

How Fathers' Involvement Shapes Children's Social-Emotional Wellbeing in Adulthood

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Abstract

Social-emotional development is crucial for children's well-being. Parental support, especially from fathers, can significantly contribute to positive experiences and healthy growth. This study explores the impact of a father's absence on a child's development. Through qualitative interviews with two individuals, 'B' and 'N,' who lacked paternal involvement in childhood, we found that the absence of a father can lead to significant social-emotional challenges. These include difficulty managing emotions, unresolved trauma, low self-confidence, and difficulties in social interactions. This research highlights the importance of a father's presence in a child's life for healthy development.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood, spanning the ages of 0 to 6, is a formative period for a child's development. During this time, children undergo physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that shape their future growth and well-being. The experiences a child has in their early years significantly impact their development. Providing children with nurturing environments and opportunities to learn and grow during this period is essential for their future success. According to Maghfiroh and Suryana, Early Childhood is education that serves children from birth to eight years (Maghfiroh & Suryana, 2021).

Early childhood is a period of rapid growth and development, laying the foundation for future life experiences. Children at this stage are highly receptive and absorb information quickly. This is supported by Ulfa and Na'imah's opinion that early childhood growth is a process in which the process develops from immature to mature child behavior, in which imperfect children become perfect (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020). So that children should be given optimal stimulation in order to become human capital so that when they grow up, they can have a healthy soul physically and spiritually (Fuadia, 2022).

Early childhood development is crucial because children are most receptive to learning during this period. Providing them with appropriate stimulation can significantly enhance their overall development, particularly in the area of social and emotional skills.

Early childhood social-emotional development is crucial for a child's optimal growth. By nurturing these skills from a young age, children can better understand and express their emotions, such as joy, sadness, and anger. This emotional intelligence also helps them adapt to new challenges and build positive relationships. Children with well-developed social-emotional skills are more likely to cope with stress effectively, behave appropriately in various social settings, and succeed academically.

According to Indanah and Yulisetyaningrum, children's social emotional development is a form of training where children learn to adjust to living with the environment and rules around society (Indanah & Yulisetyaningrum, 2019). Khoiruddin said that children's social-emotional development is very important so that it requires a calm and comfortable family environment (Khoiruddin, 2018). That way children can improve all expressions in their behavior such as being cheerful, lively, and become a person who has enthusiasm.

It's universally acknowledged that parents play a crucial role in a child's early education. From the moment of birth, parents are responsible for providing the care and support necessary for a child's physical and emotional growth. As expressed by Puspytasari, the presence of parents is very important for children, because the things that shape children's character are from the family environment (Puspytasari, 2022). This is also corroborated by Ningrum, psychologically children need role models who can be imitated to build children's character, where if the parents set a good example then the child will imitate and develop into a child with a good example (Ningrum, 2017).

Therefore, parents are the main role in parenting to provide stimulation so that children grow up with good character, especially fathers. The role of fathers in childcare is very important. Aryanti revealed that the father's role

will be continuously carried out to optimize in all areas of child development (Aryanti, 2017).

However, many of us know that Indonesia is a country that lacks the role of fathers, reported by Utami et al, it was found that as many as 5.4 million children experienced the loss of a father figure, where this is a lot of children who experience growth without the presence of an active father figure so that the child's psychology is disturbed, especially in girls (Utami et al., 2024).

The loss of a father's role in a young child's life can lead to a fractured relationship between father and child, with fathers assuming that childcare is the responsibility of the mother alone and that the head of the family is only in charge of earning a living and ruling the household. Punch reveals that power is played out in inter- and intra-generational relationships within the family (Punch, 2005). Power is an integral part of this generational process that impacts children's experiences in family relationships.

This poor parenting can lead to inhibited social-emotional development. This poor parenting can lead to inhibition of children's social-emotional development. According to Asscher et al, children's behavioral problems, especially externalizing problems, are a major determinant of parents' sense of competence regarding parenting (Asscher et al., 2006). Meanwhile, Sundari and Herdajani said that children born without a father will cause children to experience several problems, namely loneliness, hatred, lack of self-control and even have problems in psychology (Sundari & Herdajani, 2013). Children who lack the role of fathers in childhood can make their social emotions disturbed such as lack of self-confidence, too independent and do not need the help of others to always run when faced with problems.

Studies have shown that the prevalent patriarchal culture, which often relegates fathers to the sole role of breadwinner, contributes to the diminished role of fathers in their children's lives. This is unfortunate, as research indicates that fathers play a crucial role in their children's social and emotional development.

