



Family Structure and Child Labor in Indonesia: Evidence from Widowed and Divorced Single-Mother Households

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This study examines whether child labor differs between households headed by divorced mothers and those headed by widowed mothers in Indonesia. Using IFLS wave 5 data, the analysis estimates associations using an instrumental variables approach. The estimates indicate a higher likelihood of child labor among children living with divorced single mothers than among children living with widowed single mothers. The difference is larger for girls in divorced mother households relative to girls in widowed mother households. These findings support stronger enforcement of child support after divorce to reduce financial pressure on single mothers. Targeted social and psychosocial support may be especially relevant for girls in divorced mother households. Skills training and employment support for divorced single mothers may also reduce the need for children to contribute labor during schooling years.

INTRODUCTION

Studies frequently link child labor to household resource constraints and poverty. In practice, these constraints can normalize children's work, including low paid or unpaid tasks that may involve unsafe conditions. This creates a trade-off, as children's work can supplement household resources while increasing exposure to exploitation and occupational risk.

Many developing economies face recurring income shocks and limited insurance options (Javier Eduardo, 2006). Risk exposure remains high because households have limited ways to diversify income sources. Where formal insurance is weak, households often rely on savings, private transfers, or credit to smooth consumption during shocks. A frequent coping response is to reallocate household labor, including shifting children's time from schooling to work. This coping response can reduce school participation and increase child labor over time. Children's work, whether formal or informal, can harm health, well-being, and social development (Ikawati, 2015). It also reduce long-run human capital accumulation (Brown et al., 2002).

National laws and international organizations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), have taken steps to address child labor. These efforts aim to reduce and ultimately eliminate child labor by supporting government policy and delivering programs, including vocational training for children who have left school (Zafar et al., 2016). In Indonesia, the legal framework governing child labor is established under Regulation No. 13 enacted in 2003 aligning with the country's roadmap to eliminate child labor by 2022 (Ketenagakerjaan, 2022). In line with the national roadmap, the government's initial goal is to achieve a Child Labor-Free Indonesia by 2022. To accelerate progress toward this goal, the government, together with stakeholders, has even launched the Follow-Up Roadmap for a Child Labor-Free Indonesia as a guide for accelerating progress and addressing the issue.

According to an ILO study, worldwide, child labor affects over 165 million children aged 5 to 14 (ILO, 2008). Solely within the Asia-Pacific region alone, there were 77.7 million child laborers, with 38 million involved in hazardous work, including child exploitation in pornography production, drug manufacturing, and dangerous working conditions (ILO, 2013). Meanwhile, data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show an increase in the number of child laborers aged 15–17, from 1.01 million in 2023 to 1.27 million in 2024. The majority of these child laborers are in rural areas, accounting for 2.82%, compared to 1.72% in urban areas. Data from the 2023 National Labor Force Survey (SAKERNAS) also indicate that 25.22% of child laborers did not continue their education and worked in the agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sectors. These sectors often involve physically demanding work and pose high risks to children. The rise in the number of child laborers did not occur without cause. For families facing economic hardship, particularly in rural areas, there is a dilemma between keeping their children in school or involving them in work to help meet daily needs. Unintentionally, this choice can put children at risk of losing their basic rights, including the right to education, protection, and proper growth and development (BPS, 2023).

Figure 1 shows that the trend in child labor in Indonesia from 2007 to 2014 fluctuated but generally declined gradually. This indicates an improvement in socioeconomic conditions and the effectiveness of various government policies in reducing child labor, though structural challenges remain to be addressed to ensure a sustained decline. This downward trend indicates that various government initiatives to support low-income families and encourage children to return to school have had a fairly positive impact. In addition, the decline in the number of child labourers also reflects a strengthening of national and global commitments to reduce children's involvement in work activities that can hinder their rights to education, protection, and optimal growth and development.

Nevertheless, systemic shortcomings in the collecting of data on child labor may also be responsible for the observed decrease, which results in underreporting in numerous nations. (Gibbons et al., 2014). Therefore, the actual

figure of children in the workforce is likely higher than reported due to data collection constraints and the exclusion of certain child laborers from official records (Utama & Handayani, 2020).

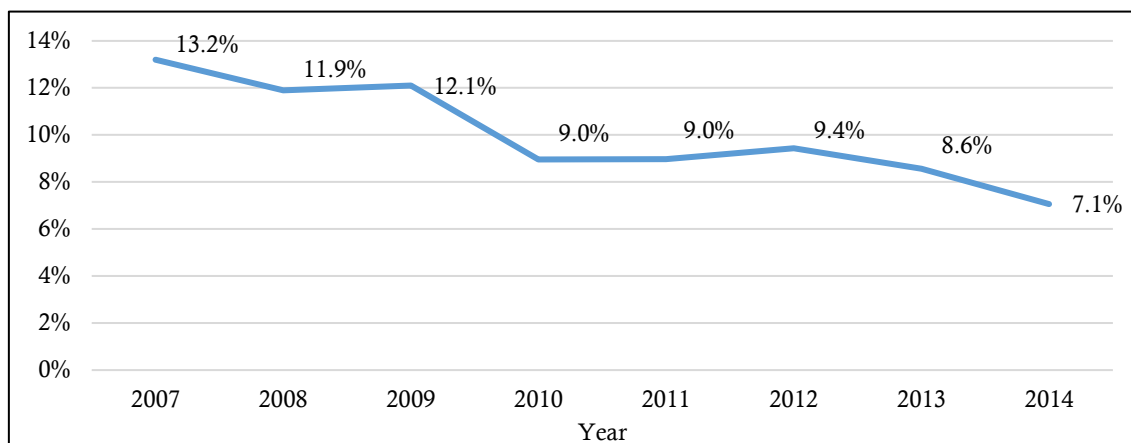


Figure 1. Child labor participation rate in Indonesia for ages 10 to 17 Years 2007-2014

Source: National Labor Force Survey, 2014

Child labor often requires household support, with parents crucial in ensuring children's psychological and economic education. However, household structures can change, sometimes resulting in single-parent households where children face challenges in receiving optimal educational support.

