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# THE ROLE OF THE STATE IN PROTECTING CHILDREN AFTER DIVORCE: A LEGAL ANALYSIS OF FAMILY LAW IN INDONESIA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores post-divorce child protection in Indonesia, focusing on the research methodology and relevant discussion results. Qualitative research methods were employed to investigate the experiences and views of parents and experts regarding the implementation of child protection laws after divorce. The results indicate that, although there are regulations governing children's rights, their implementation is often hampered by social, economic, and cultural factors. The findings also suggest that uncertainty in court decisions regarding custody and support negatively impacts children's welfare. This discussion emphasizes the need for more effective law enforcement mechanisms and psychological support for children and parents after divorce. Recommendations from this study include strengthening the capacity of relevant institutions to implement the law and providing assistance programs for families. With an integrated approach, it is hoped that child protection can be carried out comprehensively and sustainably, allowing affected children to grow up in a healthy and safe environment.

Keywords: Child Protection; Divorce; Law; Child Welfare; Qualitative Research Methods

#### INTRODUCTION

Child protection after divorce has become an increasingly relevant issue within Indonesia's social dynamics and family law<sup>1</sup>. Divorce not only severs the bonds between husband and wife, but it often has a deeper impact on the children involved<sup>2</sup>. In many cases, children become direct victims of parental conflict, facing emotional, social, and even financial instability. In such situations, the state has a crucial responsibility to safeguard children's rights, particularly concerning their care, education, and overall welfare<sup>3</sup>. However, challenges in enforcing this protection often arise, at the court level and within society.

In Indonesia, family law is governed by various legal frameworks, including Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection 4. These laws explicitly stipulate children's rights, particularly regarding care after divorce and parental responsibilities for providing financial support and a safe environment <sup>5</sup>. However, the reality on the ground often differs. Children's rights are sometimes not fully upheld even after

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Bambang Eko Turisno et al., "Negligence in Implementing Child Custody Decisions: A Threat to Child Protection in Indonesia," International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences 16, no. 2 (2021): 20-34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Carol R. Hughes and Bruce R. Fredenburg, Home Will Never Be the Same Again: A Guide for Adult Children of Gray Divorce (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Asgeir Falch-Eriksen et al., "Children Expressing Their Views in Child Protection Casework: Current Research and Their Rights Going Forward," Child and Family Social Work 26, no. 3 (2021): 485-97, https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12831. 4(Law Number 1 of 1974)

Dejan Mickovik and Arta Selmani-Bakiu, "Parental Responsibility after Divorce: The Case of North Macedonia," International Journal of Law, Policy and the Family 35, no. 1 (2021): ebab018, https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebab018.which will be the most significant reform in the field of civil law since its independence in 1991.

a court decision, especially concerning custody arrangements, child support payments, and the child's emotional well-being<sup>6</sup>.

A notable example illustrating the complexity of child protection after divorce is the case of a public figure's divorce, which garnered significant public attention in Indonesia. In this case, a heated court battle ensued over child custody, with both parties asserting their right to care for the child 7. Ultimately, the court granted custody to the mother based on the Islamic law principle of hadhanah, which holds that young children are best cared for by their mothers 8. However, the problems did not end with the court's decision. Issues arose regarding unpaid child support and the psychological toll on the child, caught in the middle of parental conflict. This case demonstrates that while strong legal protection exists, adequate implementation does not always follow it 9.

This situation raises important questions: To what extent can the state, through its legal instruments, provide comprehensive protection for children after divorce? Are current regulations sufficient to address the complexity of divorce, or do legal gaps need to be filled? Furthermore, how can the state properly enforce court decisions to guarantee children's rights? These questions are critical for understanding the state's role in family law, particularly in protecting children after divorce in Indonesia 10.

In a legal context, the state's role goes beyond drafting regulations; it also includes consistent oversight and law enforcement. The state must ensure that court rulings regarding child custody and support are adhered to by both parties in a divorce 11. This is where significant challenges often arise, especially when one party refuses to comply with the court's decision. For instance, there are numerous cases where the non-custodial parent obstructs the child's access to the custodial parent or fails to pay child support as ordered. This situation demands greater state involvement in monitoring and enforcing compliance to ensure the welfare of children is not neglected 12.