A father's absence or limited involvement in a child's life can significantly impact their social-emotional development. Children who lack a father's attention and emotional support may struggle with self-esteem, emotional regulation, and forming healthy relationships. They may also be more likely to experience behavioral issues, academic difficulties, and mental health problems like depression and anxiety.

In addition, the absence of the father during the parenting process may also affect the child's identity development and ability to handle stress. Children may have difficulty understanding and imitating positive social behaviors because their fathers often act as leaders and authority figures in the family. Therefore, it is important for fathers to actively and positively participate in their children's lives to help their emotional growth and provide a strong foundation for their social and psychological growth.

The education given by the father to the child also affects the thoughts and actions of the child, if the child gets a good upbringing then the development of the child when he grows up will follow what his father exemplifies, but if the father is not involved in educating the child or the father who always uses violence in educating the child will shape the child's character pattern to be stubborn, unable to regulate emotions, unwilling to try new things, unable to make decisions in a problem and also severe trauma.

From what has been explained above, it can be said that fathers who are not involved in childcare can have a huge impact on the child's growth period, where the child will experience social-emotional problems that will be carried over into adulthood, this is certainly a problem because of the many impacts that can be caused.

Based on what has been explained above, the researcher conducted research on a child and an adult who experienced the lack of a father's role in parenting from an early age. The two research subjects often received harsh treatment from their father so that these two subjects felt afraid of the surrounding environment and also their father. Researchers are interested in examining the lack of father's involvement in social emotional experienced by children until they grow up which will be written in this article with the title "Lack of Father's Role in Childcare and Impact on Social Emotional Development as an Adult" to find out what influences and impacts experienced by children to adulthood due to the lack of involvement of the father's role in childcare from an early age?

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach. Case studies are a type of research designed to examine real-world situations where the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and its context are indistinct. It aimed to understand processes, activities, programs, individuals/limited groups, etc. through time and specific activities.

The study involved two participants. To analyze the data, we employed an interactive approach. This meant continuously analyzing the data both during and after fieldwork until we reached a saturation point. The interactive analysis process consisted of four steps: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

To collect data, researchers conducted interviews with 2 subjects, one of which was a 6-year-old child with the initials "B" and a 21-year-old woman with the initials "N" using a qualitative method of case study type by conducting interviews. The interview method is often used in research to achieve quality data that will be more in-depth.(Yona, 2006) Similarly, researchers use this method to generate deeper and more accurate data and information about the impact experienced by children to adulthood due to the lack of father's involvement in children's social emotional development.

The next stage after the researcher conducted deeper interviews with the two subjects, the researcher found that there was a significant impact experienced by the two subjects due to the lack of presence of a father figure from an early age so that both felt unable to socialize and were not good at managing emotions. The third stage is data collection where the two subjects tell everything experienced by these two subjects, the researcher found that it turns out that the role of the father is very influential on the balance of social-emotional development and can even be in a long time when they are adults. Emotional support from the father really helps both subjects to increase self-confidence and easily manage emotions. Conversely, when they feel the absence of the father's role, the two subjects feel very lonely and become shy, often these two subjects are not confident when they want to socialize with others.

The last stage is that the researcher concludes that the results of this study show that when fathers take care of children from an early age, they have a significant influence on social and emotional development until they become adults. Children who receive consistent physical and emotional support from their fathers tend to have higher self-confidence, better ability to manage stress, and build healthy social relationships. Conversely, a lack of support from fathers can lead to feelings of being undervalued, difficulty building strong relationships, and an increased risk of emotional problems such as depression and anxiety. These results suggest that fathers are critical in parenting, and families, communities and policymakers should work together to support fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A qualitative case study was conducted to examine the experiences of two individuals, a 6-year-old child (B) and a 21-year-old woman (N), who had grown up in a family with a harsh and abusive father. The father's violent behavior, verbal abuse, and lack of positive reinforcement had a significant negative impact on both subjects' self-esteem and sense of belonging.

Subject "B": When the subject imagines his father, he feels fear. This is because he is often scolded, even for minor mistakes. For instance, if he accidentally touches a valuable item like an urn, his father may become very angry and say hurtful things. This has made the subject afraid of his father. In addition, the child never communicates directly with his father because the child is afraid of dealing with his father who always speaks harshly and also beats him.

In this case Andini explained that if children do not get good care during their growth and development, then children cannot grow and develop optimally so that the nation's successors are born with physical, mental, intellectual, social and spiritual defects (Andini, 2019). The impact of violent treatment on children is traumatizing and leaves developmental abnormalities that will affect their adulthood. The same thing was also revealed in Khabibah's research, that the violence experienced by some of these children was not only in the form of beatings, but also harsh words, cruel treatment, neglect, cursing, and some were even victims of sexual violence. Because these children often experience violence in the family, they eventually experience trauma which results in prolonged stress (Khabibah, 2018).