Households generally fall into three main types. The most common in Southeast Asia is the nuclear household, consisting of parents and children. The extended household includes a nuclear family along with other relatives. The single-parent household consists of either a father or mother raising children alone (Yeung, 2022). Nuclear households are often referred to as "intact families," while single-parent households are considered "non-intact families." There are several reasons why parents become single parents. Soomar (2019) identifies teenage pregnancy, unwanted pregnancies, short-lived forced marriages leading to divorce, and spousal death as common causes, with divorce being the most prevalent. In Indonesia, divorce cases have been rising steadily.

Household structures vary based on parental marital status (Moehling, 2004). Intact households consist of parents and children living together, while single-parent households arise

from separation through divorce or spousal passing. Parents are essential, particularly for children who cannot make independent decisions (Purwanti, 2014). Mothers are central to child development, serving as the primary source of education and daily care (Indrasari & Affiani, 2018), from childbirth and nutrition management to financial support (United Nations, 2009).

Divorce can have a more severe impact on household stability compared to spousal death or an intact household. Marital conflict often strains household relationships, with children being the most affected (Matondang, 2014). Tartari (2015) found that students from divorced families tend to have lower academic achievement compared to students from intact families. This may occur because divorce has the potential to disrupt parental supervision, limit family economic resources, reduce investment in children's education, and weaken household stability (Furstenberg & Kiernan, 2001). Nevertheless, the impact of divorce is not always uniform, as its effects can vary depending on the child's age, family circumstances, and socioeconomic context, particularly among young children (Blau & van der Klaauw, 2013).

Dommaraju & Jones (2011), state that divorce rates are still rising in Southeast Asian cities. China has more than two million divorces annually, ranking the nation at the top for divorce prevalence in Asia and among the highest worldwide (United Nations, 2015).

In 2007, the provinces of East Java, West Java, and Central Java had the highest divorce

rates in Indonesia (Central Statistics Agency, 2007). Meanwhile, in 2022, West Java remained the region with the highest number of divorce cases, totaling 102.2 thousand. East Java ranked second with 88.2 thousand divorce cases. Based on this data, disputes and arguments ranked as the leading cause of divorce, accounting for 251,800 cases (Rainer, 2025).

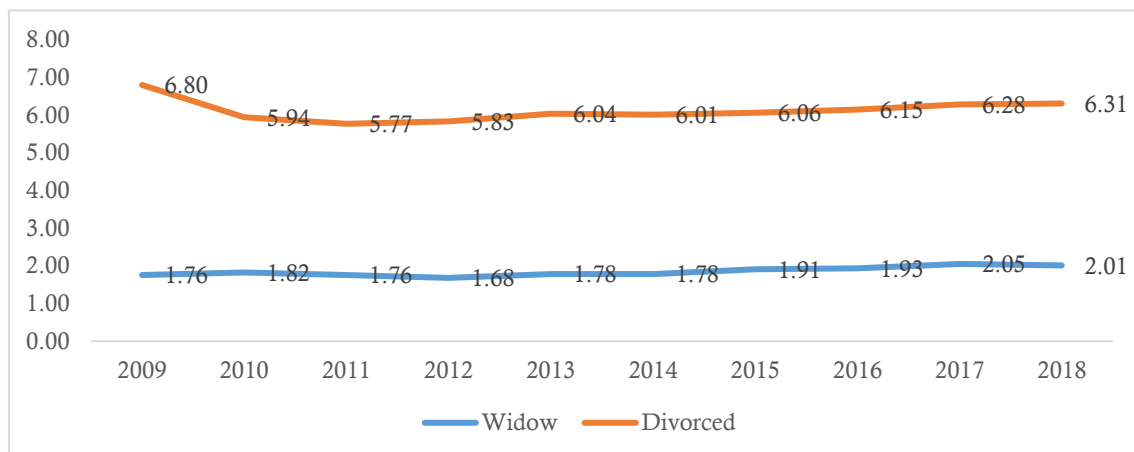


Figure 2. Indonesia's Percentage of Divorced and Widowed Marital Status

Source: BPS, 2019

Indramayu also recorded a continued increase in divorce cases in 2014, with economic factors cited as a primary driver (Jamil, 2015). Similarly, in South Jakarta, 89% of recorded cases were divorces primarily driven by dissatisfaction with spousal behavior and circumstances Rais (2014). Rising divorce rates have also been observed in Aceh (Ismiati, 2018) and Wonosobo over the past decade (Junaedi, 2018). Meanwhile, the percentage of widowhood (spousal death) in Indonesia has been significantly higher than divorce, showing an increasing trend from 2009 to 2018 (see Figure 2). On average, widowed individuals account for 6.05% of the population, while only 1.85% are divorced. Widows, particularly in Indonesia, belong to a socially disadvantaged group, marked by the loss of a family's primary breadwinner. As a result, many widowed individuals must seek

employment to support themselves and their children. The economic strain caused by the loss of a spouse often leads to children entering the workforce to contribute to household income (Parker & Creese, 2016).

The Special Region of Yogyakarta (DI Yogyakarta) records the highest number of widowed individuals in Indonesia, at 225.37 thousand people, representing 6.13% of the province's total population, with 225.37 thousand people, accounting for 6.13% of the total population. This percentage is the highest among all provinces. Following Yogyakarta, East Java has the second-highest percentage of widowed individuals at 5.47%, followed by Central Java at 4.91% (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021).