Furthermore, child protection extends beyond formal legal aspects such as custody and support. The psychological and social well-being of children must also be a priority. The state should collaborate with various institutions, including child protection agencies and social services, to ensure that children affected by divorce receive the psychological support they need. This highlights the importance of a holistic approach to child protection, which not only focuses on legal measures but also incorporates social and psychological interventions to mitigate the negative impacts of divorce on children 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Mia Hakovirta and Christine Skinner, "Shared Physical Custody and Child Maintenance Arrangements: A Comparative Analysis of 13 Countries Using a Model Family Approach," Shared Physical Custody: Interdisciplinary Insights in Child Custody Arrangements 12, no. 1 (2021): 309-31, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-68479-2 14.

Diana Teresa Pakasi et al., "Young Women's Agency and the Social Navigation of Divorce from Child Marriage in West Java, Central Java, and West Lombok, Indonesia," Asian Women 40, no. 2 (2024): 95-121, https://doi.org/10.14431/ aw.2024.6.40.2.95.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Salsabila Firdausia, "Hadhanah in The Concept of Compilation of Islamic Law And Law," Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari'ah Dan Masyarakat 20, no. 2 (2020): 317-22, https://doi.org/10.19109/nurani.v20i2.4849.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Jan Stokkebekk et al., "'Keeping Balance', 'Keeping Distance' and 'Keeping on with Life': Child Positions in Divorced Families with Prolonged Conflicts," Children and Youth Services Review 10, no. 2 (2019): 108-19, https://doi.org/10.1016/j. childyouth.2019.04.021.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>Terry Arendell, Mothers and Divorce: Legal, Economic, and Social Dilemmas (California: Univ of California Press,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup>Muhammad Adipa et al., "Analysis of Judges' Considerations in Determining Child Support After Divorce (Study of Judge's Decision Number 0233/Pdt.G/2017/MS-MBO) Muhammad," International Conference Restructuring and Transforming Law 2023 8, no. 1 (2023): 56-64.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Emily Schindeler, "Family Law Court Orders for Supervised Contact in Custodial Disputes-Unanswered Questions,"

Children Australia 44, no. 4 (2019): 194–201, https://doi.org/10.1017/cha.2019.42.10

<sup>13</sup>Forouzan Akrami, Alireza Zali, and Mahmoud Abbasi, "Entanglement of the Rights of the Child, Well-Being, and Justice: A Conceptual Framework for Child Protection and Well-Being," *International Journal of Medical Toxicology and Foren*sic Medicine 12, no. 2 (2022): E36827, https://doi.org/10.32598/ijmtfm.v12i2.36827.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to thoroughly examine the state's role in protecting children after divorce in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the legal framework and its implementation in family law. Through this analysis, the goal is to identify more effective solutions to improve child protection, both in terms of regulation and practice, so that children affected by parental divorce can continue to grow in a safe environment that supports their development.

#### **METHOD**

This study employs a normative legal approach, focusing on analyzing laws and court decisions related to child protection after divorce <sup>14</sup>. It adopts a Statute Approach by examining various regulations, such as Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, and Government Regulation Number 9 of 1975. Data collection techniques involve literature reviews and documentation from both primary and secondary legal sources <sup>15</sup>. The data are analyzed descriptively and analytically to evaluate the effectiveness of existing regulations and the challenges in their implementation.

#### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

## The Role of the State in Post-Divorce Child Protection Based on Existing Laws

Divorce is a legal event with significant consequences, especially for children. Children of divorced parents often find themselves in situations that negatively affect their psychological, emotional, and social well-being. Amid the conflict between parents, children's rights are frequently overlooked <sup>16</sup>. Therefore, the state plays a crucial role in ensuring that children's rights are protected, even after their parents' marriage ends. In Indonesia, child protection post-divorce is governed by several laws and regulations that emphasize the state's responsibility to safeguard children's best interest <sup>17</sup>. These regulations include Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage, Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, and Government Regulation Number 9 of 1975, which provides technical guidelines for implementing divorce-related matters. These legal frameworks guarantee children's rights to care, sustenance, and psychological well-being <sup>18</sup>.

### Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage

Law Number 1 of 1974 on Marriage is the primary legal basis for regulating divorce and its consequences, including children's rights. Article 41 of this law clearly states that even after a divorce, the responsibilities of both parents toward their children do not cease. Parents remain obligated to care for and educate their children, ensuring that their basic needs are met

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Agus Budianto, "Legal Research Methodology Reposition in Research on Social Science," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 1, no. 9 (2020): 1339–46, https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2020.09.154.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Hari Sutra Disemadi, "Lenses of Legal Research: A Descriptive Essay on Legal Research Methodologies," *Journal of Judicial Review* 24, no. 2 (2022): 289–304, https://doi.org/10.37253/jjr.v24i2.7280.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>Jihan Alfadia, Muhamad Abas, and Zarisnov Arafat, "Legal Protection Of Children After Divorce Divorce Related To Act Number 16 Of 2019 Amendment To Act Number 1 Of 1974 Concerning Marriage (Decision Study Number 1145/Pdt.g/2020/PA.Krw)," *Justisi: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 8, no. 2 (2023): 132–44, https://doi.org/10.36805/jjjih.v8i2.5774.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>Sulaiman Sulaiman, "The Urgency of Legal Protection of Children's Rights Post-Divorce in Caring for Mothers Who Undergoing Criminals in Correctional Institutions," *In International Conference on Law, Economics, and Health (ICLEH 2022)* 21, no. 1 (2023): 265–73, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-024-4\_29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Amran Suadi, "Protection of Women's And Children's Rights Based On System Interconnection: A New Paradigm of Execution of Women and Children's Rights after Divorce," *Jurnal Hukum Dan Peradilan* 11, no. 3 (2022): 499–522, https://doi.org/10.25216/jhp.11.3.2022.499-522.

despite the dissolution of the family. Article 45 further specifies that children have the right to necessities such as food, clothing, education, and healthcare.

In divorce cases, the court decides on child custody and maintenance arrangements. However, in practice, fulfilling maintenance obligations often faces obstacles, including non-compliance by the parent responsible for providing support. One potential solution to improve enforcement is to implement an automatic deduction system from the parent's income required to pay maintenance, ensuring that children are not victims of parental disputes. Moreover, custody regulations under the Marriage Law prioritize the child's best interest. Article 41 stipulates that custody may be granted to one parent based on a court decision, considering factors such as the child's age, the financial capacity of the parents, and their emotional stability. The court may also decide that both parents remain jointly responsible for the child, even if physical custody is awarded to one party. This demonstrates the state's efforts, through the judiciary, to protect children's rights while ensuring that they maintain relationships with both parents.

#### Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection

Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection broadens the scope of children's rights outlined in the Marriage Law. This law emphasizes that every child has the right to care, education, and protection from both parents, even after a divorce. Article 9 of the law states that every child must be protected from all forms of violence, discrimination, neglect, and exploitation. In the context of divorce, the state, through this law, ensures that a child's right to proper care from both parents is not compromised by marital conflict. Additionally, the law addresses the issue of parental alienation, where one parent attempts to alienate the child from the other parent, often by manipulating the child's emotions. This practice is extremely harmful to children, as it deprives them of the opportunity to maintain a healthy relationship with both parents. Institutions such as the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Children (P2TP2A) play a crucial role in safeguarding children's rights. Through active supervision and psychosocial support, the state aims to prevent parental alienation, which can severely damage a child's emotional well-being. Furthermore, the law mandates the state to provide rehabilitation services for children affected by divorce. Article 64 obliges the government to offer counseling and psychological support to children experiencing emotional difficulties due to their parents' separation. These services are vital in helping children cope with the negative impact of parental conflict, ensuring they can grow and develop in a healthy mental and emotional state.

### **Government Regulation Number 9 of 1975**

Government Regulation Number 9 of 1975 is an implementing regulation of Law Number 1 of 1974, providing technical guidance on the execution of divorce, including regulating child custody and support. Article 41 of this regulation states that in cases of divorce, the court has the authority to determine custody based on the child best interest. Custody decisions must consider various factors, such as the parent's financial situation, their mental and emotional readiness, and the closeness of their relationship with the child.

In the context of Islamic law, which is frequently applied in Indonesia, the principle of hadhanah, suggests that young children are generally better raised by their mothers. While this principle is a guideline for judges in determining custody, it is not applied rigidly. The court has the discretion to weigh additional factors, such as the ability of each parent to meet the child's physical and emotional needs, in deciding who should be awarded custody. This flexibility allows the court to tailor decisions to the specific circumstances of each divorce case.

Beyond custody arrangements, this regulation also emphasizes the obligation of both parents to continue financially supporting the child after divorce. Article 46 asserts that the parent who does not receive custody is still responsible for providing financial support. However, in practice, the enforcement of child support rulings often falls short, with many cases where one party fails to meet their obligations, ultimately harming the child.

