

Fathers' Experiences in Parenting Roles: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study aims to explore the experiences of fathers in childcare roles, especially in fathers who are active in child care. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with five fathers who were actively involved in the parenting process of their children. Data analysis is carried out using Individual Phenomenon Analysis (DFI). The results showed several key findings: first, these fathers underwent a transformation in the perception and exercise of their role as caregivers; second, the challenges and barriers they face in carrying out these roles, including persistent social expectations and gender norms; Third, the positive benefits felt by fathers and their children from fathers' involvement in parenting, such as closer emotional connection and more optimal child development. These findings provide deep insight into the importance of fathers' roles in childcare and emphasize the importance of community support and policies that support fathers' involvement in parenting roles.

Keywords: *Parenting, Father's involvement in parenting, Fatherless*

In an online newspaper article, Desideria (2015) stated that Indonesia is considered a country where the presence of a father does not exist spiritually, and is referred to as a "country without a father." The negative impacts of father's absence on children's growth and development include lack of confidence, difficulty adjusting to the environment, emotional control disorders, immature behavior, hesitation in making decisions, and others (Munjiat, 2017).

Losing a father figure can also affect the process of a child's gender identification. Jackson's (2010) research suggests that for adolescent girls, a father's absence can affect the formation of self-concept and relationships with the opposite sex. Regarding adolescent boys, Greenson (in Benjamin, 2012) suggests that the role of fathers has a strong influence on the gender identity of adolescent boys, because adolescent boys have the same needs.

Brooks (2001) explains that parenting is a process that refers to a series of actions and interactions carried out by parents to support child development. However, in conventional societies, the role of the father is often limited to the breadwinner and is rarely involved in the direct upbringing of children. Similarly, in Indonesia, there are still many families who

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experience imbalances in the roles of fathers and mothers in parenting. Patriarchal culture is still strongly embraced, there is a dichotomy of duty that Father is in charge outside or in public spaces, while Mother is in the domestic realm. Facts in Indonesia show that fathers still lack attention and involvement in the care of their children. So it is not surprising that some time ago there was a survey that stated that Indonesia is a fatherless country (Desideria, 2015), or the lack of role of father figures in the parenting process, both physically and psychologically. The loss of a father can be caused by neglect or divorce (Alfaruq & Indrawati, 2021). The impact of fatherless on children, including having problems with anxiety disorders and depression, (Kandel et al, 1994), to becoming psychiatric patients in hospitals, (Block, 1988) involved with early sexual activity, drug abuse, mood disorders, and involved in serious delinquency or criminal acts, (Fergusson et al, 1944).

Borba (2008), as explained in research by Septiani & Nasution (2018), suggests that parenting has a significant role in shaping children's personality. Thus, the presence of fathers in childcare is considered equivalent to the role of a mother, a view expressed in research by Rahardjo (2015). Research by Parmanti & Purnamasari (2015) highlights that nowadays, father figures have roles that involve parenting, participation in activities, and involvement in children's education issues. Allen & Daly (2002) stated that fathers' involvement is not only limited to positive interactions with children, but also involves attention to child development, creating close and comfortable relationships, and understanding and acceptance of children.

According to Astuti & Masykur (2015) in a phenomenological study quoting Andayani and Koentjoro (2004), aspects of effective fatherly involvement include the quality of the relationship between mother and child, time spent together, application of rules and discipline, guidance of children to face the outside world, providing protection and bread, and being a positive role model. Strengthening, according to Anis, as quoted in research by Prastiyani (2017), the role of fathers is not only as a protector of the family, but also as a guarantor of children's welfare, both physically and psychologically. To ensure a child's well-being, the child's basic needs, such as biological needs, security, affection, self-esteem, actualization, sense of beauty, curiosity, sense of success, and power of guidance, must be met.

The presence of a father is considered important and has a great influence on the life of the child. Fathers' involvement in parenting has a positive impact on a child's social, emotional, and cognitive development. In research by Purwindarini et al. (2014), each family member, including the role of mother and father, exerts a different influence on children. As children grow older, the role of fathers becomes more numerous and complex in supporting child development.

In a study by Tatar (2017), it was revealed that the involvement of fathers in parenting has a negative correlation with juvenile delinquency. That is, the higher the father's involvement, the lower the rate of juvenile delinquency, suggesting that fathers' involvement has a positive impact in reducing negative development in a child's life. Another study by Miftah et al. (2019) stated that fathers' involvement has the most dominant influence on the learning outcomes of grade IV students, signifying that fathers' involvement contributes to children's development through their academic achievement.

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Likewise, in research on early childhood care, the involvement of fathers has a positive impact on early childhood development, physically and mentally. Maisyarah et al. (2017), describe fathers as heroes for children because they have the power to protect themselves and their families. Parenting by fathers also teaches children to develop a sense of responsibility and independent living. Paternal involvement also plays a role in social-emotional development in early childhood. This aspect includes several things, such as the ability to socialize, express yourself, be independent, community, and develop leadership. Mansur (2009), as explained in research by Baqi & Sholihah (2019), highlights the importance of developing these aspects in shaping the balance of early childhood social-emotional development.