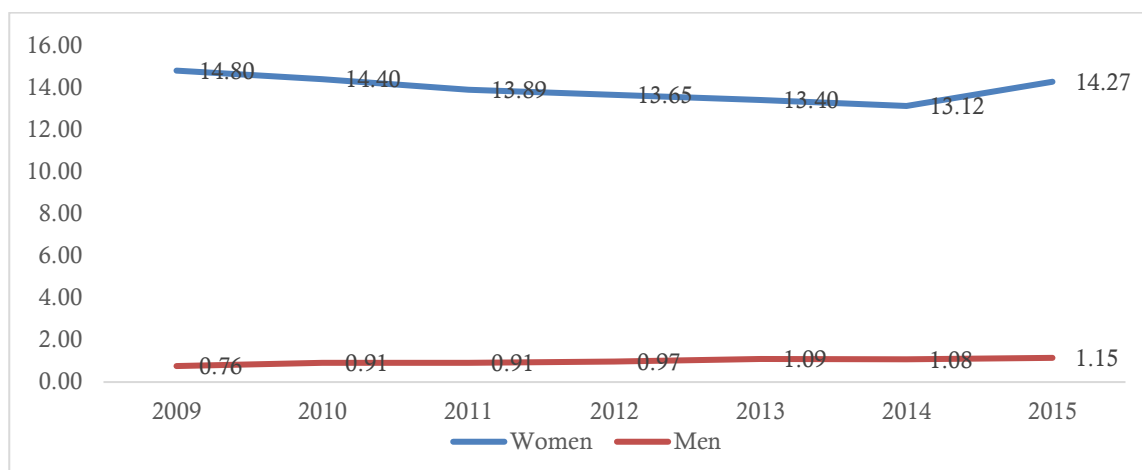


Figure 3. Single Household Heads Due to Divorce, 2009-2015 (%)

Source: Susenas 2009-2015, Statistics Indonesia (BPS RI), processed.

Women aged 10 years and older are predominantly impacted by both widowhood and divorce. In 2021, 10.25% of women were bereaved spouses. East Java, Central Java, and West Java have the highest divorce incidence in Indonesia, with East Java recording the largest number of divorced individuals, with 829.14 thousand persons, which constitutes 2.02% of the province's population of 40.99 million. West Java has 825.25 thousand divorced individuals, constituting 1.73% of its 47.59 million population. In Central Java, 691,250 individuals are divorced, constituting 1.86% of its population of 37.23 million. (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). According to Sholeh (2021), the three main causes of divorce in Indonesia from 2013 to 2015 were: lack of household harmony (37.6%), economic difficulties (25.8%) and lack of responsibility (22.1%). Among these factors, economic issues play a significant role in household instability, further contributing to the rising divorce rates.

Between 2009 and 2015, there was a significant gap between the number of single-parent households led by men and those led by women in Indonesia. Female-led households ranged from 13% to 14.40%, whereas male-led single-parent households only accounted for 0.70% to 1.15%. Figure 3 shows that female-

headed households decreased between 2010 and 2014, but increased again in 2015. In contrast, male-headed single-parent households remained relatively stable between 0.76% and 1.15%. This pattern matters because divorce is a key driver of changes in household structure, and men tend to remarry more often than women after divorce.

Divorce not only alters household structures but also significantly impacts household economic conditions. This issue is particularly concerning as it directly affects kids' emotional balance, mental well-being, and financial security, especially their access to education.

Biblarz & Gottainer (2000) highlight key differences between divorced and widowed mothers. Divorced mothers face greater financial distress, struggle with parenting responsibilities, and participate more in the labor force. Their household economy often deteriorates after divorce (Kalil & Ryan, 2010), increasing the risk of poverty, particularly for kids raised in single-parent families headed by mothers. Consequently, Children from families affected by divorce tend to have more difficulties than those in stable nuclear family environments (McLanahan & Percheski, 2008).

McLanahan & Percheski (2008) proposed three hypotheses regarding household structure, child well-being, and child labor. The first is the Economic-Deprivation hypothesis. Single-parent households often face financial constraints, which can increase the likelihood that children work to offset reduced income. This reflects an indirect consequence of household disruption. The second hypothesis is Father-Absence. When a father is absent, household income and parental supervision may decline, which can influence children's emotional and behavioral development. The third is the Family-Stress Hypothesis. Divorce-related conflicts can negatively impact children, causing depression, antisocial behavior, and defiance of rules (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000). These conflicts also weaken parent-child relationships and self-concept (Amato, 2001).

Being a single mother and head of family has significant challenges. Father-Absence and Family-Stress theories suggest that financial hardship in single-mother households may increase the likelihood that children are involved in work (de Mesquita & de Farias Souza, 2018). Household heads play a crucial role in decision-making, including whether children enter the workforce (Haszelinna binti Abang Ali & Arabsheibani, 2016; Purwanti, 2014).

Studies examining how parental marital status affects outcomes—specifically divorce and widowhood—on child labor has been conducted in various contexts. In Brazil, children have a higher probability of participating in work when raised in female-headed households due to divorce compared to those in intact families (de Mesquita & de Farias Souza, 2018). Additionally, Psacharopoulos (1997) found that when a female-headed household belongs to a low-income demographic, the likelihood of child labor significantly increases. A study in Mexico by Cummings (2016) further supports this finding, demonstrating that children living in single-mother households have a higher tendency to join the labor force.