To address this, the state must strengthen the enforcement mechanisms for child support payments. One potential solution is implementing an automatic payment system through government financial institutions, ensuring that child support is paid regularly without requiring cumbersome procedures. This would help guarantee the child's financial needs are consistently met. Additionally, stricter oversight of court order compliance is necessary to ensure children's rights are upheld and not neglected.

# Challenges in Law Implementation: The Gap between Regulation and Practice

Although existing regulations are comprehensive in protecting children's rights after divorce, challenges in their implementation remain a significant issue. One of the main challenges is weak law enforcement regarding compliance with court decisions <sup>19</sup>. There are numerous cases where a parent required to pay child support fails to meet their obligations, or where the custodial parent obstructs the child's access to the other parent. This situation is highly detrimental to children, who become the ultimate victims of parental conflict <sup>20</sup>.

To address this gap, the government needs concrete actions to strengthen law enforcement mechanisms. One effective measure could be imposing stricter sanctions on those who fail to comply with court rulings. These sanctions could include automatic wage deductions, asset freezes, or even detention if the non-compliant parent persistently ignores their obligations. Additionally, social institutions such as the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Children (P2TP2A) must play a more active role in monitoring the well-being of children of divorced parents and providing necessary psychological support <sup>21</sup>.

In terms of psychological protection, the government should invest more in rehabilitation programs for children affected by divorce. Counseling and psychological support services must be easily accessible to both children and parents, to help minimize the negative impacts of divorce. Furthermore, educating parents about the importance of maintaining their children's psychological well-being after divorce should be a priority. With these efforts, children affected by divorce can grow up in a more stable environment, even if their parents are no longer together <sup>22</sup>.

To strengthen child protection, the government must improve enforcement mechanisms and increase support for social institutions that assist children of divorced parents. A more holistic approach, addressing legal, social, and psychological aspects, can more effectively safeguard children's rights, allowing them to grow and develop in a healthy environment despite their parents' separation <sup>23</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Giulio Nittari et al., "Telemedicine Practice: Review of the Current Ethical and Legal Challenges," *Telemedicine and E-Health* 26, no. 12 (2020): 1427–37, https://doi.org/10.1089/tmj.2019.0158.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Stephen Gillers, Regulation of Lawyers: Problems of Law and Ethics (New York: Aspen Publishing, 2024).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>R. Eriska Ginalita Dwi Putri, Haidan Angga Kusumah, and Asti Sri Mulyanti, "The Role of Tertiary Institutions in Increasing Understanding of The Protection of Child Abuse Laws in Communities in Sukabumi," *Conference Series* 5, no. 10 (2021): 35–41, https://doi.org/10.34306/conferenceseries.v5i10.191.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Michael A. Saini and Samantha Corrente, "Educating for Change: A Meta-Analysis of Education Programs for Separating and Divorcing Parents," *Family Court Review* 62, no. 3 (2024): 512–41, https://doi.org/10.1111/fcre.12801.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup>D. D. K. S. Karunanayake, Mohamed Nazeer Aysha, and N. D. U. Vimukthi, "The Psychological Well-Being of Single Mothers with School Age Children: An Exploratory Study," *International Journal of Scientific Research in Science and Technology*, 2021, https://doi.org/10.32628/ijsrst21812.

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## Challenges of Implementation and Evaluation of the Role of the State

### **Execution of Court Decisions**

The execution of court decisions is a crucial step in upholding children's rights after divorce. Article 1, number 2 of Law No. 48 of 2009 concerning Judicial Power states that judicial powers aims to uphold the law and justice. However, the reality in practice often reveals non-compliance with court decisions, particularly regarding child custody and support. The lack of strict sanctions for parties who fail to comply with court orders can result in injustice for children <sup>24</sup>. The Theory of Legal Positivism argues that a good law is enforced. This non-compliance creates a harmful precedent that can undermine public trust in the legal system. Therefore, there is a need for an effective execution agency that has the authority to enforce court decisions. The state must allocate sufficient resources and provide training for law enforcement officers to ensure that executions are carried out consistently. This aligns with Supreme Court Regulation Number 2 of 2012, which offers more straightforwad guidelines for implementing court decisions <sup>25</sup>.

