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Father Involvement in Parenting Program To Overcome The Fatherless Phenomenon (A Multi-Case Study At Kb Fun Islamic School And Tk Mutiara Ibu Purworejo)

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The phenomenon of fatherlessness, or the lack of father involvement in child-rearing, is a critical issue in early childhood development. Father involvement plays a vital role in shaping children's character, emotional intelligence, and psychological well-being. This study analyzes the implementation of the *Fathers' Parenting* program in addressing this issue at KB Fun Islamic School and TK Mutiara Ibu Purworejo. Using a qualitative multi-case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document studies. The findings reveal that the program is implemented through discussions, play-based activities, storytelling, and parenting workshops. Supporting factors for its success include institutional support, implementation flexibility, and awareness campaigns on the father's role. However, challenges such as low father participation due to work commitments, gender stereotypes in parenting, and a lack of understanding of the benefits of father involvement persist. This study concludes that the *Fathers' Parenting* program can enhance father involvement in early childhood care. To improve its effectiveness, more flexible strategies, institutional policy support, and collaboration between schools and parent communities are needed. This research contributes to parenting studies and serves as a reference for educational institutions in developing more inclusive and family-based parenting programs.

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Introduction

A father's role in childcare is as important as that of a mother (Mulyana, 2022). The role of fathers is not only to earn a living, but also as educators, leaders, and role models in all family life (Batee, 2023). However, the role of fathers in Indonesia is still very minimal. Indonesia is ranked the 3rd fatherless country in the world based on the Global Fatherhood Index Report 2021 (Silalahi, 2023). This fatherless phenomenon is not only characterized by the biological absence of the father, but also the psychological loss of the father's role. Fatherlessness has a complex impact on children's development; children lack self-confidence, difficulty getting along, and potential mental health problems in later life (Silalahi, 2023), a low sense of responsibility and a tendency to engage in negative behavior as adolescents (Laman, 2023).

KB Fun Islamic School and TK Mutiara Ibu Purworejo are two educational institutions that hold parenting classes by requiring both parents to attend. While most parenting classes are dominated by women, Fun Islamic School and Mutiara Ibu Purworejo Kindergarten also require fathers to attend parenting classes. These two institutions believe that the role of the father is not only a figure who earns a living and is biologically present, but also acts as an educator who is psychologically present to accompany children to play. At the extreme, if parents are absent or the father is unable to attend for more than three meetings, then the school invites parents to find another school.

So far, existing studies show three main trends. First, studies focus on the negative effects of fatherlessness. The fatherless phenomenon can result in children developing a lack of self-confidence, the potential for delinquency as teenagers (Nindhita, 2023), a low sense of responsibility, a lack of appreciation of moral values because the father as a role model and moral authority figure is absent (Laman, 2023). Second, looking at the fatherless phenomenon biologically, namely orphans who lose their fathers and have an impact on their psychological development as adolescents (Nindhita, 2023). Third, studies that focus on the root causes of fatherlessness, such as the patriarchal culture in society, so that gender equality education is the first step to overcome fatherlessness.

This study aims to respond to the needs and complement the shortcomings of previous studies in responding to the fatherless phenomenon. While previous studies have focused on the effects of fatherlessness on child development and the factors that contribute to the phenomenon of fatherlessness in Indonesia, this study focuses on parenting models for parents, especially fathers, as part of a program to address the phenomenon of fatherlessness in Indonesia.

The “Fathering Parenting” program or parenting activities for fathers that have been carried out at KB Fun Islamic School and TK Mutiara Ibu Purworejo can be one of the models to bring back fathers not only biologically, but also psychologically.
This study is based on an argument that a father-only parenting program could be one way to overcome the fatherless phenomenon. Fathers are very instrumental in building discipline, independence, and shaping the mentality of children who are resilient, optimistic and hardworking. A special parenting program for fathers that is carried out in a programmed and planned manner will become a new culture and a new model of a school program that has implications for fathering patterns at home. This could be one way to overcome the fatherless phenomenon in Indonesia.