Purwanti (2014) highlights that female-headed households significantly impact child labor decisions, as evidenced by longer working

hours among children in such households. Additionally, parental characteristics crucially influence whether children engage in labor (Wahba, 2006). Research has shown that children raised by single mothers—whether due to widowhood or divorce—tend to attain lower levels of education, hold lower-status jobs, and report lower levels of life satisfaction in adulthood (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000).

Some studies indicate that divorced and separated women may have better access to employment and may allocate more time and resources to their children's schooling, particularly for daughters (Oya & Sender, 2009). However, divorced single mothers also often work long hours in low-wage jobs, which can increase the likelihood that their children enter work earlier to support household income (Bradbury & Katz, 2002). In Mexico, female-headed households due to divorce experience higher poverty rates than those headed by widows, which, this situation leads to greater child labor engagement among children with divorced parents (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008). Although child labor might deliver short-term monetary assistance to struggling families, but its long-term repercussions for children's well-being are profound. When children from female-headed households engage in labor, they are often subjected to compounded disadvantages—both from the burdens of employment and the destabilizing effects of parental separation. This situation presents a complex trade-off, as economic survival comes at the expense of children's development and prospects.

Overall, these studies confirm that divorce not only changes family structure but can also create economic and social pressures that influence household decisions regarding children's education and employment. Children in female-headed households resulting from divorce are at risk of multiple vulnerabilities, including family instability, economic stress, reduced caregiving support, and workloads that can disrupt their education and development. Therefore, children's involvement in work is not solely an economic issue but also reflects limited social protection for vulnerable families,

particularly female-headed households following divorce. Therefore, research on family structure and child labor in Indonesia, drawing on evidence from children of widowed and divorced single-mother families, is necessary. This research contributes to expanding the study of the relationship between family structure and child labor in Indonesia, particularly by distinguishing children living in widowed and divorced single-mother families. This distinction is important because female-headed households do not always share the same characteristics, levels of vulnerability, and coping mechanisms. Children of divorced single mothers may face different pressures than children from widowed families, both in terms of economics, social support, family stability, and access to education.

This study uses an instrumental variables (IV) approach to address potential endogeneity in family-structure choices. Endogeneity can arise from unobserved or omitted variables in the model, as well as from uncertainty about whether family structure is fully exogenous. These conditions have the potential to bias estimates. In this approach, the instrument is the percentage of the population in the family's residential area who belong to a particular religious group (De Mesquita & de Farias Souza, 2018). The choice of this instrument is based on the assumption of peer effects or social pressure within the community, where norms and the socio-religious composition of the residential environment can influence core family decisions, including those related to family structure. In other words, the social environment is assumed to play a role in shaping preferences, norms, and pressures on family decisions. Methodologically, this instrument is expected to meet two main requirements. First, the instrument must be correlated with family structure. Second, the instrument does not directly influence children's employment involvement, but only through its influence on family structure, after individual, household, and regional characteristics are controlled for in the model.

This paper focuses on assessing the effects of household arrangements—specifically households headed by divorced or widowed

mothers—on participation of children in the workforce in Indonesia. Given the scarcity of research on this issue within the Indonesian context. This research seeks to provide empirical insights to the wider discussion on how female-headed households, whether due to divorce or widowhood, influence child labor trends in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study examines household structure as a variable that contribute to children entering the workforce in Indonesia in 2014. Specifically, the analysis focuses on households headed by divorced and widowed mothers. Furthermore, child labor is measured in regarding the amount of time spent working over the past week, as Rosati & Rossi (2003) highlight that working hours constitute a critical factor influencing children's well-being, particularly concerning health and human capital accumulation. The choice of 2014 as the study period aims to encompass long-term fluctuations in the analyzed variables, given that the dataset employed is longitudinal and reflects the most recently available data. This period was selected because of increasing divorce rates in Indonesia and the ongoing presence of child labor. This study uses secondary cross-sectional data from the fifth wave of the Indonesian Family Life Survey (IFLS), completed in 2014.

The use of the 2014/2015 IFLS data remains relevant because it is the most recent IFLS wave available to the public, has broad national coverage, a comprehensive data structure, and consistent measurement quality at the individual, household, and community levels. These data allow for a more in-depth analysis of the relationships between variables compared to many more recent cross-sectional surveys. This study is not intended to describe Indonesia's actual conditions in the current year, but rather to test empirical relationships and structural mechanisms among variables during the IFLS 5 observation period. Nevertheless, temporal limitations are acknowledged, as changes in policy, labor market conditions,

household structures, and socioeconomic dynamics after 2015 may affect the generalizability of the results. Therefore, the study's findings are interpreted as empirical evidence based on the 2014–2015 period, not as a direct estimate of current conditions, and need to be validated through follow-up research using more recent data.

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables

Variable Name	Description
Child Labor Hours (CLH)	Amount of time a child engaged in labor over the last week
School Participation	School participation rate
Household structure of divorced mothers	Household structure: 1 = Household headed by a divorced mother 0 = Nuclear family units with both parents present
Household structure of widowed mothers	Household structure: 1 = Family unit headed by a widowed female guardian 0 = Nuclear family units with both parents present
Child Gender	Child's gender: 1 = Female 0 = Male
Child Age	Child's age (5-14 years)
Sibling Count	Total biological brothers and sisters (younger or older)
Mean of years schooling of household head	Highest formal education level achieved by the head of the household
Employment situation of the head of household (Work of the HoH)	Whether the household head has been employed in the past 12 months: 1 = Employed 0 = Unemployed
Age of the family head (Head Age)	Age of the household head (19-76 years)
Residential Location (Urban)	Place of residence: 1 = Urban 0 = Rural
Household Size (Hhsize)	Total occupants living together under one roof

Source: Data Processed, 2025

The analysis also draws on secondary panel data from IFLS 4 and IFLS 5, covering IFLS 4 (2007 to 2008), collected from late November 2007 to late April 2008, and IFLS 5 (2014 to 2015), collected from late October 2014 to late August 2015. The sample represents about 83% of Indonesia's population and includes more than 30,000 individuals across 13 of 27 provinces. The study uses descriptive statistics to summarize the dataset in a structured way and to support interpretation after data collection, processing, and analysis.