Subject "N" : The subject grew up without a father, which significantly impacted her self-confidence. Her father's harsh and abusive behavior contributed to her feelings of weakness, emotional instability, and difficulty concentrating. These challenges affected her academic performance, as she struggled to focus amidst constant criticism and physical punishment. At school, she often faced isolation and mistreatment due to her quiet nature and lack of friends.

The individual known as "N" experienced a deep emotional dependence on their romantic partner during their formative years. In their relationships, they sought a protective figure, but the reality often fell short of their expectations. Consequently, N frequently encountered emotional challenges while navigating these connections. Related to this, Sari in her research revealed that when someone grows up without a father figure present, they may experience emotional emptiness and the need for deep relationships. In

some cases, the individual may feel lonely and seek replacement in a partner relationship or another person.

Not only that, the subject always remembers what happened what the father did as a child, this makes the subject have a personal grudge that if he sees his father he will feel upset. Related to this, Mardiyati suggests that the consequences of this trauma form a mental wound that is stored and has the potential to undermine a person in doing positive things (Mardiyati, 2015). The effect is that one's life can become unrecorded and even become sad. Fear and trauma also haunt the subject so that it makes the subject unable to live calmly, starting from his not being able to speak in public for fear of being wrong and being yelled at, or when he hears a screaming sound the subject will feel easily surprised. The subject also said that it is not uncommon for him to have difficulty controlling his emotions when he is angry and often does things that his father used to do. As Mahmud stated that the process of child development is greatly influenced by the stimulation he gets from his environment (Mahmud, 2020). Including the process of forming children's character is also greatly influenced by environment. Children tend to quickly imitate the things they see from their environment. When a child is verbally abused, it is likely that the child will do the same thing as an adult. One time the subject consulted a psychologist but due to the high cost the subject finally stopped consulting.

From the explanation above, the impact of the loss of a good father's role can cause various kinds of trauma and fear that can be carried over from childhood to adulthood. Where early childhood should feel calm and also freedom from fear. Children should be allowed to play and also express what is on their minds instead of being yelled at or used as an outlet when angry. The impact experienced by children can affect when they grow up. Where this is experienced by the subject with the initials "N" who has deep trauma from bitter events experienced during childhood.

The solution that can be done by these 2 subjects is to ask a psychologist or counselor for help to express the problems experienced so that it can become a severe trauma. As Romadhona said and that it is important for children who experience fatherlessness to have adequate emotional support from other caregiving figures, as well as obtaining appropriate guidance and attention to help them overcome the challenges faced in building healthy relationships with others (Romadhona & Kuswanto, 2024). Therefore, to overcome this, parents must also realize that the role of both is very important for children, For problems experienced by children can be overcome by spending time with children, providing validation of all children's activities. If the child is traumatized, parents can take the child to meet with a counselor or child psychologist to examine the child's emotional state. As Stone states that counselors trained in play therapy can work with parents and families to help increase resilience in children exposed to trauma (Stone & Bray, 2015).

Swallow et al. found that fathers' active participation in their children's healthcare can significantly benefit the well-being of fathers, mothers, children, and the entire family (Swallow et al., 2012). Additionally, Paternal involvement has been linked to numerous positive outcomes in children, such as cognitive development, mental health, and physical well-being. Recognizing these benefits, the American Academy of Pediatrics has encouraged pediatricians to actively engage fathers in their patients' care (Allport et al., 2018).

On the other hand, it is crucial to promote awareness about effective parenting practices, emphasizing the vital role of fathers in early childhood development. Additionally, parents should actively address past emotional issues and seek professional guidance from counselors when necessary. As stated by Townshend et al., educating parents about the early signs of mental illness can be a cost-effective way to address delayed diagnoses (Townshend et al., 2016). A pre- and post-test design revealed that, following the parenting sessions, parents reported feeling more confident in their parenting abilities across five key dimensions: emotional self-regulation, self-esteem, communication, conflict resolution, and discipline strategies (Martínez-González et al., 2016).

Early childhood growth is something that is needed when childhood begins to develop, greeting early childhood development there are 6 aspects that must grow including cognitive, language, art, social emotional, religion and morals, and also physical motor skills. Sholichah da Ayuningrum said that when the brain gets a new stimulus, the brain will learn something new (Sholichah & Ayuningrum, 2020). The stimulus will cause nerve cells to form new connections to store information. The cells that are used to store the information will expand, and can also produce hormones that are needed in child development. Meanwhile, those that are not or rarely stimulated will become extinct.

