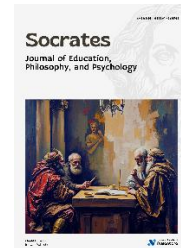




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The Importance of Fathers Roles in Early Childhood Care

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Abstract: The importance of father involvement in child care has become a topic that is often researched, both internationally and in Indonesia. However, in Indonesia, the role of fathers in child care is still not optimal. active that involves physical, affective and cognitive. This article was written using the literature study method. This research shows that the presence of fathers in children's lives has a significant role, especially in children's social development. Fathers, as part of the family, are expected not only to be breadwinners but also to contribute actively in parenting to create optimal child development. Father's involvement in raising children has a significant impact on three main domains, namely cognitive, affective and behavioral. supervising, being involved in the child's development process, being a provider of needs, showing affection, protecting, providing emotional support, carrying out responsibilities, nurturing, caring for children, sharing pleasant moments, being present when needed, making plans, and participating in various activities together.

Keyword: Father's Role, Parenting, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, various societies around the world have tended to divide roles between men and women within the family. Men generally bear the responsibility for providing for the family's economic needs, while women are more often expected to manage the household, prepare meals, and care for their children (Wahyuni, 2021). However, social changes have influenced parenting patterns. While mothers used to stay at home and be solely responsible for childcare, while fathers served as the primary breadwinners, these roles have now often shifted, with both parents working. The phenomenon of working mothers has become a part of modern life, no longer considered a deviation from the norm, but rather a response to ongoing social changes.

Observations of families in Indonesia generally show that the task of educating and caring for children is largely considered the responsibility of mothers. Most magazines and books discussing childcare are aimed at mothers. Even in scientific studies, the role of fathers in childcare often receives less attention, as evidenced by the lack of research specifically addressing paternal involvement in childcare.

The development of children aged 0 to 8 is often referred to as the golden age. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, this period is divided into several age groups: 0-3 years, 3-5 years, and 6-8 years (Suryana, 2014). During this period, children experience age-appropriate growth, encompassing six key developmental areas: physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, artistic, language, and religious and moral values. These developmental stages require the full support of the family, which serves as the primary foundation for a child's development.

Development can be defined as a qualitative process that reflects changes in the abilities and skills of an individual as a whole. This is clearly visible through human personality, where each individual personality forms a unified and inseparable whole. During this developmental period, parents serve as primary role models for their children, who will imitate what they observe in their father's and mother's activities. The role of both parents is crucial for them. Not only the mother, but the father's role is also crucial in supporting a child's growth and development. Involving a father in early childhood care is essential.

Fathers' involvement in parenting is a form of active contribution that encompasses physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects. According to Allen and Sarah (2007), fathers who actively interact with their children and pay attention to their development can create a sense of closeness and comfort. Two types of father involvement consistently found are acceptance-responsiveness, which encompasses warm and tolerant behavior, and demandingness-control, which relates to discipline and supervision.

Contrary to what Hedo (2020) suggests, fathers' parenting involves interactions, providing experiences, opportunities for the child's interests, protection, and other positive support. The Quran lists 17 conversations between parents and children, of which 14 are conversations between father and child, 2 between mother and child, and the remainder are between parents and children in general (Allen and Daly, 2007). This indicates that fathers play a dominant role in parent-child conversations according to the Quran.

The presence of fathers in parenting is crucial for supporting a child's holistic development. Not only is the mother the child's first educator, but the father is also expected to act as a "principal" working collaboratively with the mother. The concept of fathering emphasizes the father's contribution to the parenting process as an integral part of parenting. Collaboration between the father and mother creates a balanced role within the family, allowing both to serve as complete role models for the child. With a balanced father's role, he can be a strong role model for his child in navigating life.

METHOD

This article was written using the literature review method, an assessment approach that aims to collect, integrate, and evaluate various studies relevant to a specific topic. According to Setyosari (2010), literature can be found in scientific books and journal articles, which typically include an overview of the research topic, supporting theories, the issues raised, and the methods and methodology used.