To address potential endogeneity in household structure, this study applies an instrumental variables method. Endogeneity arises when regressors correlate with the disturbance term, which violates the exogeneity assumption. In this setting, conventional estimates may be biased and inconsistent

(Wooldridge, 2013). The IV approach uses an external instrument that shifts the endogenous regressor while remaining exogenous to the outcome equation. Following common IV requirements, the instrument must predict the endogenous regressor, affect the outcome only through that regressor, and remain independent of unobserved determinants of the outcome (Hernan & Robins, 2006).

De Mesquita & de Farias Souza (2018) emphasize to distinguish identifying the differences between direct causes (like father absence and family tension) and indirect effects (such as household income) when analyzing household structure, following the framework established by McLanahan & Percheski (1985). Consequently, household income is omitted from the model in this study. However, this omission introduces a potential endogeneity

issue, as excluding a relevant variable from the model may result in biased and inconsistent estimations. To address this concern, this study uses the share of residents affiliated with a religious group in the household's area of residence as an instrument for family structure. The approach assumes a peer effect, where local social norms and community pressures can shape family decisions. These contextual factors are therefore treated as external influences on household structure.

Though it employs a different dataset, this study modifies the de Mesquita & de Farias Souza (2018) model. Additionally, it introduces distinct, independent variables, specifically child labor hours and households headed by divorced and widowed mothers. Accordingly, the research equation is formulated as follows:

$$CLH_{iht} = \beta_1 HH\ Structure_{ht} + \beta_i X_{iht} + \delta_i + u_{hit} \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where, CLH is the total number of hours worked by a child during the previous week; HH Structure represents the household structure; X denotes a set of control variables that may influence child labor, including child characteristics, household head attributes, and household characteristics; β represents the regression coefficients; i denotes the individual identifier; h denotes the household identifier; t denotes the time period; and u is the error term.

In Equation (1), several econometric issues in the data must be addressed. First, it is necessary to establish the relationship between family structure and child labor of household

income. However, decisions about household income and child labor supply are made simultaneously by families, and therefore, income is endogenous in the regression equation. To achieve this, the strategy is to include a proxy for family income among the model's explanatory variables: the head of household's year of study. Second, it is necessary that individuals are randomly distributed across family structure types, given their observed and unobserved characteristics. In other words, the error term must be uncorrelated with the variable of interest; otherwise, the estimated equation will be biased. To accurately estimate causal effects in this type of research problem, an instrumental variables approach is typically used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics indicate that about 2.31 percent of children work, while about 87.16 percent remain enrolled in school. Household structure in the sample consists mainly of households headed by divorced or widowed mothers. The mean child age is 9.95 years, and boys represent a larger share than girls. Most household heads are employed (95.43%), with a mean age of 44 years. The average household size is 4.87 members. Regarding land tenure, 70.89% of households report owning their land. Child labor rates vary across socioeconomic characteristics. Higher education of the household head is associated with lower child labor. Additional earnings from other household members are associated with lower child labor.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean
Child Labor Status (child labor=1)	10603	0.0231
Household structure		
Divorced (1 = Divorced mother)	10603	0.9893
Widowed (1 = Widowed mother)	10603	0.9647
Child's age (years)	10603	9.9458
Child Sex (male=1)	10603	0.5093
School enrollment status of child (attending school=1)	10603	0.8716
Siblings (people)	10603	0.8698
Mean of years schooling of household head (year)	10603	8.7307
Job status of the head of the household (working = 1)	10603	0.9543

Variable	Obs	Mean
The age of the family head (years)	10603	44.009
Number of individuals living in the household (persons)	10603	4.868
Classification of residence location (urban=1)	10603	0.6054
Secondary household earnings (log)	10603	14.624
Status of land possession (owns land=1)	10603	0.7089

Source: Data processed, 2025

Urban residence is associated with longer schooling, which may reflect better access to schools and stronger adult employment opportunities. In rural areas, constraints such as weaker adult employment prospects and limited schooling infrastructure may increase the likelihood of child work. Sibship size may also increase child work participation when household resources are limited. The descriptive patterns suggest gender differences in work participation. Boys more often perform market work, while girls more often perform domestic work or help in household enterprises. These patterns align with documented gender role expectations in many Indonesian communities across Indonesia.

Table 3 shows that, in the divorce estimates, the Kleibergen–Paap LM statistic for under-identification is statistically significant at the 1 % level, providing evidence against the null hypothesis of instrument under-identification (Baum et al., 2007). The same results for the Cragg-Donald F-test are statistically significant at the 5 % level, indicating that the instruments are not weak. Furthermore, the Hansen J-statistic in this model is not significant, indicating that we fail to reject the null hypothesis. Thus, the instrument used in this research is valid (i.e., uncorrelated with the error term). Based on all these results, the instrument is valid, not weak, and relevant, so the estimated model is reliable.

The instrumental variables estimates indicate that children in single-mother

households formed through divorce have a higher probability of workforce participation than children in single-mother households formed through widowhood. This difference is statistically significant at the 5% level, holding other factors constant. These findings align with Biblarz & Gottainer, (2000), who argue that divorced single mothers face more significant economic pressures than widowed mothers. This disparity arises because divorced mothers often experience a substantial decline in income following separation, particularly when financial support from the surviving father is inadequate. Consequently, children in these households show an increased likelihood of entering employment to contribute to household income.

