Post-Divorce Co-Parenting Strategies: An Analysis of Early Childhood Emotion Regulation

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Abstract
The increase in divorce cases in Indonesia from 394,608 (2024) to 438,168 (2025) has the potential to result in young children being raised in two households. This study aims to describe post-divorce co-parenting strategies and their relationship to young children's emotional regulation. This qualitative study employs a single-case study design focusing on a divorced family that consistently practices co-parenting. The subject is a five-year-old child, with the mother and classroom teacher serving as informants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation, and were subsequently interpreted using Feinberg's co-parenting components and the three pathways of family influence. Meanwhile, the observation sheet was developed based on indicators of emotional regulation in children aged five to six years, using the "Elements of Self-Identity" from the Learning Outcomes framework. This study is expected to provide a detailed picture of the co-parenting strategies implemented by both parents after divorce to support their child's emotional regulation.

1. Introduction

Divorce cases in Indonesia rose to 394,608 in 2024 and increased to 438,168 in 2025 (Central Statistics Agency, 2025). This upward trend in divorce places children including young children in a transition to new parenting patterns and different caregiving environments. For children, the change involves more than just a change of residence. The parenting style they experience also changes, as do the division of responsibilities between parents, communication styles, and the process of making joint decisions regarding the child's future. This situation warrants further study because young children remain highly dependent on adults to help them regulate and soothe their emotions.

The ability to recognize, manage, and regulate emotional reactions develops rapidly during early childhood. Eisenberg et al. (2010) demonstrated that this ability is closely linked to how children adapt outside the home environment. Difficulties in regulating emotional reactions fall into two categories: internal factors such as anxiety, sadness, and withdrawal from the environment and external factors such as hitting, rule-breaking, and excessive anger. Both of these factors stem from the same underlying issue: the child's inability to moderate their emotional reactions to the situations they are facing.

Emotional regulation undergoes changes; these changes form the main framework of the research described by Kopp (1982), which outlines the transition of emotional control through five stages, beginning with emotional regulation that is entirely assisted by caregivers during infancy, simple responses to stimuli, compliance with adult instructions, the ability to manage simple desires without direct supervision, to the stage of self-regulation beginning around age three, when children start choosing their own ways to calm themselves depending on the situation. Children aged five to six are in this final stage. The significance of this stage lies in the fact that children are not yet fully capable of managing their emotional control; it is still largely determined by the quality and consistency of their parents' care. Thompson (1994) expands on this description by focusing on the intensity and duration of emotional reactions rather than the mere presence or absence of emotions and emphasizes that the process originates both from within the child and from external influences. A child who cries and then calms down within a reasonable amount of time actually demonstrates good emotional regulation.

The parenting aspect, as explained by Kopp (1982), involves three channels of influence from the family: what children observe regarding how their parents manage their emotions; how parents respond to their children's emotions; and the emotional atmosphere created at home. Sanaky et al. (2026) demonstrate that both the parent-child relationship and the way parents respond to their children's emotions contribute to children's

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ability to regulate their emotions. Both references explain that emotional regulation does not occur spontaneously but is also influenced by recurring parenting patterns within the family.

In studies on divorce, the focus of research has shifted from the question of whether divorce is harmful to children to the question of under what circumstances such harm occurs. Vowels et al. (2023) explain that children who are raised alternately in two homes have emotional well-being comparable to that of children from intact families, whereas children raised by only one parent generally experience difficulties with emotional regulation. Thus, the distinguishing factor is not the divorce itself but rather whether the child continues to receive the care and support from both parents. Kleinschlomer and Krapf (2023), analyzing data from 2,057 children, found two key conditions: first, children with highly conflicted parents exhibit more emotional problems; however, children who are accustomed to openly sharing their feelings experience relatively fewer emotional difficulties. In fact, as explained by Van Dijk et al. (2020) through a meta-analysis of 115 studies, conflict between parents does not directly harm children but rather reduces the quality of care they receive. Twenty recent studies by Sajodi (2026) indicate that parenting styles can also lead to difficulties in emotional regulation. Therefore, divorce is not something that automatically has a negative impact on children; rather, the quality and consistency of caregiving must be prioritized following the separation.

This collaborative parenting is known as "co-parenting." Feinberg (2003) identifies four components of co-parenting. The first component is an agreement on parenting principles that is, the extent to which both parents agree on the rules established in both homes. The second component is the division of roles that is, how daily parenting tasks are coordinated across both homes. The third component is joint family management, which refers to both parties' ability to manage communication, schedules, and joint decisions without involving the child in disputes. The fourth component is mutual support between the parents. It is this fourth component that serves as the framework for this article. In divorced families, co-parenting does not mean that both parents must reunite as a couple; rather, both parties continue to fulfill their parenting roles separately to ensure that the child does not lose a parental figure.