Methods

This study used a qualitative approach with a multi-case study method at KB Fun Islamic School and TK Mutiara Ibu Purworejo to understand the implementation of the Fathers’ Parenting program. Data were collected through direct observation (monitoring father-child interactions, activity strategies, and program effectiveness), semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, and participant fathers, and documentation studies (activity plans, implementation reports, and child development data). Observation instruments and interview guides were designed to explore perceptions, challenges, and impacts of the program, while document analysis focused on the suitability of objectives, father participation, and success indicators.
Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2018) through three stages: data condensation (selection and simplification of raw data), data presentation in the form of a matrix or table to identify patterns, and drawing conclusions that were verified with the original data. This process was carried out iteratively to ensure consistency of findings, especially related to program implementation strategies, supporting/inhibiting factors, and their impact on father involvement in parenting. Interactive analysis allows researchers to understand the dynamics of the program and its implications for the fatherless phenomenon.
Data sources include primary data (in-depth interviews with 11 informants, including principals, teachers, and fathers) and secondary data (program documents, teaching materials, and child development reports). Triangulation of data sources was conducted to validate the findings, ensure the depth of contextual analysis in both research locations, and enrich the understanding of the effectiveness of the program in enhancing the role of fathers and practical solutions to overcome fatherlessness in early childhood education environments.

Result

KB Fun Islamic School and KB Mutiara Ibu Purworejo are early childhood education institutions that emphasize holistic child development through family involvement, particularly in parenting. Recognizing the crucial role of fathers in early childhood development, these institutions have implemented the *Fathers' Parenting* program to encourage greater paternal engagement in child-rearing. The program is structured through carefully designed materials that include discussion sessions, play-based activities, storytelling, and parenting workshops aimed at enhancing fathers' parenting skills. However, its implementation faces several challenges, such as low father participation due to work commitments, persistent gender stereotypes in parenting, and a lack of awareness regarding the benefits of father involvement. Despite these obstacles, the program continues to evolve, seeking more flexible strategies and institutional support to maximize its impact on children's emotional and psychological well-being.

1.1. Overview of KB Fun Islamic School and KB Mutiara Ibu Purworejo

KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) was established on July 18, 2016 under the auspices of the Fun Islamic School Foundation, an institution engaged in the field of education, social, and Islamic propagation. The foundation originated from the training and workshop activities of thousands of early childhood teachers in various parts of Indonesia, such as Medan, Aceh, Kalimantan, Yogyakarta, and East Java. With the GURAME community (Guru Asyik dan Menyenangkan), the foundation regularly organizes training activities and workshops for PAUD teachers every three months in Yogyakarta. The founder of the foundation, Deden HMS, S.Sos.I, sees the need for a pre-school education institution that is able to integrate general and religious education. This aims to answer the community's need for quality, Islamic and fun early childhood education.

KB Mutiara Ibu is one of the preschool institutions located on Jalan Dewi Sartika no 3A Purworejo, established on March 20, 2000, on a land area of ± 3180 m2, with a license number 893.3 / 0026958 from the Office of Education and Culture. KB Mutiara Ibu serves children aged 2 - 4 years. For parents who wish to send their children to Mutiara Ibu KB, parents must be willing to participate in the Trial Program for 3x arrivals at a cost of Rp. 100,000, - accompanied by a parent. In addition, parents must be willing to discuss with the Head and Management of the School before officially registering. Provide a Certificate of Test Results from a Psychologist / Pediatrician / Growth and Development Consultant if needed (after Trial). Since the beginning, KB Mutiara Ibu has made parents the main partners in assisting children's growth and development.

1.2. Implementation of the Fathers' Parenting Program

The approach used in the Fathers' Parenting program at KB Fun Islamic School focuses on building harmonious relationships between schools, parents (fathers), and children through positive communication, education, and activities that involve the active role of fathers in the family and school environment. This approach is designed to build awareness that the role of fathers is very important in the education and character formation of children. Here are some of the approaches used:

a) Collaborative Approach.