Moreover, widowed single mothers are more inclined to obtain social support from extended family or governmental aid, like widow's pensions, inheritance, or child benefits. Conversely, divorced mothers frequently face social stigma and heightened financial difficulties, which impede their ability to obtain financial support, thereby exacerbating their children's susceptibility to labor involvement (McLanahan & Booth, 1989). Children in divorced single-mother households are more likely to enter part-time or full-time work at younger ages than children in widowed single-mother households. This pattern is primarily driven by economic necessity and the absence of paternal financial support (Kendig & Bianchi, 2008).

Table 3 Household structure and child labor

Variables	OLS		IV	
	Divorce	Widowed	Divorce	Widowed
Household Structure	0.0156 (0.0140)	0.0118 (0.0084)	0.8960** (0.4570)	0.5820** (0.2940)
Child's age (years)	0.0086*** (0.0006)	0.0091*** (0.0006)	0.0104*** (0.0012)	0.0101*** (0.0011)
Child sex (boys=1)	0.0138*** (0.0029)	0.0140*** (0.0029)	0.0101** (0.0040)	0.0135*** (0.0037)
Children's school status (school=1)	-0.0372*** (0.0049)	-0.0404*** (0.0049)	-0.0369*** (0.0072)	-0.0435*** (0.0081)
Siblings (people)	-0.0029*** (0.0011)	-0.0026** (0.0011)	-0.0012 (0.0016)	0.0017 (0.0026)
Mean of years schooling of household head (year)	-0.0013*** (0.0004)	-0.0012*** (0.0004)	-0.0019*** (0.0006)	-0.0037*** (0.0014)
Job status of the head of the household (working = 1)	-0.0090 (0.0087)	-0.0179** (0.0079)	-0.0445** (0.0215)	-0.1870** (0.0858)
The age of the family head (years)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	6.43e-06 (0.0002)	-0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0011* (0.0007)
Number of individuals living in the household	0.0028** (0.0011)	0.0016 (0.0011)	0.0011 (0.0016)	-0.0021 (0.0024)
Residence location (urban=1)	-0.0054 (0.0034)	-0.0063* (0.0034)	-0.0026 (0.0044)	0.0045 (0.0068)
Secondary household earnings (log)	-0.0038 (0.0028)	-0.0052* (0.0027)	0.0008 (0.0043)	0.0016 (0.0055)
Status of land possession (self-owned = 1)	0.0069*** (0.0017)	0.0077*** (0.0017)	0.0090*** (0.0023)	0.0105*** (0.0027)
Constant	0.0188 (0.0424)	0.0430 (0.0420)	-0.9050* (0.4800)	-0.4830* (0.2830)
Observations	10603	10603	10603	10,603
Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic			39.15***	16.63***
Cragg-Donald Wald F statistic			8.138**	6.497**
Hansen J			0.2680	0.172

Note: Robust standard errors in brackets, *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

Child age is positively associated with work participation in both divorced mother and widowed mother households. Older children show higher probabilities of working than younger children. These results align with previous research indicating that older children have greater opportunities to enter the labor market than younger children (Bertoni et al., 2025). Further analysis suggests that older children's physical endurance and skill development increase their market value, making

them more attractive to employers (Suryahadi et al., 2005). Compared to younger children, older children exhibit higher levels of maturity, enhanced work-related skills, and greater physical stamina, enabling them to undertake more demanding and complex tasks. Beyond physical and skill-based factors, social expectations also influence child labor participation. Cultural norms and social expectations can increase pressure on parents to allow children to work earlier, particularly in

low-income households. Sulistiyo and Syafitri found that in economically constrained families, older children are more often expected to assist the household head in meeting financial demands. These factors reinforce the correlation between child age and labor participation.

Gender is a significant predictor, with boys more likely than girls to participate in labor. This pattern holds for children in both divorced and widowed single-mother households, with results significant at the 5% confidence level, assuming *ceteris paribus*. These outcomes correspond with past studies indicating a greater likelihood of boys working informally, as they are often perceived as physically stronger than girls (Wang et al., 2025). Moreover, deeply embedded social norms in many communities continue to reinforce the expectation that boys should serve as potential breadwinners for their families (Edmonds & Pavcnik, 2005). Conversely, girls are more often assigned to unpaid domestic tasks or family caregiving responsibilities (Kambhampati & Rajan, 2006). This gender-based division of labor has lasting consequences for children's academic and economic futures. Social and cultural factors shape the ways boys and girls are allocated to different types of work. Across many developing countries, boys primarily work in agriculture, construction, and manufacturing, while girls often take part in household chores, small-scale trade, or assist in family businesses (Bhalotra & Heady, 2003). This division influences the development of children's skills and their future economic prospects. Gender roles also affect access to schooling. Among working children, boys are more likely than girls to remain in education, girls' work often involves longer hours and fewer opportunities for flexibility (Gunnarsson et al., 2006). Consequently, female students engaged in labor face greater chances of discontinuing their education, ultimately limiting their economic opportunities in adulthood.

