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Coping Strategies among Generation Z Young Adults with Divorced Parents: A Qualitative Descriptive Study

Annisa Eva Amelia Pribadi[1]*, Risna Resnawaty[2], Dyana Chusnulitta Jatnika[3]
[1,2,3]Padjadjaran University, Jatinangor, Sumedang, Indonesia
*Corresponding Author: annisa22020@mail.unpad.ac.id

Abstract
Parental divorce can create stressful circumstances that require young adults to navigate practical challenges and emotional responses. This study examines the coping strategies employed by Generation Z young adults whose parents are divorced. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research involved six purposively selected informants born between 1998 and 2003. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation, and analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that informants employed both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping involved addressing manageable aspects of their circumstances, making personal decisions, and seeking social support. All six informants reported receiving support from their social networks. Meanwhile, emotion-focused coping included emotional expression, distraction, gradual acceptance, positive reappraisal, and temporary distancing from stressful situations. Although positive reappraisal helped informants develop more constructive perspectives on their circumstances, it did not necessarily resolve their ongoing emotional difficulties. The study highlights the coexistence of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies in the experiences of Generation Z young adults with divorced parents, demonstrating that adaptive coping responses can occur alongside persistent emotional challenges. These findings emphasize the importance of social work interventions that recognize individual strengths, respect diverse coping preferences, and facilitate access to appropriate support systems. However, the study is limited by its small sample size and reliance on retrospective accounts, meaning that the findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized to a broader population.

Keywords: parental divorce; coping strategies; generation z; social support; young adults

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INTRODUCTION

Parental divorce can bring significant changes to family relationships and children's lives, including during adolescence. In DKI Jakarta, official statistics recorded 14,062 divorce cases in 2025 (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, DKI Jakarta Province, 2026a). According to BPS-Statistics Indonesia's table on divorce cases by contributing factors, 10,790 cases were classified under continuous disputes and quarrels, while 1,821 cases were attributed to economic factors (BPS-Statistics Indonesia, DKI Jakarta Province, 2026b). These figures highlight the prominence of marital conflict and economic issues among the factors recorded in divorce proceedings in DKI Jakarta. Beyond the marital relationship itself, parental divorce also raises the importance of understanding how children, particularly adolescents, experience and respond to changes in family structure.

Parental divorce may affect adolescents psychologically, socially, and emotionally. Changes in parenting patterns, reduced emotional support, family conflict, and adjustment to new social environments may become sources of stress that influence adolescents' emotional development and their ability to carry out developmental tasks. The family environment is one of the significant factors influencing individual development (Laaturu, Yani, Elfansha, & Valentalita, 2025). A harmonious, supportive, and nurturing family environment can contribute positively to children's development, including greater self-confidence, improved social interaction, and better academic achievement. Conversely, a family environment characterized by conflict and disharmony

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may contribute to psychological and behavioral difficulties, including anxiety, stress, and problematic behavior (Laaturu et al., 2025). Therefore, understanding how adolescents respond to and manage the consequences of parental divorce is important for understanding their adjustment process.

In this context, coping strategies become an important aspect of adolescents' responses to stressful family experiences. Coping refers to the efforts individuals make to manage demands that are perceived as stressful or exceeding their available resources. Lazarus and Folkman distinguish coping into two broad forms: *problem-focused coping*, which is directed toward managing or addressing the source or consequences of a problem, and *emotion-focused coping*, which is directed toward regulating emotional responses to stressful situations. Both forms of coping may operate simultaneously depending on the characteristics of the situation and the resources available to the individual. Thus, *coping* should not be understood solely as an attempt to eliminate a problem, particularly when adolescents face circumstances that cannot be changed, such as their parents' decision to divorce.

The development of Generation Z provides an important context for examining coping with parental divorce. Generation Z is commonly described as individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who have grown up alongside rapid developments in digital technology. Their familiarity with the internet, social media, and digital devices provides access to information, communication networks, and various forms of social support. At the same time, extensive engagement with digital technology may present challenges for psychological and social development (Jamiluddin, 2020, as cited in Adawiyah et al., 2023; Asbari, 2019; Azzahra et al., 2023; Jihan et al., 2023; Larasati et al., 2023; Nuryanti et al., 2020). These characteristics provide a relevant context for examining how Generation Z obtains information, communicates emotions, seeks social support, and manages stressful experiences, including parental divorce.