In the data collection process, the technique used involves searching for written materials relevant to the core problem being studied. These materials can include books, journals, articles, and other supporting documents. This step aims to strengthen the arguments presented in the article through references relevant to the topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The parents of a 5-year-old child participated in an in-depth, face-to-face interview. They are a young couple, with the mother marrying at 15 and the father at 18. Their child was born when the mother was 16 and the father was 19. This young age presents unique challenges in building a household and raising a child. The father works as a factory worker, while the mother plays the role of a housewife (Nurjanah, 2023).

Both parents shared their experiences raising their child. The father plays the role of breadwinner, while childcare falls entirely on the mother. The couple's parenting experience is considered suboptimal due to their lack of knowledge, psychological immaturity as parents, and the influence of a patriarchal culture that views childcare as the mother's primary responsibility, while the father focuses solely on the breadwinner. The impact of this division of parenting roles on the child is further explored in the narrative.

Father Involvement in Child Development

The presence of fathers in children's lives plays a significant role, particularly in their social development. In addition to meeting family needs, fathers are also expected to pay attention to their children's surroundings (Aisyah, Dewi Siti, Nancy Riana, 2019). Fathers' involvement is often demonstrated through physical activities, such as rocking horses, cycling, playing ball, and other physical activities. Research shows that male educators tend to encourage children to participate in activities that involve gross motor skills and are challenging. Conversely, female educators often direct children toward quiet activities, such as reading, which involve less noise (Allen, Sarah, 2007).

Fathers' participation in parenting has been shown to positively impact children's enthusiasm for learning and various aspects of their development. According to research by Wijayanti and Resti Mia (2020), active fathers in parenting contribute to children's development in language, cognitive skills, religious and moral values (NAM), social-emotional skills, arts, and motor skills. Novela (2019) also states that individual development is a comprehensive process involving creativity, cognitive, social, language, and motor skills, with early childhood being the "golden age" for intensive growth. During this period, both parents, including fathers, serve as primary role models for children, who tend to imitate their behavior.

The role of fathers is no less important than that of mothers in parenting. Paternal involvement is closely related to the development of a child's moral intelligence. This indicates that fathers have a significant influence on the formation of a child's character. Another study by Bussa and Bernadete Dewi (2018) shows that paternal involvement in parenting can reduce negative behaviors in children. However, fathers' busy schedules outside the home often hinder communication and time spent with their children. However, many fathers still play an active role in educating and caring for their children.

Thus, involvement is a continuous, active participation in childcare. This involvement encompasses aspects of frequency, initiative, and personal empowerment across the physical, social, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions. Sensitivity is the ability to understand and respond appropriately to a child's needs. Sensitivity is an ability that comes from experience (Andayani, 2014). Therefore, it can be assumed that high involvement will be followed by high sensitivity. Lamb et al. in the book Jacobs and Kelly put forward 4 categories of factors that influence fathers' involvement in parenting based on a summary of the opinions of several experts, namely: Fathers' motivation to be involved in their children's lives. This father's motivational factor can be seen from their commitment and identification with the father's role. Another factor that influences fathers' motivation to be involved with their children is career saliency. Men who are less emotionally attached to their jobs can spend more time with their children. Low job salience predicts greater participation in child care.

1. Skills and confidence in the fathering role (father self-efficacy). Self-efficacy and satisfaction in parenting are two components of skills and confidence that influence father involvement. Research has shown that self-efficacy in parenting is related to father involvement in parenting. In other studies, fathers reported lower levels of self-efficacy than mothers. Fathers who perceived themselves as having greater parenting skills reported greater involvement and responsibility in childcare tasks.
2. Social support and stress. Mothers' beliefs about fathers' parenting, marital satisfaction, and work-family conflict are social support and stress factors that have been found to influence fathers' involvement in caregiving. In general, women's beliefs about how their

partners should be involved in caregiving are related to men's involvement. Positive emotional interactions with their partners can influence men's thinking and strengthen their desire to be involved in all aspects of family life. Some studies have shown that fathers with high marital satisfaction report greater participation in caregiving. High marital satisfaction is associated with high-quality father-child interactions. However, other studies have found that, for men, greater time spent on childcare is associated with lower marital satisfaction.

3. Institutional factors (e.g., job characteristics). Institutional factors include workplace policies (e.g., parental departure times, work schedule flexibility). The more hours a father works, the less involvement he has with his children. The more hours a woman works, the greater the father's involvement in childcare.