In every phase of child development, the role of the father has significant implications. When the child is still a baby, an active father is present, able to bring a sense of security and protection to the baby and also the mother who is still in the process of postpartum recovery. When children begin to enter toddler age and old age in elementary school age, the involvement of fathers in parenting is proven to improve children's social interaction skills. Likewise, the presence of fathers in the process of adolescent growth and development is reported to increase self-confidence in children and minimize the occurrence of juvenile delinquency (Harmaini, et al., 2015)

Thus, some phenomena show that the traditional role of fathers in the family has undergone significant changes in recent decades (Flouri, 2005). Shifts in social outlook and changes in family dynamics have resulted in increased paternal participation in child care. Many fathers today contribute as active figures in the upbringing of their children. Not only responsible for providing for the family, fathers also began to play an important role in the development and education of their children (Febriyani, 2022). This fact can be seen from the growth of communities and individuals who strive to prioritize the importance of the role of fathers in child development. Now, the father's duties are not only limited to earning a living, but are also judged based on his involvement in raising children, as Santrock (2002a) argues.

The increasing number of fathers who are increasingly open to their presence, both physically and psychologically in parenting, is the basis for this research with the aim of finding out what experiences fathers have gained while being with children. Understanding fathers' experiences in caregiving roles can provide valuable insight into the challenges and joys they experience, as well as how fatherhood can impact child development. It could also provide the basis for better programs and support for fathers who want to play a more active role in the care of their children.

Qualitative research has advantages in exploring personal experiences and individual viewpoints. Therefore, this qualitative research will explore the experiences of fathers who are active in child care in the hope that it can provide a deep understanding of the role of fathers in the modern family and how it affects family relationships and child development. Through this qualitative research, it is hoped that more in-depth nuances will be revealed about fathers' experiences in parenting and how this role develops in modern family dynamics. In addition, the results of this study are expected to make a valuable contribution to the literature on developmental psychology and parenting, as well as assist in identifying areas that require further attention in an effort to understand and support the role of fathers in parenting.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative-phenomenological research methods were chosen in this study on the grounds that the emergence of consciousness and experience is a topic of a personal and complex nature. Moleong (2011) defines qualitative research as research that is used to understand phenomena experienced by research participants (for example behavior, motivation and actions).

The data obtained are then analyzed by the Individual Phenomenon Description (DFI) method. This approach opens up opportunities to be able to better understand in depth the life experiences and phenomena experienced by individuals.

Sample

The participants in this study were 5 fathers, aged 25-48 years and had children with an age range of 0-17 years, in Malang City who were actively involved in daily child care and care.

Procedure

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews containing a list of questions to be answered by respondents. The advantages of the semi-structured interview approach include its ability to capture the complexity and diversity of responses, as well as giving the interviewer the flexibility to customize their approach. It is often used in qualitative research, case studies, or interviews with subjects who have unique experiences or views.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research applies the Individual Phenomenon Analysis (DFI) approach to process the data. The analysis process involves a series of steps until reaching the synthesis of themes. The analysis of interviews with all participants revealed five distinct episodes in individuals' lives. First is the pre-marriage episode, where subjects haven't experienced significant changes in their lives that would affect how they interact with others and themselves. Second, there's the marriage episode, where participants begin their lives within the institution of marriage and must learn to adapt to a new relationship with their partner. Third, there's the pre-natal episode, where subjects experience significant changes in their lives as prospective parents and begin to develop healthy behaviors for the upcoming child. Fourth is the episode of becoming a father, where subjects take on a new role as fathers with all the responsibilities and affection for their children. Fifth is the episode of becoming a member of society, where participants experience changes in their roles as active, beneficial, and responsible human beings within their surroundings.

It was found that each of these episodes has different impacts on the participants' character and how they face challenges in their roles, particularly as fathers in raising children. This study also revealed the parenting experiences of the participants and their environment since childhood, as well as the characters shaped by parental upbringing and the surrounding environment, such as religious character, simplicity, resilience, high learning motivation, leadership, and visionary traits.

The participants' character greatly influences how they face challenges in their roles, especially in parenting. The participants' religious depth motivates them to choose partners with good religious backgrounds. Choosing a partner then becomes the starting point for parenting. Together with their partners, the subjects build a family vision that leads to their relationship with God. This commitment becomes the key for the subjects in their marriage

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and parenting. Personal parenting experiences, experiences in societal roles, support from spouses, support from work, and support from the children's schools are supportive factors for the participants. The inhibiting factors faced include limited time due to work demands or community service, technological advancements threatening ingrained values, and contradictory cultural-societal values.

Furthermore, the interview results indicate that the five participants involved in this study tend to have positive parenting experiences and minimal negative or traumatic experiences since childhood. Shared experiences with fathers also shape the subjects' self-concepts, such as the concept of men as responsible leaders of the family and involvement in beneficial community activities. All respondents stated that they want to be fully involved in the parenting process and do not want their children to experience fatherlessness. All participants agree that fatherlessness would have negative impacts on children.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that fathers' experiences in parenting have a pattern that is common between fathers, although unique to each individual. Parenting patterns generally include four things: Islamic parenting, parenting that prioritizes equality, authoritative parenting, and parenting that supports children's potential. Factors influencing parenting patterns include character, habits, self-concept, and supporting factors such as personal parenting experience, wife support, employment, and child schooling. Inhibiting factors include technology, community values, and time constraints.

The unique finding of this study is that the principle of religious life is the foundation for the role lived by fathers. The suggestion from this study is that fathers-to-be should be accustomed to doing domestic tasks and be flexible in the distribution of duties with their wives. They are also advised to choose a life partner who has the concept of family and life in line. Other fathers are advised to synergize in carrying out various roles and apply religious values to the family flexibly. In addition, other researchers are advised to expand and deepen research related to fathers' involvement in parenting, as well as use this study as a reference and frame of mind for similar research.

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Conflict of Interest

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