Previous research provides an important foundation for understanding coping among adolescents experiencing parental divorce. Compas et al. (2017), in their study of coping and emotion regulation from childhood to early adulthood, demonstrated that individuals facing stress engage not only in efforts to solve problems but also in efforts to regulate their emotional responses. Strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, acceptance, and positive thinking have been associated with more favorable psychological conditions. Similarly, Atmasari (2023), in a study entitled "*Coping Stress Strategies among Adolescents Facing Parental Divorce,"* found that adolescents experiencing parental divorce employed both *problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping*. This finding indicates that adolescents may utilize different *coping* strategies according to the demands of their experiences. However, the study did not specifically examine Generation Z adolescents within the context of Be Home Indonesia.

Studies of coping after parental divorce have mostly examined adolescents and report both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Atmasari & Adzkia, 2023, whereas Generation Z coping has been studied mainly in other stressors, such as internships (Lubis & Komalasari, 2024). Less is known about how people now in young adulthood recall coping with a divorce that occurred earlier in life, and about whether the framework's indicators, developed for stressors people try to change, fit a stressor that cannot be changed. This study therefore describes how Generation Z young adults recall coping with their parents' divorce, using the framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), and examines how well each indicator fits these accounts. Its contribution is empirical and conceptual: an account of what coping targets when the stressor is fixed, and an assessment of which indicators the data support. The study does not evaluate any intervention.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore and describe the *coping* strategies used by Generation Z adolescents with divorced parents in dealing with the consequences of parental divorce, particularly through *problem-focused coping* and *emotion-focused coping* based on the framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The study further seeks to understand the forms of support and contextual factors that accompany adolescents' *coping* processes. The novelty of the study is its examination of the intersection between Generation Z characteristics, parental divorce, and coping within the contextual setting of Be Home Indonesia. The contribution of this research is expected to strengthen the literature on adolescent coping and provide practical

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insights for social work practice by identifying forms of individual and social support that may help adolescents adapt to changes in family conditions and maintain their social functioning.

Previous studies have examined coping strategies among adolescents experiencing parental divorce and among Generation Z individuals facing stress in other contexts. However, these studies address different circumstances and do not fully explain how Generation Z young adults whose parents are divorced describe their responses to the practical and emotional consequences of parental divorce. This study addresses this contextual gap by examining problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping through the retrospective accounts of six young adults. Rather than assuming that participation in a digital community determines coping responses, the study focuses on the strategies described by the informants and the social resources they reported using. Its contribution lies in providing a contextual account of how coping responses vary according to individual appraisals, circumstances, and available support.

METHODS

Design. This study used a qualitative descriptive design. The unit of analysis was the informant's account of coping with parental divorce (six accounts), organized in a categorization matrix by informant and indicator. The accounts are bounded by three conditions: birth between 1997 and 2003, parental divorce, and an interview in August 2026. Be Home Indonesia, a predominantly online community for people with broken-home experiences that operates mainly through Instagram, served as one recruitment channel. It was not analyzed as a causal or contextual influence.

Recruitment and informants. Informants were recruited through two routes: the researcher's personal network and comments on Be Home Instagram posts about broken home experiences. The researcher contacted candidates directly, did not act on behalf of Be Home, and received no membership list, so informants were not necessarily members. Inclusion criteria were birth between 1997 and 2003 and parental divorce. The founder of Be Home provided information about the community as a supporting informant. The characteristics of the six informants, including their age at interview, age at parental divorce, and recruitment channels, are presented in Table 1. *Identify the informants using codes only*.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Informants

Code Informants	Year of birth	Age at interview	Age at parents' divorce	Recruitment channel
1	2001	25	4-5 years (elementary school)	Contacted candidates
2	2003	23	19-20 years (university)	Comments on Be Home Instagram
3	1998	28	Elementary school	Contacted candidates
4	2002	24	7-8 years (grade 1)	Comments on Be Home Instagram
5	1998	27	Approx. elementary to senior school	Contacted candidates
6	2002	24	Grade 5-6	Contacted candidates

Source: Research Data, 2026.