Research linking the quality of co-parenting to children's ability to manage emotions has largely been conducted in intact families; for example, the longitudinal case study by Pan et al. (2025) explains that the quality of co-parenting is related to emotional regulation, but it was examined in intact families. This study focuses on parents' assessments of their relationships, rather than the actual parenting practices they engage in.

Research in Indonesia has already shown that co-parenting has a positive impact on children's emotions (Cahyani, 2023; Fadila et al., 2025; Gymnastia et al., 2025), but it generally stops at examining general parenting styles. No study has yet examined a specific, observable activity and linked it to Feinberg's components of co-parenting. This study aims to answer two questions. First, what co-parenting strategies do both parents employ after divorce, and which of the four components of Feinberg's model do they utilize? Second, what is the profile of children's emotional regulation as perceived by their parents and classroom teachers?.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using a single-case study design, which serves as a means of in-depth analysis to understand the broader issues underlying the phenomenon. This approach and design were chosen based on three considerations: first, the purpose of this study is to explain how a parenting strategy is implemented and what is communicated to the child, rather than to measure the extent of its impact. Second, the co-parenting strategy can only be understood as a contextual backdrop. Third, the case studied was selected because co-parenting was already in place; thus, this study seeks to identify what makes a parenting pattern successful, rather than examining the negative effects of divorce.

2.2. Participants

The research subject is a five-year-old girl whose parents are divorced and live apart; she is referred to as M in this article. The subject attends a kindergarten in Malang and lives with her mother, while spending regular time with her father. The informants consist of the subject's mother (code IB), who is both a co-parent and the primary caregiver at home. The second informant is the subject's father (code AY), who is a co-parent in a joint parenting arrangement. The third informant is the subject's classroom teacher (code G), who was selected because she observes the subject's behavior outside the home environment. In a subsequent phase, data collection will be expanded to include peers in the class (code T) to support this study.

Four selection criteria were applied. The subject's parents are officially divorced and live separately. Both parents consistently practice co-parenting. The subject is between five and six years old and enrolled in an early childhood education (PAUD) program. Both parents are willing to serve as informants and have given their

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consent. There are two exclusion criteria: a history of domestic violence, child abuse, or child neglect; and the presence of developmental delays in the subject. Muhsi et al. (2026) explain that co-parenting cannot be applied in such situations.

2.3. Target Population and Participant Recruitment Methods

The population for this study consists of families in Malang City whose parents are divorced and who have children aged five to six years old enrolled in early childhood education (PAUD) institutions. From this population, participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on specific criteria; that is, potential participants were chosen based on the criteria outlined above.

A purposive sampling technique was chosen because the objective of this study is not statistical representativeness, but rather the richness of information. Random sampling would not be appropriate, as the number of families who continue to practice consistent co-parenting after divorce is small. The selected cases also represent positive outliers—that is, situations that fare better than the general picture found in the study and such cases are useful for identifying what makes this parenting pattern successful..

2.4. Data Collection Instruments

The primary instrument was a semi-structured interview guide developed in four versions: for mothers, fathers, classroom teachers, and peers. The semi-structured format was chosen because it provides a framework of questions that allows for open-ended exploration of unexpected answers. DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) note that the semi-structured format can strike a balance between maintaining a close rapport with informants and gaining insight into an individual's experiences. All items were derived from Feinberg's four components of co-parenting.

An example item in the guide for mothers is "How was M's care agreed upon between the mother and father after the divorce?" which represents the component of agreement on parenting principles, as well as "What rules does the mother enforce at home, and are those rules the same as the ones the father enforces?" which represents the same component of the agreement on parenting principles. An example item in the guidelines for teachers is "How does M behave when his or her wishes are not met in class, for example, when having to wait for his or her turn?" An example item in the guidelines for peers is "When M is angry or sad, what does he or she usually do?"

All items in the interview guidelines are presented in Tables 1 through 3. The guidelines for mothers and fathers are combined into a single table because both address the co-parenting component identified byFeinberg (2003) represented by the corresponding items in the guidelines for parents as well as the set of emotional regulation indicators to be explored in the guidelines for classroom teachers and peers. These columns ensure that each question can be traced back to the framework used. The subjects' names in the questions are indicated by the initial "M" in accordance with anonymity guidelines.