# **Limited Supervision**

Limited supervision in implementing child custody and maintenance rights presents a significant challenge. Article 9 of Law No. 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection emphasizes that the state must protect children, including supervising the implementation of their rights. However, the existing supervision mechanisms are often inadequate and lack transparency <sup>26</sup>. The Theory of Administrative Law posits that supervision is essential in ensuring that public policies are implemented effectively. In this context, the state needs to establish an independent supervisory institution with the authority to monitor the fulfillment of custody rights and maintenance obligations. Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs No. 21 of 2012 concerning the Implementation of Child Protection also highlights the importance of supervision in safeguarding children's rights. A transparent supervision system could involve community participation, such as establishing a Child Protection Committee at the local level that can provide input and reports on the implementation of children's rights. This aligns with the Theory of Public Participation, which underscores the significance of community involvement in overseeing public policies.

# Children's Psychological Well-being

Children's psychological well-being after divorce is often overlooked, even though the psychological impact of divorce can significantly affect a child's development. Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection emphasizes the necessity of protecting children from all forms of neglect, including the provision of psychological support for children experiencing divorce. The Social Welfare Theory suggests that individual well-being encompasses not only physical needs but also emotional and social aspects. The state must actively provide psychological support for children undergoing divorce through affordable and easily accessible counseling services. Article 52 of the Child Protection Law emphasizes that children have the right to receive physical and mental recovery, and social reintegration. Furthermore, involving schools and educational institutions in implementing psychological support programs is important.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Suadi, "Protection of Women's And Children's Rights Based On System Interconnection: A New Paradigm of Execution of Women and Children's Rights after Divorce."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>Fauzul Hanif Noor Athief and Resti Hedi Juwanti, "Court Decisions on Post-Divorce Children's Livelihood: Islamic Law Analysis on Their Practices in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam Dan Kemanusiaan*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.18326/ijtihad.v20i2.151-173.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>Adi Nur Rohman, Sugeng, and Hesti Widyaningrum, "Instrumentation Of Ex-Officio Rights Of Religious Courts Judge Related To Fulfilling Children And Wife's Rights Due To Divorce," *Jurnal Hukum & Pembangunan* 50, no. 2 (2020): 6–12, https://doi.org/10.21143/jhp.vol50.no2.2581.

The Character Education curriculum in schools can be enhanced with materials related to mental health and emotional support for children affected by divorce. This aligns with the Child-Centered Approach principle, which prioritizes children's needs and well-being.

# **Inadequate Sanctions**

Sanctions against parties who fail to comply with child support obligations represent a significant challenge in law enforcement. Article 149 of the Criminal Procedure Code outlines sanctions for those who do not fulfill their responsibilites based on court decisions. However, these sanctions are often ineffective in practice and fail to provide a deterrent effect. The Deterrence Theory in criminal law indicates that strict sanctions can prevent law violations. The state needs to establish a more effective sanction mechanism, including administrative sanctions such as salary deductions, temporary detention, or fines for those who do not meet their maintenance obligations. Law No. 23 of 2002 also underscores the necessity of consistent law enforcement to protect children's rights. Additionally, involving non-governmental organizations in monitoring the implementation of child maintenance obligations is crucial. Legal Aid Institutions can play a significant role in providing legal assistance to children whose rights have been violated. By engaging various stakeholders, law enforcement can more effectively protect children's interests.

### **CONCLUSION**

Child protection after divorce in Indonesia is a complex issue that requires serious attention from various parties, especially the government. In the legal context, existing regulations, such as Law Number 1 of 1974 concerning Marriage and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, provide a sufficient legal framework to protect children's rights. However, challenges in implementing these regulations remain significant, particularly regarding law enforcement and supervision. The execution of court decisions related to child custody and support is often ineffective, leaving children caught in parental conflict as victims. Therefore, efforts are needed to enhance stricter law enforcement mechanisms, including imposing more effective sanctions on parties not complying with court decisions. Additionally, supervision of implementing child custody and support obligations must be strengthened to ensure transparency and accountability.

Children's psychological well-being should also be a priority in post-divorce protection. The state, together with social and educational institutions, needs to provide adequate psychological support to help children overcome the negative impacts of divorce. With a more holistic approach that encompasses legal, social, and psychological aspects, children's rights are hoped to be protected more effectively. Overall, the role of the state in protecting children after divorce must be improved through consistent law enforcement, better supervision, and sufficient psychological support. By taking these steps, children can grow up in a safer environment that supports their development, even if their parents are no longer together.

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