Informants were adults at interview, so their accounts are retrospective: they describe coping from the time of the divorce to the present. Data collection. Six semi structured interviews were conducted between 11 and 31 August 2026, one in person and five online. The interview guide covered the divorce experience and the eight coping indicators. Observation was limited to informants' verbal and non-verbal responses during interviews, recorded with a seven-aspect guide; relationships with parents were not observed and come only from interview accounts. Documentation consisted of.

Analysis. Analysis followed the interactive model of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). Accounts were condensed into a matrix and coded deductively

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against the eight indicators using the rules in Table 2. Material that fit no indicator (lingering effects, caregiving roles) was kept as separate codes and reported as such.

Trustworthiness. Credibility was supported by technique triangulation across interviews, observation during interviews, and documentation. Observation notes recorded a similar calm demeanor across informants and added little independent evidence on coping, so interview accounts are the primary evidence. The supporting informant provided information about the community only, not about informants' coping.

Ethics. Informants received information on purpose and procedures and gave written informed consent. Identities are coded, and identifying details of third parties were removed from quotations. Public Instagram comments were used only to contact candidates and are not quoted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Coping Responses to Parental Divorce

The accounts of the six informants indicate that coping with parental divorce involved both efforts to manage practical circumstances and efforts to regulate emotional responses. However, these responses varied according to how the informants understood the divorce, the aspects of their lives they perceived as manageable, and the support available to them. Four informants explicitly described the divorce as a circumstance beyond their control (Informants 2, 3, 4, and 6). Accordingly, their responses were generally directed toward managing its consequences rather than changing the divorce itself.

The findings are presented through the two broad dimensions of coping proposed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984): problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The categories are interpreted cautiously because some reported behaviors overlap in their purpose and do not always fit exclusively into one theoretical indicator.

Problem-Focused Coping

Managing Problems Within One's Control

The findings suggest that problem-focused responses were primarily directed toward aspects of life that informants believed they could manage. None of the informants reported attempting to reverse their parents' divorce. Instead, their responses focused on preparing themselves emotionally, continuing educational or personal activities, and addressing specific difficulties arising from their family circumstances.

Three informants (Informants 2, 3, and 4) described calming themselves before deciding what to do. Informant 3 explained, "Once I am calmer and my mind is clearer, only then can I decide what I should do to solve the problem." This account illustrates that informants did not necessarily move directly from recognizing a problem to taking action. In some cases, managing their emotional state was an initial step before considering possible responses.

Other informants described directing their attention toward self-improvement, reading, education, or constructive activities (Informants 1, 2, 4, and 6). Informant 5, meanwhile, described talking with friends, although not every conversation about a problem necessarily constituted a deliberate problem-solving effort. Two informants had consulted psychologists or psychiatrists (Informants 1 and 3), while Informant 6 expressed an intention to seek professional assistance. These accounts indicate different ways of responding to the consequences of parental divorce, but they should not automatically be interpreted as the same coping strategy. For example, calming down may primarily serve emotional regulation, whereas planning a specific action to address a manageable difficulty more directly reflects problem-focused coping.

The problem being addressed also differed across informants. Most accounts concerned emotional experiences and daily functioning, while Informant 6 referred to a financial issue involving relatives. Informant 5 did not regard the divorce itself as a problem that needed to be solved. Taken together, these findings suggest that problem-focused coping was directed toward the consequences of parental divorce that informants considered open to action, rather than toward the parental decision itself.