Table 1. Interview Guidelines for Parents

No	Informant	Question items	Feinberg's Components of Co-Parenting
1.	Mother	How is custody arranged between the mother and father after a divorce for example, regarding living arrangements, visitation, and decision-making?	Agreement in Principle on Parenting
2.		What rules do you enforce at home, and are those rules the same as the ones your husband enforces at his home?	Agreement in Principle on Parenting
3.		How can Mom and Dad agree on how to discipline M when they have differing opinions?	Agreement in Principle on Parenting
4.		How are M's daily caregiving responsibilities such as taking M to school, helping with homework, and meeting M's daily needs divided between the mother and father?	Division of Roles
5.		How do Mom and Dad maintain open communication with M, and do they avoid discussing personal conflicts in front of M?	Joint family management
6.		How is the "family time in nature" (at the beach) routine planned and carried out, and why is this routine still maintained?	Joint family management
7.		How does the mother react when M talks about his father, and conversely, how does the father react when M talks about his mother?	Support for couples

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8.		How does M express his emotions on a daily basis at his mother's house for example, when he's happy, sad, angry, or afraid?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
9.		Is M already able to identify the emotions they're feeling and their causes? Can you give an example of such a situation?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
10.		How can M calm down when he's angry or upset, and to what extent should his mother help him calm down?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
11.		Did you notice any differences in M's emotional behavior after she came home from her father's house or after her trip to the beach?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
12.		How does M react when she faces a difficult task or experiences something she fails to do? Does she try again, or does she give up right away?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
13.		What factors do you think have been most supportive of your collaborative parenting with M's father?	Factors that support co-parenting
14.		What challenges have you had in working with M's father to co-parent?	Factors Hindering Co-Parenting
15.		How can the mother overcome these obstacles so that their co-parenting arrangement can continue and M isn't affected?	Factors Hindering Co-Parenting
16.	Father	How is the M parenting agreement carried out from the father's perspective after the divorce?	Agreement in Principle on Parenting
17.		What rules do you implement when M is at your house, and are those rules consistent with the rules at his mother's house?	Agreement in Principle on Parenting
18.		How is your father involved in M's day-to-day care, aside from providing for his material needs?	Division of Roles
19.		What activities did you usually do with M during the time you spent together?	Division of Roles
20.		How do Mr. and Mrs. M communicate about M's needs and development?	Joint family management
21.		How do you handle it when you and M's mother have a difference of opinion about parenting, especially when M is nearby?	Joint family management
22.		What are your thoughts on the routine of going to the beach together, and what keeps that routine going?	Joint family management
23.		How does M express her emotions when she is with her father for example, when her wishes aren't fulfilled or when they have to part ways again?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
24.		Has M been able to express his feelings to you in words? Can you give an example?	Emotional regulation: children managing their emotions
25.		How do you respond when M is angry, crying, or disappointed?	Family Dynamics: How Parents Respond to Their Children's Emotions
26.		How does M react when faced with a difficult task while with his father does he try again, or does he give up easily?	Emotional Regulation in Children: Self-Motivation
27.		What factors do you think have been most supportive of your collaborative parenting with Ms. M?	Factors that support co-parenting
28.		What challenges have you encountered in practicing co-parenting, and how have you dealt with them?	Factors Hindering Co-Parenting

Table 2. Interview guidelines for classroom teachers, including indicators of emotional regulation.

No	Question items	Sub-objective (Emotional Regulation Indicator)
1.	Based on your daily observations, how does M express his emotions in class both when he's happy and when he's facing something unpleasant?	Recognizing Emotions
2.	Is M already able to name the emotions he's feeling and explain their causes to his teacher or friends?	Recognizing Emotions
3.	How does M behave when his wishes aren't fulfilled in class for example, when he has to wait his turn or loses a game?	Recognizing Emotions
4.	How does M calm down after experiencing negative emotions, and how long does it usually take for him to calm down?	Recognizing Emotions
5.	How persistent is M in completing tasks or activities in class for example, when facing difficulties or failing on the first try?	Self-motivation
6.	How does M respond to his friends' emotions, for example, when a friend is crying or having an argument?	Recognizing Other People's Emotions

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7.	How does M interact with classmates for example, when inviting them to play, sharing toys, or resolving conflicts?	Building social relationships
8.	How well is M able to adapt to new activities or situations at school?	Building social relationships
9.	Do you notice any changes in M's emotional state on certain days, for example, after spending the weekend with both of her parents?	Managing emotions (related to routines)
10.	How does the school communicate with M's parents regarding their child's development, and are both parents equally involved?	Joint family management
11.	In your opinion, what factor has been most instrumental in fostering M's emotional intelligence while at school?	Factors that support co-parenting
12.	Have you observed any obstacles or challenges in M's emotional regulation development at school?	Factors Hindering Co-Parenting
13.	Based on your observations, does M's social-emotional development align with that of other children his or her age?	Social-emotional development milestones

Table 3. Interview guidelines for peers.