Fathers are actively involved in various school activities and communication with the school through mutually supportive cooperation between the school and family. This approach recognizes that the roles of fathers and mothers are equally important but have different roles in supporting children's growth and development.

A collaborative approach involving fathers in school activities has become a major focus at KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) Purworejo. In an interview conducted on December 11, 2024, the Principal of KB FIS, Tri Hadyati, S.Pd., explained that the school actively invites fathers to participate in various educational activities. "We hold programs such as Father's Day Activity, where fathers are given the opportunity to accompany children in learning, even teaching certain classes.

This helps children understand that the role of a father is not only as a breadwinner, but also a direct supporter in their education and development," said Tri Hadyati. She also emphasized the importance of two-way communication between teachers and parents to create a conducive learning atmosphere at home and at school.

This explanation reinforces the concept of a collaborative approach by showing how father involvement can be integrated into school activities effectively. The direct participation of fathers in teaching and learning activities not only increases the emotional bond between father and child, but also enriches the child's learning experience through a different perspective. The program as explained by Tri Hadyati shows that collaboration between schools and families can improve children's educational success holistically, by respecting the unique roles of each parent.

b) Educational and Information Approach

Providing fathers with an understanding of the importance of positive parenting, and how their involvement can affect children's well-being and education. In an interview conducted on December 11, 2024 with Tri Hadyati, S.Pd, Principal of KB Fun Islamic

School (FIS) Purworejo, she conveyed the importance of a collaborative approach between teachers and parents in supporting child development. “Teachers at KB FIS not only focus on teaching in the classroom, but also establish active communication with parents. We use daily contact books and WhatsApp groups to provide information related to child development, as well as to educate parents, especially fathers, about their role in shaping children's character,” said Tri Hadyati. According to her, the involvement of parents, especially fathers, has a big influence on children's success in the future.

The statement from Tri Hadyati, S.Pd strengthens the educational and information approach in involving fathers as important figures in parenting patterns. By using media such as contact books and WhatsApp, communication between teachers and parents can take place effectively and efficiently. This allows parents, including fathers who often have limited time, to remain involved in monitoring and supporting their children's development. This approach creates good synergy between schools and families, so that children get maximum support both in the school environment and at home.

Slightly different from the approach used by KB Mutiara Ibu. On Friday, October 18, 2024, we had the opportunity to interview Sisilia Maryati, the organizer of KB Mutiara Ibu. In this discussion, she explained how KB Mutiara Ibu applies a holistic approach in strengthening the role of fathers in children's education from before they register until they graduate.

Mrs. Sisilia Maryati emphasized that KB Mutiara Ibu does not only focus on academic learning, but also on character building and parental involvement, especially fathers, in the child's education process. The approach used is carried out comprehensively, from upstream to downstream, so that the role of fathers can continue to be strengthened at every stage of the child's development.

1.2.1 *Fathers' Parenting Program Material Design*

The Fathers’ Parenting program is designed as a strategic initiative to enhance the role of fathers in active, responsive, and loving child rearing. In modern society, the role of fathers is no longer limited to the traditional function as breadwinners, but rather becomes the main partner in supporting children’s holistic growth and development, both in terms of emotional, social, and educational aspects.

The design of this material aims to equip fathers with knowledge, skills, and parenting approaches based on family values, children's development needs, and challenges faced in the digital era. With an interactive and applicable approach, this program is expected to be able to create a harmonious family environment and build a healthy and empowered generation.

1.2.2 Contents

On Saturday, November 2, 2024, KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) Purworejo held a parenting activity as part of an annual program aimed at strengthening collaboration between schools and parents in supporting children's growth and development. This activity was attended by guardians and guided by educators and resource persons relevant to the theme raised. In general, parenting activities at FIS are carried out at least three times a year. However, flexibility in determining the material is one of the characteristics applied at this school. Rif'atus Sa'idatul Muyasiroh, one of the educators at KB Fun Islamic School, in an interview on December 11, 2024 explained that the design of parenting materials is always adjusted to the needs of the committee and guardians. In addition, the school also considers current studies that are developing in the community so that the material provided is relevant and applicable to parents.