Higher education is associated with lower child labor in both divorced and widowed mother households. This finding is consistent with earlier studies showing that higher educational attainment is associated with a lower probability

of child labor participation. This relationship is driven mainly by financial support mechanisms and free education policies, which assist in keeping children enrolled in school rather than entering the workforce (Nukpezah & Konlan, 2025). Children who remain students are less prone to participate in work, underscoring education as a crucial factor in lowering child labor rates (Basu & Van, 1998). Education provides academic skills and enhances awareness among children and parents regarding the long-term benefits of human capital investment. This aligns with prior research demonstrating that school attendance significantly lowers child labor participation rates. However, in many cases, children continue working despite being enrolled in school (Satriawan & Ghifari, 2018). This phenomenon is particularly prevalent among low-income families facing economic constraints. For households with limited financial resources, the high cost of education and restricted access to educational assistance often force children to work to help support household finances. In such cases, children must divide their time between school and work, which can negatively affect academic performance and increase the likelihood of dropping out (Gunnarsson et al., 2006). Besides economic determinants, geographic constraints and policy measures in education contribute to shaping the education-child labor dynamic. In rural areas with limited access to quality education, children are more likely to enter work rather than remain in school.

Household size is positively associated with child labor participation in both household groups. Larger households have higher likelihoods that children work. A larger household can increase per-period consumption needs and financial pressure. Households with a large number of dependents commonly see heads of family turning to their children for financial support. Prior research suggests that larger households face greater economic pressure, which increases the likelihood that children work to support the family (Ben Hassen et al., 2025). This factor is closely related to household survival strategies in low-income families, where

every member, including children, plays a role in sustaining the household economy (Goswami & Jain, 2006).

The number of siblings shows a small positive association with child labor, but the estimate is not statistically significant. This supports the findings of de Mesquita & de Farias Souza (2018), who noted that with the increase of siblings, the economic demands on the household rise, leading to a higher chance that children will enter the workforce. In larger families, time allocation among siblings becomes more complex, often pushing some children into labor markets to help sustain the household. Other studies support this trend, indicating that children from larger households often face increased work demands due to economic constraints (Webbink et al., 2013). In Indonesia, a case study in Sematang Borang District, Palembang, revealed that children from larger families showed a higher propensity to work informally as a means of aiding the family's finances (Ariyanti, 2016). Similarly, Goswami & Jain, (2006) found that large low-income families often adopt survival strategies that involve all household members, including children, to sustain financial stability. This dynamic is particularly pronounced in developing countries, where high poverty rates are a key driver of child labor. Children in low-income households face greater work burdens and reduced access to education, depriving them of opportunities for future economic mobility. Research by Edmonds & Pavcnik, (2005) further supports the argument that as household size increases, child labor may increase markedly, particularly in rural regions where informal jobs are common. In households with many members, the demand for essentials like food, clothing, and housing also grows, making child labor an alternative to ease financial burdens.

Mean years of schooling of the household head has a negative and statistically significant association with child labor in both divorced and widowed single-mother households. Higher educational attainment of the household head corresponds to a lower likelihood that children engage in labor. This result highlights the role of

parental education in reducing child labor and is consistent with prior findings that household head education is negatively related to child labor participation (de Mesquita & de Farias Souza, 2018). More educated household heads may place greater value on schooling and child welfare, which increases the likelihood that children remain in school rather than enter the labor market. Education can also shape family expectations about children's future outcomes. Suryahadi et al. (2005) argue that household head education is an important determinant of economic well-being. Higher education often improves access to more stable and better paid employment, which reduces financial pressure and lowers the need for children to work (Leoni, 2023).

The employment status of the household head has a negative and statistically significant association with child labor in both divorced and widowed single-mother households. This result is consistent with prior studies indicating that stable parental employment reduces the likelihood that children enter work because household income is more likely to cover basic needs (Binder & Scrogin, 1999). Households where the head is employed in a stable sector exhibit lower child labor rates compared to those facing financial instability (Duryea et al., 2007). Research indicates that children in households where parents work full time are more likely to remain in school and less likely to participate in labor (Musizvingoza et al., 2022).

Household size shows a positive association with child labor, although the relationship is not statistically significant in both divorced and widowed single-mother households. This suggests that larger household sizes indirectly contribute to an increased financial burden, which may, in turn, push children into the labor force. Although household income may increase with more family members contributing, the cost of living rises significantly, leading some families to involve children in income-generating activities. In line with the findings of Goswami & Jain, (2006), it is argued that household size positively

correlates with child labor, as larger households require more resources to sustain themselves.

There is no statistically significant association between living in rural areas and child labor for children in either divorced or widowed single-mother households. These results are consistent with Octaviani et al. (2018), who report that financial pressure has a stronger role than geographic location in shaping child labor in single-mother households. Similarly, (Fajrianthi, F & Faradina, 2012) find no significant association between rural residence and child labor, which supports the view that economic stress, rather than location, is the primary driver of child labor participation.

Household income does not show an association with child labor among children in either divorced or widowed single-mother households. This finding is consistent with Diza Aprillia Maharani Puteri (2022), who argues that although a single mother's income affects household well-being, it does not necessarily reduce child labor due to other socio-economic

factors. Further research suggests that while financial stress influences single-mother households, additional income does not always translate into declining child labor, as emotional and social factors also play a crucial role (Octaviani et al., 2018).

Land ownership shows a positive association with child labor, affecting both children residing in households with single mothers due to divorce and those living with single mothers as a result of widowhood. The result is significant at the 1% confidence level, indicating strong statistical evidence, assuming *ceteris paribus* conditions. These findings align with previous studies indicating that families engaged in agricultural work exhibit higher levels of child labor, particularly in single-mother households where labor shortages compel children to contribute (Fan et al., 2014). Moreover, the wealth paradox is supported by the positive correlation between child labor and ownership markers of assets or resources, like land (Gebregziabher et al., 2023).