No	Questions item	Emotional Regulation Indicators
1.	When you're playing with M, what do you usually play?	Building Social Relationships
2.	When M is happy, what does he usually do?	Recognizing Emotions
3.	When M is angry or sad, what does he usually do?	Managing Emotions
4.	Has M ever hit or yelled when a friend took his toy? What does he usually do?	Managing Emotions
5	If a friend is crying, does M help or comfort him?	Recognizing Other People's Emotions
6.	Is M willing to take turns and wait his turn when playing together?	Self-motivation and social-emotional development milestones

The interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim and then coded by theme. All items in the interview instrument were evaluated by experts using a validation sheet on a scale of one to four, with each item marked to indicate the corresponding Feinberg component so that evaluators could verify the alignment between the item and its component. The validation sheet was completed by a single expert who was familiar with the subject matter and language; no corrections were made because the items were already consistent with the indicators and components used. Qualitative research cannot be measured through statistics but is instead explored in depth through field notes that is, all recordings, transcripts, and coding notes are preserved so that the process of drawing conclusions can be traced.

2.5. Observation and Documentation Tools

In addition to the interview guidelines, this study utilized two other tools. The data collection technique followed the recommendations of Ardiansyah et al. (2023), who suggested that interviews, observations, and documentation should be used together to ensure greater accuracy, as the three methods complement one another. The first tool was an observation sheet designed as an instrument to measure emotional regulation indicators in children aged five to six years. Each indicator was recorded using a "yes" or "no" response, accompanied by a field notes column. The location column was filled in with the codes "RI" for the mother's home, "RA" for the father's home, and "S" for school, so that behavioral outcomes could be compared across settings. The indicators were derived using three theoretical frameworks: Kopp's (1982) developmental stages, Thompson's (1994) definition of emotional regulation, and Gross's (1998) stages of emotional regulation, aligned with the "Self-Identity" learning objective from the "Foundation Phase" Learning Outcomes. In this way, each indicator has a theoretical basis and is aligned with the curriculum framework currently in effect in Indonesia.

The indicators on the data collection sheet were organized according to the framework for emotional regulation indicators for children aged five to six years used in this study. This framework comprises five interrelated behavioral groups: recognizing one's own emotions, managing emotions, self-motivation, recognizing others' emotions, and building social relationships. Each group is grounded in a theoretical basis and aligned with the learning objective sequence for the "Self-Identity" element in the Foundation Phase learning outcomes (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, 2025). The "recognizing one's own emotions" cluster draws on Gross (1998), who positions emotional awareness as the starting point of the entire regulation process, as well as on Kopp (1982), who states that such awareness only matures at the stage of self-regulation. The "Managing Emotions" group draws on Thompson (1994), who argues that what is regulated is the intensity and duration of emotions, not their presence, and on the response modulation stage described by Gross (1998), which distinguishes between managing and suppressing emotions. The following three groups draw on Bandura (1977) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2020), which explain how and where these abilities are formed.

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These five groups were broken down into nineteen behavioral indicators. The "recognizing one's own emotions" group includes four indicators: the child identifies the emotion they are currently feeling; displays facial expressions or body language consistent with that emotion; is aware of changes in their physical state when an emotion arises; and identifies the cause of the emotion they are feeling. The "managing emotions" group contains four indicators: the child expresses anger or disappointment through words rather than by hitting or yelling; calms down within a reasonable amount of time after a negative emotion arises; shifts to another activity when their desires are not met; and adjusts how they express their emotions to the situation and setting they are in. The "Self-Motivation" group includes four indicators: the child tries again after a failure; completes a chosen activity until it is finished; waits for their turn or postpones their desires without crying excessively; and has the courage to volunteer to perform or try new things.

The "Recognizing Others' Emotions" category includes three indicators: the child comforts a friend or sibling who is crying; asks how someone else is doing when they appear sad or in pain; and understands that others' feelings may differ from their own. The "Building Social Relationships" group includes four indicators: the child inviting friends to play or accepting invitations to play, sharing toys and taking turns using them, resolving conflicts by talking or asking an adult for help instead of hitting, and adapting when with new people or in a new environment. All indicators are intentionally formulated as behaviors that children exhibit on their own initiative, rather than as compliance with adult instructions, because according to Kopp (1982), it is precisely these independent choices that mark the stage of self-regulation in children aged five to six years.

The second tool is a documentation guide that includes a list of components along with the objectives of their assessment. The documents sought include report cards and child development records to determine social-emotional achievements as assessed by the institution; classroom rules to understand the routines that shape children's behavior at school; and school activity programs involving parents to determine the nature of both parents' involvement. For each document, its presence or absence is recorded, along with a note indicating its source.

2.6. Research Procedures and Stages

This study was conducted in four phases. The first phase consisted of preparation, which included developing the four interview guides and observation sheets, having experts assess the content validity, revising the items, obtaining institutional approval, and requesting written consent from the subjects' parents after explaining the study's objectives, procedures, and the right to withdraw.