With this approach, KB Fun Islamic School ensures that parenting is not only a routine program, but also a place for parents to gain insight and solutions to the challenges they face in educating children. Parenting activities at this school are not only about providing one-way material, but also opening up a discussion space for parents to share experiences and effective parenting strategies. The flexibility in the design of this material is expected to further strengthen the synergy between schools and families in supporting optimal child development.

Slightly different from KB Mutiara Ibu. Based on the results of an interview with the Head and teachers of KB Mutiara Ibu Purworejo, Friday, October 18, 2024, Mrs. Nova explained that parenting materials at KB Mutiara Ibu Purworejo are entirely the authority of the institution and are implemented at least twice a year. "We compile parenting materials with a focus on strengthening the role of the family in educational units. This is important so that parents can better understand how to support children's development at home in accordance with the approach applied at school," she said. In addition, there are also parenting activities managed by the school

committee. Unlike programs compiled by institutions, these activities are more flexible and adjust to the needs of parents. Mrs. Nova added, "Parents can convey the themes they need to the committee, then they will be considered in the design of parenting materials." This opinion was reinforced by Mrs. Ratna Dewi, one of the parents of students. She appreciated the flexibility provided in parenting activities managed by the committee. "Sometimes we want to discuss specific things, like how to deal with tantrums or effective communication patterns with children. By having this discussion space, we feel more involved and get solutions that are more in line with our needs as parents," she said.

1.2.3. Challenges faced by fathers in parenting

Challenges faced by fathers in parenting at KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) and KB Mutiara Ibu. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and document studies, fathers at KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) Purworejo and KB Mutiara Ibu Purworejo face various challenges in parenting. Here are some differences and similarities in the challenges they face.

Common Challenges Experienced by Fathers in Both Institutions are Limited Time due to Work Responsibilities. Many fathers work full time, so they have minimal direct involvement in their children's daily activities, including assisting with learning at home. Some fathers feel that parenting is more the responsibility of the mother, so their role in supporting child development is less than optimal.

In addition, there is a lack of understanding about effective parenting patterns. Most fathers feel that they lack skills in parenting, especially in managing emotions and supporting children's psychological development. Fathers tend to be more oriented towards financial aspects than emotional involvement in parenting.

Both at FIS and Mutiara Ibu, some fathers have difficulty in following the development of modern parenting methods, such as positive parenting or child psychology-based approaches. Some fathers still use more authoritarian traditional methods, which sometimes conflict with the parenting concept applied in schools.

Meanwhile, a special challenge at KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) is balancing Islamic values with modern education. FIS emphasizes modern Islamic-based education. Fathers often find it difficult to balance the demands of religious teachings with the challenges of modern life, especially in educating children about the digital world. Some fathers worry that their children are too exposed to technology, but on the

other hand, schools also encourage the use of technology in learning. In addition, there are high expectations of independence. FIS teaches children to be more independent from an early age, but many fathers are not used to parenting styles that give freedom to explore. Some fathers tend to control their children's decisions and find it difficult to let children learn from experience.

The aspect of the lack of involvement in the school parenting program is homework at FIS. FIS has parenting programs and workshops for parents, but father participation is still low compared to mothers. Fathers feel that parenting activities are more suitable for mothers, so they are less involved in discussions about parenting patterns recommended by the school.

Meanwhile, a special challenge at KB Mutiara Ibu is the social demands on the role of fathers in the family. KB Mutiara Ibu emphasizes family and community-based parenting, which often requires fathers to play the role of primary disciplinary role models. In some cases, fathers feel pressured by societal expectations to be authoritative and role models, which can limit a gentler parenting approach.

In addition, the difficulty of implementing Tradition-Based Parenting remains a challenge. Schools encourage the implementation of local cultural values, but fathers often struggle to balance tradition with the realities of modern life. Some fathers feel alienated from community-based parenting practices, especially if they have a more urban lifestyle.

In practice, the dominant role of mothers in parenting is still common. Because of the stronger family-based approach, childcare is often considered the mother's responsibility. Many fathers feel that they only play a role in the economic aspect and are less involved in decisions related to their child's development.