Table 4. Gender-Based Analysis of Household Structure and Child Labor Using Instrumental Variables

Variables	IV			
	Boys		Girls	
Household Structure				
Divorced	0.2330 (0.6920)		0.677** (0.321)	
Widowed		-0.507 (1.046)		1.129* (0.653)
Both				
Constant	-0.2190 (0.7400)	0.571 (0.978)	-0.527* (0.286)	-0.884 (0.547)
Observations	5,211	5,353	5,022	5,140
Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic	31.61***	1.053	14.56***	6.321**
Cragg-Donald Wald F statistic	4.347	0.557	6.716*	2.106
Hansen J	0.236	0.131	0.792	0.506

Note: Robust standard errors in brackets, *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

Variable control including: Child's age (years), child sex (male=1), children's school status (school=1), siblings (people), Average years of education completed by household head (year), Job status of the head of the household (working = 1), The age of the family head (years), Number of individuals living in the household, Residence location (urban=1), Secondary household earnings (log), Status of land possession (self-owned = 1)

Table 4 reports the estimates by child gender. The Kleibergen Paap LM test is statistically significant at the 1% confidence levels, which indicates that the model is not under-identified. The Cragg Donald F statistic is

also statistically significant at 10%, which supports instrument relevance and reduces concern about weak identification. The Hansen J test is not statistically significant, so the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. Together, these

diagnostics support the validity of the instruments and the reliability of the IV estimates.

Estimation results using the instrumental variable method reveal that girls living in single-mother households due to divorce are negatively and significantly associated with child labor participation, with significance at the 5% confidence level, assuming *ceteris paribus*, compared to those living in widowed single-mother households. This finding suggests that girls in divorced single-mother households are more vulnerable to becoming child laborers than those whose fathers have passed away. The full results are reported in Table 4

These results are consistent with prior research indicating that divorce has a stronger negative impact on girls, especially in areas such as educational access and the risk of entering the workforce (Leopold, 2018). Girls living with divorced single mothers are more prone to entering the workforce at a younger age than those in widowed single-mother households. Furthermore, children in divorced single-mother families are have an increased likelihood of entering the workforce as child laborers than those in widowed single-mother households. In particular, girls in divorced single-mother households are more frequently assigned to paid domestic work or informal labor (de Mesquita & de Farias Souza, 2018).

Table 5. Robustness Check

Variables	Divorce		Widowed	
Household Structure	0.6880*	0.8960**	0.3260	0.5820**
	(0.4250)	(0.4570)	(0.416)	(0.2940)
Child's age (years)		0.0104***		0.0101***
		(0.0012)		(0.0011)
Child sex (boys=1)		0.0101**		0.0135***
		(0.0040)		(0.0037)
Children's school status (school=1)		-0.0369***		-0.0435***
		(0.0072)		(0.0081)
Siblings (people)		-0.0012		0.0017
		(0.0016)		(0.0026)
Mean of years schooling of household head (year)		-0.0019***		-0.0037***
		(0.0006)		(0.0014)
Job status of the head of the household (working = 1)		-0.0445**		-0.1870**
		(0.0215)		(0.0858)
The age of the family head (years)		-0.0003		0.0011*
		(0.0002)		(0.0007)
Number of individuals living in the household		0.0011		-0.0021
		(0.0016)		(0.0024)
Residence location (urban=1)		-0.0026		0.0045
		(0.0044)		(0.0068)
Secondary household earnings (log)		0.0008		0.0016
		(0.0043)		(0.0055)
Status of land possession (self-owned = 1)		0.0090***		0.0105***
		(0.0023)		(0.0027)
Constant	-0.6580	-0.9050*	-0.2901	-0.4830*
	(0.4210)	(0.4800)	(0.4010)	(0.2830)
Observations	10603	10603	10,603	10,603
Kleibergen-Paap rk LM statistic	47.11***	39.15***	4.517*	16.63***
Cragg-Donald Wald F statistic	8.3900*	8.138**	2.3000	6.497**
Hansen J	0.1320	0.2680	0.02160	0.172

Note: Robust standard errors in brackets, *p < 0.1, **p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

One explanation is limited financial support from fathers after divorce, which can increase pressure on children to contribute to household income. Evidence also suggests that girls in widowed single-mother households face lower child labor risk than girls in divorced single-mother households (Clark & Hamplová, 2013). Moreover, girls living with divorced single mothers experience greater stress and emotional pressure, which may drive them to enter the workforce earlier to support their families (Trivedi et al., 2009). Girls from divorced single-mother households also face greater challenges in maintaining their education compared to those whose mothers are widowed (Barber & Eccles, 1992). They are more likely to leave school and enter work at younger ages (Biblarz & Gottainer, 2000).

CONCLUSION

This study finds that children living in divorced single-mother households are more likely to engage in child labor than children living in widowed single-mother households. The estimates indicate a higher child labor risk among children whose parents divorced than among children whose fathers died. Moreover, girls in divorced single-mother households have an even greater likelihood of entering the workforce compared to girls in widowed single-mother households. Girls living with divorced single mothers face a higher risk of child labor than girls living with widowed single mothers. Many policy recommendations are suggested to alleviate these concerns. Initially, enhanced enforcement and supervision of child support regulations following divorce should be instituted to mitigate the financial strain on divorced single mums. Secondly, enhanced social and psychological assistance must be offered to girls in divorced single-mother households to mitigate their susceptibility to child labour. Finally, single mums' educational and vocational training initiatives should be enhanced to enable them to attain improved economic prospects and provide for their children without resorting to child labour. The main limitation of this study is its reliance on cross-sectional data.

Future studies should utilise longitudinal data to account for unobserved oscillations influencing outcomes. This analysis does not account for the COVID-19 pandemic's consequences, which likely exacerbated household financial difficulties and modified child labour dynamics. Future studies should examine child labour trends post-epidemic to further understand this phenomenon.

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