Informed consent is a person's willingness to voluntarily participate in a study, procedure, or program after receiving clear and complete information. Two elements are inherent in this definition: voluntariness and adequacy of information. Consent given under pressure, or consent given without the prospective participant knowing what will happen, does not qualify as informed consent. For this study, consent was sought before data collection began. Since the subject was only five years old and not yet legally competent, written consent was provided by both parents as legal guardians. The classroom teacher provided her own consent as an informant, while research permission was requested from the administration of the institution where the subject attended school.

The information provided before consent was granted included the research objectives, the parties conducting the study, the nature of the requested participation, the estimated duration of the interview, the use of recording devices, data storage methods, the anonymization of the subject's and institution's identities, plans to use the data for the preparation of a scientific article, as well as the right to refuse to answer specific questions and the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The consent form was read aloud together, with an opportunity for questions, and then signed in duplicate, one copy for the participant and one for the researcher. For the subjects, consent was obtained verbally using simple language appropriate for their age. The researcher also monitored for signs of discomfort throughout the activity and halted the activity if a subject expressed objection, even if their parent had already given consent. The second phase consisted of initial data collection in July 2026, specifically an interview with the subject's mother on July 9, 2026, and an interview with the classroom teacher on July 15, 2026. This article reports the results of that second phase. The third phase, which has not yet been conducted, will include interviews with the subject's father and peers, observations in three caregiving settings, and a review of documents. The fourth phase consists of a comprehensive analysis, follow-up with informants, and the preparation of a report.

2.7. Data Analysis Strategies

The analysis utilized the interactive model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), which consists of four iterative activities: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing and testing conclusions. Rijali (2019) emphasizes that these four activities are not carried out in a single pass but are repeated throughout the research, so that conclusions drawn earlier are re-examined each time new data are received. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and each unit of meaning was coded with a sequence comprising data

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type, informant code, serial number, and date. The code W.IB01/090726, for example, denotes an interview with the subject's mother, the first in the sequence, conducted on July 9, 2026.

Coding was conducted deductively using Feinberg's (2003) four components of co-parenting as an initial framework; that is, each unit of meaning was assigned to one of the following components: agreement on parenting principles, division of roles, joint family management, or support and attitudes toward the partner—while remaining open to new themes emerging from the data. Each data unit regarding the subject's behavior was also annotated to indicate whether the behavior occurred on the subject's own initiative or with assistance from an adult, following the concept of "transfer of control" described by Kopp (1982). The coding results were then presented in a matrix that cross-referenced these four components with the three family influence pathways identified by Morris et al. (2007) and with the five groups of emotional regulation indicators. The analysis was conducted manually without qualitative analysis software, given that the amount of data at this stage was still limited.

Data validity was ensured through four methods. Source triangulation at this stage involved comparing statements from the mother and the classroom teacher who observed the subject outside the home; this will be supplemented by the father's statements in a subsequent stage. Methodological triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documents. Informants were cross-checked by returning summaries of the interview results to them for correction. Traceability of records was maintained by storing all recordings, transcripts, and coding notes so that the process of drawing conclusions could be verified..

2.8. Data Confidentiality and Personal Data Protection

A child's face and visual identity are classified as specific types of personal data under Law No. 27 of 2022 on the Protection of Personal Data. Children's data and biometric data—including faces in photographs—are classified as specific personal data, and Articles 20 and 39 of the law require that their processing obtain valid written consent from the child's parents or guardians. Unauthorized publication may result in penalties. Therefore, all visual documentation in this study was used only after written consent was obtained, and the faces of children and other individuals from whom consent was not sought were obscured prior to publication. To protect the privacy of the subjects, all data published in this research report has been anonymized using codes or initials. The true identities of the subjects and their families are not disclosed to the public in accordance with confidentiality agreements. The name of the institution where the subjects attend school is also not mentioned.

The original, unanonymized data is securely stored by the researcher to meet ethical standards and for scientific verification purposes. This data may only be provided on a limited basis upon request by authorized parties, such as an ethics committee or an academic advisor, for validation purposes. This provision follows the principle of confidentiality in National Research and Innovation Agency Regulation No. 6 of 2022 on the Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct for Research, which requires researchers to protect the identities of research subjects while retaining raw data along with a list of its encryption keys. Such retention is necessary for scientific scrutiny in cases where the examination board, advisor, or ethics committee needs to verify the possibility of data falsification or alteration. The original data is not made public but is only accessible to authorized internal parties tasked with verifying the validity of the research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Co-Parenting Strategies Practiced by the Subject's Family

The subject's parents are divorced and live apart, but they continue to share custody. The most tangible form of this cooperation is a shared routine that they have maintained every weekend for two years. The subject's mother explained it as follows.

