impact of a dysfunctional family on adolescents: A literature study. *Harmoni Sosial: Jurnal Pendidikan IPS*, *10*(2), 109-121. https://doi.org/10.21831/hsjpi.v10i2.57527

Laletas, S., & Khasin, M. (2021). Children of high conflict divorce: Exploring the experiences of primary school teachers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *127*, 106072. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106072

Lewig, K., Arney, F., & Salveron, M. (2010). Challenges to parenting in a new culture: Implications for child and family welfare. *Evaluation and program planning*, *33*(3), 324-332. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2009.05.002

Li, X., Luo, S., Lin, L., Li, C., Li, J., Cao, W., ... & Guo, V. Y. (2025). Association between family disharmony, maternal negative emotional states, and behavioral problems among Chinese children attending preschools. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, *377*, 217-224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2025.02.057

Maghfiroh, N. L., Siregar, R. D., Sagala, D. S., & Khadijah, K. (2022). Dampak tumbuh kembang anak broken home. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Konseling*, *4*(4), 42-48.

Mayowa, I. O. (2021). Impact of broken homes on education of children: A sociological perspective. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, *10*, 1342-1348.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: Sourcebook Methods. 3rd*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

Rayan, A., Harb, A. M., Baqeas, M. H., Al. Khashashneh, O. Z., & Harb, E. (2022). The relationship of family and school environments with depression, anxiety, and stress among Jordanian students: a cross-sectional study. *SAGE Open Nursing*, *8*, 23779608221138432. https://doi.org/10.1177/23779608221138432

Sanders, M. R., & Turner, K. M. (2018). The importance of parenting in influencing the lives of children. In *Handbook of parenting and child development across the lifespan* (pp. 3-26). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-94598-9_1

Sarnoto, A. Z., Sari, W. D., Alhan, K., Hidayat, R., & Saksitha, D. A. (2024). Exploring the Impact of Broken Home Conditions on Adolescents' Focus and Academic Achievement. *Acta Psychologia*, *3*(2), 40-48. https://doi.org/10.35335/psychologia.v3i2.56

Syakhrani, A. W., & Aslan, A. (2024). The impact of informal family education on children's social and emotional skills. *Indonesian Journal of Education (INJOE)*, *4*(2), 619-631. https://www.injoe.org/index.php/INJOE/article/view/153

Wulandari, W., Musafir, M., & Mulyono, A. (2023). The impact of broken homes on the learning motivation of students: Case Study in elementary school in North Lombok, Indonesia. *Panicgogy International Journal*, *1*(2), 57-62. https://doi.org/10.59965/pij.v1i2.148