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Communication of Feelings and Responses to Conflict

The findings indicate that the informants responded to their parents' divorce in different ways. Some described accepting the situation and making peace with themselves, while others expressed their emotions privately or sought professional assistance when they felt unable to manage their difficulties independently. Not all informants perceived the divorce as a problem requiring specific coping efforts. One informant, for example, reported feeling relieved rather than distressed by the separation. In contrast, another described spending excessive time outside the home, leaving without informing family members, and experiencing a loss of motivation. These accounts suggest that coping responses varied according to how the informants perceived and experienced their family circumstances. Several informants described communicating their feelings to family members or other trusted individuals. Informants 1, 3, and 5 reported expressing their feelings directly, while Informants 4 and 6 preferred communicating through messages or letters. Informant 4 explained, "When I use chat or a letter, I feel freer and more open." Informant 2 described expressing feelings when an opportunity arose and otherwise processing them alone.

Communication emerged as one of the ways informants expressed their feelings and responded to changes in family relationships following parental divorce. Their communication practices included open discussions with family members, private conversations, written messages or letters, telephone calls, and video calls. However, the degree of openness varied across informants. While some felt comfortable expressing their feelings directly, others preferred written communication or one-on-one conversations to discuss personal matters. One informant also described difficulties communicating with a parent, leading to more limited exchanges focused on everyday updates. These findings highlight the importance of considering not only whether informants communicated their feelings, but also the forms of communication they found comfortable and the relational circumstances that shaped those interactions.These accounts demonstrate that informants used different communication channels to express emotional experiences.

However, expressing feelings does not, by itself, establish the presence of confrontative coping. Within the framework of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), confrontative coping involves efforts to confront or change a stressful situation. The accounts presented here do not show that informants attempted to challenge or reverse their parents' decision to divorce. Therefore, communication of feelings is more appropriately described as an observed response unless further evidence establishes that a particular action was intended to confront or change a stressful circumstance. One informant (Informant 6) also described a period of leaving home without informing family members and experiencing reduced motivation, which the informant regarded as unhelpful. This account differs from the more deliberate communication described by other informants and cautions against treating all responses to family stress as equally constructive. Overall, the findings show variation in how informants communicated or managed their feelings, but the available accounts do not sufficiently establish confrontative coping as a distinct pattern across the group.

Social Support as a Resource

Social support emerged as a recurring resource in all six informants' accounts. Friends were mentioned by Informants 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, while family members were mentioned by Informants 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Informant 1 identified emotional support as particularly helpful, explaining, "The support that helped most was emotional support."

Three informants (Informants 2, 4, and 6) emphasized the value of interacting with friends who had similar experiences. Informant 4 explained that sharing with someone who had experienced a similar situation made the informant feel less likely to be judged. This suggests that the perceived value of support was related not only to the availability of other people but also to whether the informants felt understood and accepted. Material assistance was also reported by Informants 3, 5, and 6. Informants 4 and 6 described online friendships or online sharing, while Informants 1 and 3 reported experiences involving professional help.

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These findings establish that social support was present in the informants' accounts, but receiving support should be distinguished from actively seeking it. The accounts indicate that support came through different relationships and circumstances; they do not establish that all six informants deliberately sought support in the same way. Accordingly, social support is best understood as an important resource accompanying their coping experiences, with differences in its sources, forms, and perceived usefulness.

Emotion-Focused Coping

Emotional Regulation and Temporary Diversion

The informants described several ways of managing emotional responses to parental divorce. Four informants (Informants 2, 3, 4, and 6) reported crying as a way of releasing emotions, often in private. Informant 6 stated, "There are times when emotions need to be released rather than suppressed." Four informants (Informants 1, 2, 4, and 6) also described activities such as reading, exercising, listening to music, or watching entertainment. Breathing techniques were mentioned by Informants 3 and 4, while other accounts referred to prayer, patience, or gratitude.

These practices indicate that informants responded to emotional distress in different ways. Some allowed themselves to express emotions, while others used activities or personal practices to manage their emotional states. Two informants (Informants 2 and 4) also described restrictions on emotional expression in the past. This variation shows that emotional regulation was not a uniform process across the six accounts.

The reported activities should nevertheless be interpreted according to their function and context. An activity such as reading, exercising, or spending time alone may provide temporary relief, but its presence alone does not establish whether it effectively resolved distress. The findings therefore describe the strategies reported by informants without assuming that every strategy produced a positive or lasting outcome.