"…We don't hide the fact that we're divorced, but as a mother, I don't want M to feel like she's missing a parental figure. Our beach outings might be our way of showing her that family is a safe and comfortable place for her. While we're there, we don't talk about problems—we just play and eat together. We've consistently done this for the past two years, and the impact is evident in M's emotional stability and sense of calm. Perhaps this is also part of my commitment to M's father: while conflicts may arise, our beach outings must never be skipped..." (W.IB01/090726)

This description includes four elements that can be traced back to the components of co-parenting. First, there are rules that are agreed upon and jointly upheld namely, not discussing issues between the parents while the activity is taking place. Second, there is a division of roles in preparing for and accompanying the child during

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the activity. Third, there is management of the relationship between the parents, evident in their ability to be in the same place without bringing personal issues into the situation. Fourth, there is a mutual commitment to respect each other in front of the child, evident in the decision not to hide the fact of the divorce but also not to make it a source of conflict in the child's presence.

This agreement is a commitment expressed openly and in a very simple form: conflicts may exist, but the schedule for shared time with the child must not be disrupted. This arrangement does not require the parents to reconcile first. Two years of consistency demonstrate that this simple arrangement can indeed be put into practice.

3.1.2. Subjects' Emotional Regulation as Observed by Classroom Teachers

The mother's account was compared with the observations of the classroom teacher, who observed the subject outside the home environment. The classroom teacher reported the following:

"...She adapts quickly to new environments and is full of enthusiasm. That's what I like about M she's already confident. Usually, kids do like to sing, but during the first few sessions, many of them were still shy. M, on the other hand, when asked, "Who wants to come to the front?" immediately volunteered. When asked, "Who wants to lead the singing?" she said she would, and when asked, "Who wants to lead the prayer?" she immediately volunteered. In short, she's very enthusiastic....." (W.G01/150726)

Three things can be inferred from this description. First, the subject quickly adapts to new environments, which requires the ability to manage anxiety in unfamiliar situations. Second, the subject is bold enough to step forward when most of his friends are still shy, which requires the ability to manage shyness. Third, the subject took the initiative to lead activities, which required a willingness to handle the attention of a crowd. All three are behaviors commonly used as indicators of emotional regulation in children aged five to six years. The teacher's observations describe the child's behavior in enjoyable situations, such as singing and leading classroom activities. The child's ability to calm down after feeling disappointed or angry is not yet reflected in the data for this stage, and observations in such situations will only be conducted in the next stage. Thus, the consistency between the mother's and the teacher's observations at this stage is preliminary and incomplete.

3.1.3. Mapping Co-Parenting Components and Their Influence Pathways

The accounts provided by the two informants were then compared with the framework used in this study. Feinberg (2003) divides co-parenting into four components, while Morris et al. (2007) explain that the family's influence on children's emotional regulation occurs through three pathways. These three pathways are what children observe from their parents, how parents respond to children's emotions, and the emotional atmosphere at home. The mapping between the two is presented in Table 1

Table 4. Mapping the components of co-parenting mechanisms in relation to early childhood emotion regulation and family pathways

Components (Feinberg, 2003)	Key Components	How it works in relation to children's emotional regulation	The Family Track (Morris et al., 2007)
Agreement on parenting principles	Shared values, behavioral expectations, and approaches to disciplining children.	It creates a predictable environment for children; having the same rules in both homes means children don't have to readjust every time they switch homes.	How parents respond to emotions; the emotional atmosphere at home
Division of roles	A complementary and consistent division of daily parenting responsibilities.	It prevents parents from becoming overwhelmed; an uneven burden makes it harder for parents to respond patiently to their children's emotions.	How parents respond to emotions.
Joint family management	Establishing communication, setting relationship boundaries, and managing conflicts in front of the children.	It determines how often children witness conflict and how great the risk is that they'll be caught in the middle as mediators.	The emotional atmosphere created by parents.
support between partners	Mutual respect between partners.	Demonstrating how to resolve disagreements while also maintaining and fostering a sense of security in children.	What children observe about the emotional atmosphere at home.

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The mapping shows that the four components do not function in the same way. Agreed-upon rules work by making situations predictable for the child. Division of roles works by preventing parents from becoming exhausted so they can continue to respond to the child's emotions. Shared family management works through how often the child witnesses conflict. Supportive or dismissive attitudes toward a partner work through the examples children see as well as through their sense of security. Although the methods differ, all four ultimately converge on the same three pathways. These pathways are illustrated in Figure 1..