This is also reinforced by Nurhasanah et al who argue that early childhood with its advantages in recording information will record all the activities of others, including teachers and parents (Nurhasanah et al., 2021). The results of recording this information will then sooner or later be actualized in the form of behavior or attitude. It is also supported by Morrison cited by Aisyah et al that proper services for children and their families are very complementary from safety, health, affection to love, social emotional development and also academic development in children (Aisyah et al., 2021; Morrison, 2012). From the researchers' explanations, it can be concluded that child growth is a process to start all aspects of development that exist in children so that children must have good experiences so that when they grow up children have a very positive memory for their survival until adulthood.

During this growth period, children certainly need the role of parents, especially from a father. Maisyarah et al suggest that the role of the father in the child's life can be an example for the child to become a more independent person, making him a strong and strong figure in facing problems in the future (Maisyarah et al., 2017). Because basically the father is a leader for the family to protect and love the people around him. This is also reinforced by the opinion of Parmanti and Purnamasari, that a father figure is able to provide examples of leadership, make children become disciplined and independent individuals, teach children to socialize in their environment, and teach rational-logical thinking is one of the roles of fathers in the family (Parmanti & Purnamasari, 2015).

With the role of the father in growing up, the child will become a person who can lead and be good at socializing. The role of the father also greatly helps the child's social emotional development to be guaranteed better. Wardani and Aulia suggest that children with fathers who have good relationships are better at coping with stress and frustration, solving problems, and controlling their emotions and impulses (Wardani & Aulia, 2023).

As the leader of the household, fathers should provide a pleasant experience at the earliest possible age of the child. In this case, social emotion is one of the most important developments for children, where Hurlock as cited in Dewi et al said that social development is the ability of a person to always behave and also interact with the aim of socialization into society (Dewi et al., 2020; Hurlock, 2003).

In contrast, the role of fathers is less supportive of child development, where there is no male figure to protect the family and support children's social-emotional development. There are many cases of the absence of a father's role in child development in Indonesia. In fact, the role of the father or the father's attachment to the child is very important. For example, fathers who always speak kind words will give birth to gentle and polite children, while fathers who often speak harsh words will give birth to stubborn children. This condition still continues until now. Related to this, Kurniasari said that if the treatment takes place early, continuously and for a long time, it will interfere with his personal life (Kurniasari, 2017). The impact is not only physical but also psychological. They may grow up to be anxious, lack confidence, pessimistic, or conversely rebellious, aggressive and prone to bad behavior in the future".

The reason for the absence of the father's role in parenting is also due to the patriarchal culture that still exists today, where the male side submits all household affairs including taking care of children is the responsibility of women. This is very appropriate with the thought that men are breadwinners and also figures who have nothing to do with taking care of children or helping clean the house. In fact, a male figure is needed in the security of the family. Related with it, the study by Patel and Mavungu highlights the influence of materialistic constructions of fatherhood, socioeconomic factors, cultural considerations, and relational dynamics on the phenomenon of father absence (Patel & Mavungu, 2016).

Not only that, parental divorce can also cause a lack of father's role in child development. In addition, the role of fathers who are not present in childcare is a less harmonious family relationship, where fathers who are rude to the family, especially children, can make children fearful. As said by Wulandari and Shafarani that a less harmonious family can cause the parenting used by parents to be less than optimal (Wulandari & Shafarani, 2023). Aligned to the opinion, Taş stated that a common mistake following divorce is the unintentional severing of communication between fathers and their children. This can be detrimental to children's well-being, as both parents play vital roles in their development. It's essential to maintain a father's presence in a child's life, even after divorce (Taş, 2018).

To effectively engage divorced fathers, Kruk advocated for a combination of validating their parental identity and providing counseling that focuses on enhancing their role as active and responsible parents (Kruk, 2016). One effective approach to counseling divorced fathers is through video-based interventions. As demonstrated by Winslow et al., videos rooted in social influence and health behavior theories can significantly enhance parental engagement, thereby maximizing the positive impact of evidence-based parenting programs (Winslow et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

Based on the conclusion of the results of the interview research conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that the lack of father's involvement in parenting has a significant impact on the long-term social-emotional development of children until adulthood. The father's role should be to provide support in the form of affection, presence, as an example of being a household or a good leader. Father's involvement helps children become more confident and influences positive behaviors in their social life into adulthood. Counseling and emotional support are also very influential if the child is traumatized by the lack of a father's presence in their growing up years.

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