Acceptance of the Situation and Its Limits

All six informants described some form of acceptance or adjustment to the consequences of parental divorce, although the process differed across individuals. Four informants (Informants 2, 3, 4, and 6) viewed the divorce as beyond their control. Informants 1, 4, and 5 described circumstances in which separation was considered preferable to continued conflict at home. Informants 1 and 5 described accepting the situation relatively early, whereas Informant 6 emphasized that acceptance was gradual and not yet complete.

Two informants (Informants 2 and 5) also described taking on caregiving or financial responsibilities toward family members. These responsibilities are relevant to understanding their circumstances, but they should not be treated as evidence of "accepting responsibility" in the specific theoretical sense of acknowledging one's own role in a problem. The categorization data indicate that none of the informants attributed their parents' divorce to themselves.

The findings therefore support an interpretation of situational acceptance: informants were attempting to come to terms with circumstances that they could not directly change. This is conceptually different from accepting personal responsibility for causing or contributing to a stressful event. Their accounts also indicate that acceptance varied in pace and completeness, rather than occurring as a single, definitive outcome.

Positive Reappraisal and Continuing Effects

All six informants identified changes, lessons, or meanings associated with their experiences. Informants 3, 5, and 6 described increased independence; Informants 1, 2, and 3 referred to empathy or openness; and Informants 2, 3, and 4 described changes in their views of marriage or relationships. Informants 2, 3, and 5 also viewed the separation as an exit from an unhealthy household.

These accounts illustrate positive reappraisal, in which individuals identify alternative meanings or lessons in a stressful experience. However, positive interpretations coexisted with continuing effects. Five informants (Informants 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) described effects that persisted or recurred, including fear of marriage, a

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reduced sense of family togetherness, or experiences of stigma in relationships. Informant 2, for example, stated that they still did not feel ready to marry.

Consequently, identifying positive meanings should not be equated with the disappearance of distress or the complete resolution of the consequences of parental divorce. The findings instead suggest that positive reappraisal and continuing emotional effects can coexist. Coping, in these accounts, was an ongoing process in which individuals could recognize lessons or changes while still experiencing difficulties related to their family histories.

Distancing and Avoidance-Related Responses

The informants described responses involving time alone, outings with friends, shifting attention toward other priorities, limiting disclosure about family circumstances, and temporarily moving away from stressful people or places. Informants 1 and 4 described spending time alone, while Informants 3 and 5 referred to outings or time with friends. Informant 6 described redirecting attention toward other priorities, and Informant 2 described limiting what was shared about family circumstances.

Some of these responses appeared to function as temporary pauses rather than a refusal to address a problem. Informant 4 emphasized that the intention was "not to avoid, but so that my mood improves and I feel ready to face it calmly." This distinction highlights the importance of considering the purpose of an action rather than classifying it solely by its outward form.

At the same time, the accounts of Informants 3, 5, and 6 were similar across the initial categories of distancing and escape-avoidance. The available data therefore do not consistently distinguish these two indicators. Rather than treating them as clearly separate strategies, the findings are more cautiously described as distancing and avoidance-related responses whose functions may differ according to context. Further probing would be needed to establish whether a particular response represented temporary emotional recovery, ongoing avoidance, or another form of coping.

Discussion

Overall, the findings indicate that the informants' coping responses were shaped by their appraisals of the circumstances surrounding parental divorce and the resources they perceived as available. Consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional perspective, the informants did not uniformly attempt to change the stressful event itself. Instead, they described responses directed toward manageable aspects of their lives, alongside efforts to regulate emotional experiences. The accounts also show that these two dimensions can overlap: calming down, for example, may help an individual prepare to make a decision, even though emotional regulation is not itself evidence of problem-solving action.

This pattern provides a contextual point of comparison with Lubis and Komalasari (2024), who examined coping among Generation Z students experiencing internship-related stress. Both contexts involve problem-focused and emotion-focused responses, but the stressors and the degree to which they can be changed differ. In the present study, the informants generally regarded their parents' decision to divorce as beyond their control. Therefore, the findings suggest that their problem-focused efforts were directed more toward the consequences of the divorce than toward the original event. This interpretation is limited to the accounts of the six informants and should not be generalized to all Generation Z individuals with divorced parents.