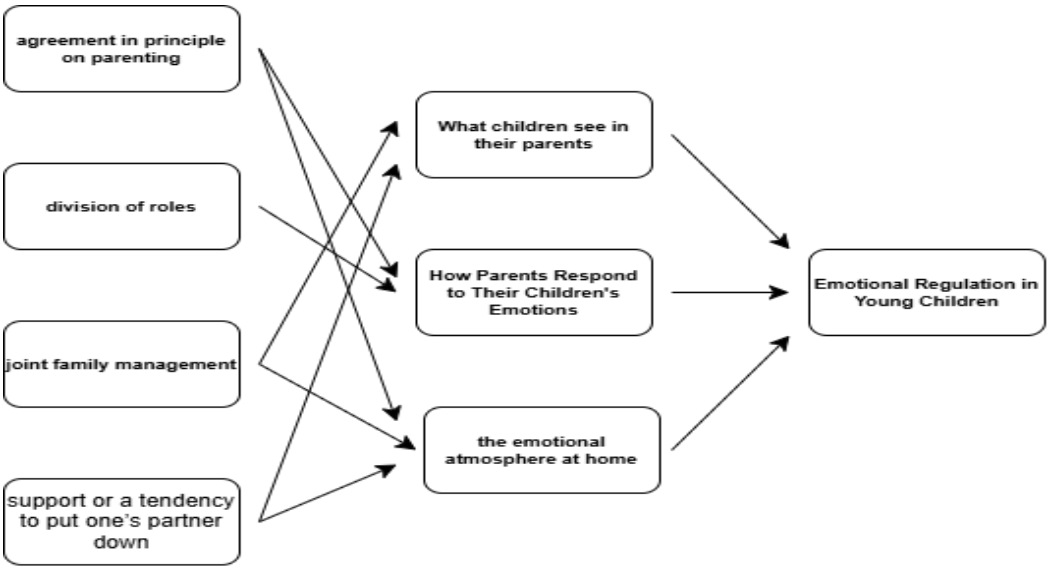


Figure 1. The influence of co-parenting components on emotional regulation in young children

The shared routines that form the core of this strategy are captured in the subjects' family photographs. The faces of the subjects and other individuals appearing in the photos have been blurred, and location tags have been removed, in accordance with the provisions for the protection of children's personal data outlined in the Methods section.

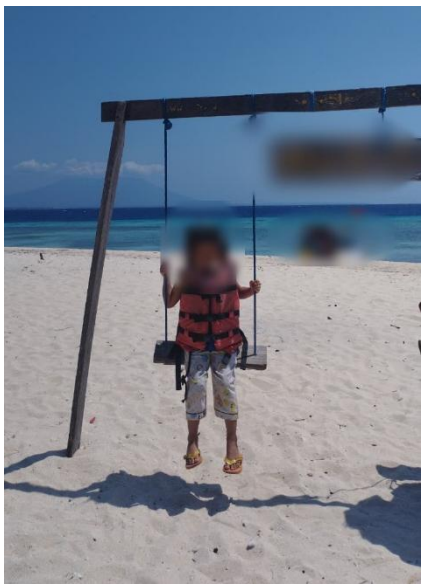


Figure 2. The subject's family's daily routine (faces obscured)

3.2. Discussion

The research findings indicate that the success of post-divorce co-parenting strategies does not depend on the absolute absence of conflict, but rather on the ability to manage the boundaries of conflict in the presence of children. The commitment of the study participants to follow a consistent weekend routine demonstrates that all four components of Feinberg's co-parenting model can be applied in practice. This pattern aligns with a typology of cooperative parenting that focuses on the child's needs and emotional support, rather than parallel parenting that operates independently or conflictual parenting that triggers dysregulation (Dumitriu et al., 2022; Dumitriu et al., 2023). The subject mother's statement that conflict is permissible but the shared schedule

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must not be disrupted reinforces the view of Van Dijk et al. (2020) that conflict does not directly harm children as long as it does not diminish the quality of parenting. This finding is supported by Yusuf et al. (2026), who demonstrated that the emotional climate of post-separation parenting is a stronger determinant of self-regulation outcomes than the structural transition of divorce itself.

Observations at school indicate that the subject exhibits adaptive emotional regulation, evidenced by the courage to lead activities and rapid adaptation to new environments. Based on the framework proposed by Morris et al. (2007), this stability is formed through the child's observation of a controlled family emotional atmosphere. The subject observed both parents interacting in sync without conflict when they were with him. This high level of synchronization between parents and their shared parenting alliance functioned as a form of triadic co-parenting that protected the child from negative effects and behavioral reactivity (Sirotkin et al., 2025; Kerr et al., 2021). Therefore, the subject's ability to take the initiative in the classroom directly reflects prosocial coping capacities developed through consistent routines (Acar & Yalcintas, 2025).