Early Childhood Development

According to Syafiqoh (2022), early childhood has several main characteristics, including:

1. Actively exploring and adventurous.
2. Always doing activities spontaneously.
3. Fantasy worlds are their main attraction.
4. Easily frustrated.
5. Weak attention span.
6. Eager to learn from experience.
7. Highly interested in playing with peers.
8. Unique personality.
9. Self-centered.

During this period, the family plays a crucial role in supporting physical, cognitive, social-emotional, and other developmental aspects. Fathers, as members of the family, are expected not only to be breadwinners but also to actively contribute to childcare to ensure optimal child development.

Father Involvement in Parenting

Fathers' involvement in childcare has a significant impact on three key domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. This can be achieved through various stimuli, such as spending time with children, consistent levels of involvement, emphasizing the importance of the father's presence, and fostering openness and emotional closeness. According to Palkovits (Cabrera et al., 2007), fathers can participate in their children's lives in fifteen ways: communicating, educating, monitoring and supervising, being involved in the child's developmental process, providing for their needs, showing affection, protecting, providing emotional support, assuming responsibility, nurturing, caring for the child, sharing joyful moments, being present when needed, making plans, and participating in various activities together.

Fathers play a crucial role in developing children's intellectual abilities, problem-solving skills, and various cognitive aspects (Sholikhah, 2019). A father's presence from an early age can help optimize a child's cognitive development. Furthermore, a close bond between father and child can positively influence the child's character development. A warm father-child relationship is also closely linked to improved academic performance. A harmonious relationship between father and child not only motivates children to achieve but also positively impacts their behavior. Father involvement helps reduce behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in girls. Thus, an active father's role in parenting has significant benefits in supporting a child's overall growth and development.

Benefits of Father Involvement in Early Childhood Development Development of Religious and Moral Values

As Erikson argued, children learn what is expected of them. If children are given limited freedom, they will become independent. It is the father's role to provide a good example for their children. In terms of religious and moral development, fathers play a significant role in guiding their children. First, in matters of religion, the father is the family leader. Because this is the core belief within the family, his role is crucial. Furthermore, in matters of worship, the father is a role model for his children, such as leading prayers, where the father serves as an example for his children.

Morals and Ethics

Morals encompass morals, ethics, behavior, and positive aspects that form the foundation of a child's life, in addition to the crucial religious values. In this regard, children tend to pay attention to how their parents speak and what they convey, which is then imprinted in their memories from an early age. Therefore, role modeling and habituation are essential in providing examples of good behavior.

Cognitive Development

The role of fathers is crucial in supporting children's cognitive development, including intellectual abilities, problem-solving, and other aspects related to cognition (Budiono, n.d.). With paternal involvement from an early age, children's cognitive abilities can develop optimally. The emotional bond between father and child also has a positive influence on the child's character. The warmth of the father-child relationship is also closely related to academic performance, which can motivate children to achieve. Furthermore, paternal involvement helps reduce behavioral problems in boys and reduces the risk of psychological problems in girls.

Social-Emotional Development

Social-emotional aspects are a crucial part of child development that must be addressed from an early age because they are directly related to emotions. Emotions influence how a person feels and shape communication and social interactions. Emotions encompass feelings, thoughts, psychological and biological states, and tendencies to act. Good emotional development plays a crucial role in shaping positive attitudes and behaviors. Effective emotional management from an early age will impact daily behavior and social relationships.

In this regard, the role of fathers is crucial, as their presence can help children better manage their emotions. Even through physical touch, fathers can provide a sense of calm and comfort to their children, which is crucial for building emotional stability. A happy child will impact their emotional development, as well as their social influence. Paternal involvement is positively associated with a child's social competence, maturity, and ability to relate to others.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that father involvement in raising children is essential for the child's development. When a child is close to his father, the child always feels safe, happy, comfortable, and content. If a father sincerely provides for all his child's needs with sincerity and honesty. As the head of the family or father, his position influences the continuation of the child's life journey. Continuing to grow and develop at every stage through communication with the father has a positive impact by gaining experiences that the child will emulate later in life. Many fathers already understand the meaning of parenting. Fathers also understand that participating in caring for children is very important for their future development. Various experiences shared with fathers, children will grow into strong, great, and happy humans in every journey of their life until adulthood.

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