Social support was a recurring resource across the six accounts. Friends and family were frequently mentioned, while some informants described material assistance, online sharing, or professional help. The accounts involving peers with similar experiences suggest that perceived understanding and reduced fear of judgment were important features of support. This finding is consistent with the broader relevance of social support in coping, while also showing that support should not be treated as a single, uniform experience. The data establish that informants reported receiving support; they do not demonstrate that every informant actively sought it or that the support had the same effect in every case.

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The findings also require careful interpretation of the theoretical categories. Communication of feelings did not consistently demonstrate confrontative coping, because the accounts did not establish a clear intention to change or challenge the stressful situation. Similarly, accepting the circumstances of parental divorce differed from accepting personal responsibility for a problem. The informants did not attribute the divorce to themselves. These distinctions matter because assigning a theoretical label solely on the basis of a behavior's outward form may obscure its purpose and the meaning it holds for the individual.

A related issue concerns the overlap between distancing and escape-avoidance. Some informants described temporary diversion or time away from stressful situations as a way to regain emotional readiness, whereas other responses were less clearly differentiated in the data. These findings suggest that the function, duration, and context of a behavior need to be considered before interpreting it as adaptive coping or avoidance. The current data are insufficient to establish the effectiveness of each response, and the overlapping accounts indicate a need for more precise questioning in future research.

Positive reappraisal also coexisted with continuing emotional and relational effects. Although all six informants identified lessons or changes associated with parental divorce, five described effects that persisted or recurred. This suggests that finding meaning in an experience does not necessarily mean that its consequences have disappeared. The findings should therefore be interpreted as accounts of coping and adjustment, not as evidence of complete recovery or of the effectiveness of a particular strategy.

Although the study was conducted in the context of Be Home Indonesia Official, no informant directly identified Be Home as a source of coping support in the accounts presented here. Online support was mentioned by two informants, but the available data do not establish that this support came from Be Home or that the community shaped their coping strategies. Consequently, this study cannot draw conclusions about Be Home's influence or effectiveness. Its contribution is instead a contextual description of coping experiences among six Generation Z young adults whose parents are divorced.

Implications for social work

The findings suggest that social work practice can begin by recognizing the resources and coping efforts already present in individuals' lives. Supportive responses may include listening without judgment, helping individuals identify manageable concerns, and respecting differences in how they express emotions or seek assistance. Peer-based opportunities may be considered where appropriate, but participation should remain optional because the informants described different preferences and sources of support.

The accounts involving professional help also suggest the value of making information about available services and referral pathways accessible. However, the present study did not evaluate a particular intervention, and its findings do not establish that any proposed program would be effective. These implications should therefore be understood as practice considerations informed by the reported experiences, rather than evidence of the feasibility or effectiveness of a specific program.

CONCLUSION

This study found that Generation Z young adults whose parents divorced recalled using both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping, but directed problem-focused effort at what could be changed, not at the divorce itself. The strongest insight is conceptual: two framework indicators fit poorly when the stressor is fixed, because no informant contested the divorce and acceptance concerned reality, not personal responsibility. Social support was reported by all informants, and most chose their confidants. Emotion-focused coping combined controlled emotional release, diversion, acceptance at different paces, and reappraisal alongside lingering effects. Differences among informants appeared related to how they appraised the divorce, their circumstances, and available support. Social work support can build on these strengths through optional peer spaces and clearer referral pathways. The findings are limited to six retrospective accounts, recruitment through acquaintances and a public online community may have favored people willing to discuss divorce openly, recall may be imperfect,

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and data saturation was not tested. Future research could include younger participants and examine online communities directly.

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Author Contributions
Annisa Eva Amelia Pribadi: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Data Analysis, and Writing, Original Draft. Risna Resnawaty: Supervision, Validation, and Writing, Review & Editing. Dyana Chusnulitta Jatnika: Supervision, Validation, and Writing, Review & Editing.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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