Furthermore, a father's presence in weekend routines indicates paternal emotional involvement, which plays a unique role in stabilizing young children's emotional coping (Yusuf et al., 2026; Kerr et al., 2021). Young children essentially acquire self-regulation skills through external scaffolding from their caregivers (Northrup et al., 2025). The decision by both parents not to hide their divorced status but also not to make it a source of conflict in front of the child reflects adequate parental self-regulation capacity. This capacity effectively protects children from developmental stress, in contrast to disparaging behavior or unsupportive responses, which have been empirically shown to exacerbate regulation deficits (Zitzman et al., 2023; Laifer et al., 2025).

Nevertheless, an objective evaluation at this stage also identified limitations in the observations: specifically, the teachers' observations only covered emotional regulation in positive situations or when children responded to pleasant stimuli. The subjects' ability to manage negative emotions such as anger or disappointment when their desires are delayed—which is an essential indicator in the stages of emotional regulation (Thompson, 1944; Gross, 1998)—has not yet been fully represented in these preliminary findings. A comprehensive assessment of the efficacy of this co-parenting approach requires further analysis of the underlying issues that present stressors for the child.

3.3. Implications

Theoretically, these findings strengthen the evidence that Feinberg's co-parenting model can be identified and implemented effectively through consistent, specific routines. The cooperative emotional involvement of both parents, without involving the child in disputes, has been shown to play a unique role in stabilizing emotional regulation in young children (Yusuf et al., 2026; Dumitriu et al., 2022). In practice, an approach that maintains at least one shared routine with the child can be recommended as an objective guideline for divorced parents. This approach safeguards the child's emotional well-being in a measurable way without requiring both parties to resolve all their personal conflicts. These findings are also relevant as a basis for psychological interventions or family education, given that parenting programs focused on establishing predictable routines have been shown to effectively reduce children's regulatory dysfunction following divorce (Hamidi et al., 2024; Suciyanti et al., 2026).

3.4. Limitations

This research is a single-case study with newly collected data that has only reached the initial reporting stage. Final conclusions regarding emotional regulation cannot yet be fully drawn because behavioral data on how the child responds to stressors or negative emotions has not been directly observed. Additionally, data triangulation currently relies solely on the mother and teacher, while interviews with the subject's father and observations of peers have not yet been conducted. These limitations are relevant to the principle that emotional regulation should ideally be examined comprehensively within a triadic interaction system (father, mother, and child) (Sirotkin et al., 2025). The validity and precision of these findings will depend on the completeness of the data in subsequent stages.

4. Conclusion

This study describes a co-parenting strategy in a family where the parents are divorced but continue to share parenting responsibilities. The strategy takes the form of a shared routine that was maintained for two years, with one agreed-upon rule: not to discuss issues involving either parent while the activity is taking place. Their commitment was openly stated in a simple formulation: conflicts may arise, but the shared time schedule must not be disrupted. This formulation did not require the parents to reconcile first; rather, it required one thing that could be carried out even if their relationship had not yet been restored. From the child's perspective, the classroom teacher reported that the subject quickly adapted to the new environment, appeared confident when speaking in front of the class, and took the initiative to lead activities. These three behaviors are commonly used as indicators of emotional regulation in children aged five to six years. The consistency between the mother's account and the teacher's account is preliminary, as the subject's behavior in disappointing situations has not yet been observed.

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The mapping in this study shows that the four components of co-parenting operate in different ways but converge on the same three pathways. These three pathways are what the child observes from their parents, how parents respond to their emotions, and the emotional atmosphere at home. In this case, the rule against discussing problems in front of the child touches on two components simultaneously: the agreement on parenting principles and shared family management. This rule then operates through the "what the child observes" pathway and the "emotional atmosphere" pathway. Three further steps are needed. First, supplement the data with statements from the subject's father and peers, as well as with observations across three parenting settings. Second, observe the subject in disappointing situations so that emotional regulation can be distinguished from emotional suppression. Third, test the mapping in Table 1 on a larger Indonesian sample, including families where joint parenting is not practiced..

Author Contributions

All authors have contributed similarly to the preparation of this article. Diva Ratna Damayanti: Conceptualization, Research, Data Processing, Formal Analysis, First-Draft Writing. Pramono: Supervision. Alif Sukma Muclisin: Advisor and reviewer. All author have read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

This study was carried out with authorization from the institution where the subjects are enrolled, as well as written agreement from both parents of the subjects following an explanation of the study's goals, methods, and withdrawal rights. All recordings and transcripts are kept in a safe area that is only accessible by the researcher; names are substituted with initials and informant codes; and the identity of the subjects, informants, and institutions are anonymised.Ethics and Consent Declarations

Data Availability

The data collected and analyzed in this study comes from a survey designed based on interesting questions, while protecting a subject identity and information.

Declaration on AI Use

The author of this article used deepL and grammar to improve the quality of the writing and verify the spelling. so that the article can be evaluated well after two rounds of review and analysis.

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