Although fathers at KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) and KB Mutiara Ibu face different challenges according to the educational vision of each institution, there are common challenges experienced, such as lack of time, lack of parenting skills, and difficulty adjusting to modern parenting methods. At FIS, the main challenge is how to balance Islamic values with modern education and increase father involvement in the school parenting program.

In Mutiara Ibu, the challenges are more related to social demands, the role of fathers in the community, and how fathers can be more active in family-based parenting. To address these challenges, more inclusive and flexible programs for fathers are

needed, such as parenting sessions that are more in line with their work schedules and a more practical approach to supporting father involvement in parenting.

Discussion

According to Erik Erikson (1950), children aged 3-6 years are at the initiative vs. guilt stage, where they begin to develop independence, initiative in activities, and understand the concept of morality. Parental support, especially fathers, in providing freedom of exploration and value formation is very important. KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) emphasizes modern Islamic-based education and children's independence. However, some fathers face challenges in providing freedom of exploration, because they tend to be more protective or have a parenting style that is still authoritative. As a result, children may experience conflict between the urge to take initiative and feelings of guilt or fear of making mistakes.

KB Mutiara Ibu is more based on traditional community-based parenting. Fathers in this environment are often considered authoritative figures, which can strengthen or hinder the development of children's initiative, depending on how they support their children's exploration and decision-making. If fathers are less involved or too controlling of their children, they can develop excessive guilt and fear of making decisions (Erikson, 1963). On the other hand, if children are given balanced freedom, they will develop self-confidence and creativity in taking initiative (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2011).

John Bowlby (1969) suggested that the emotional bond between a child and the primary caregiver (usually the mother and father) plays an important role in shaping the child's social and emotional development. The father plays a role as a secondary attachment figure, but remains crucial in shaping the child's independence. KB Fun Islamic School (FIS) encourages fathers to be more active in parenting, but their participation is still low compared to mothers. This can lead to a weaker attachment between father and child, which affects the child's social development.

KB Mutiara Ibu, with a community-based parenting approach, often places the mother as the primary caregiver, while the father is more of a disciplinary figure. As a result, some children may have a stronger emotional bond with the mother, while the relationship with the father is more based on authority than emotional attachment.

Children who have a secure attachment with their father tend to be more confident and independent in social environments (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

However, if the father is less emotionally involved, the child can develop an insecure attachment, which can lead to social anxiety and difficulty in emotional regulation (Bretherton, 1992).

The Fathers' Parenting Program theory (Cabrera et al., 2000) emphasizes that fathers' involvement in parenting has three main dimensions: Engagement (Direct involvement in children's activities), Accessibility (Fathers' availability to children emotionally and physically). Responsibility (Fathers' role in meeting children's needs). KB Fun Islamic School (FIS): Fathers face challenges in direct involvement (engagement), due to work demands and lack of participation in school parenting programs. However, the school has provided parenting workshops to improve fathers' roles.

KB Mutiara Ibu: Fathers play a greater role in accessibility and economic responsibility, but direct involvement in children's activities is still limited. Parenting is still considered the mother's primary role, so fathers tend to only play a role in discipline and family decision-making. More active father involvement in children's daily activities (not just economics or discipline) is positively related to children's social-emotional and academic development (Lamb, 2010). If fathers only play a role in the financial aspect, children can experience emotional deficits and a lack of security in their relationship with their fathers (Pleck, 2010).

Conclusion

Both institutions, KB Mutiara Ibu and KB Fun Islamic School (FIS), have an interactive approach in parenting programs, although with different emphases. KB Mutiara Ibu prioritizes discussion methods, case studies, and simulations, while KB FIS is more flexible by adjusting themes based on the needs of parents and current issues. Both avoid one-way lecture methods, but KB FIS tends to be more responsive in material design, holding activities three times a year with dynamic themes, compared to KB Mutiara Ibu which is scheduled twice a year.

In terms of father involvement, both schools have Fathers' Parenting programs to strengthen the role of fathers in parenting. KB Mutiara Ibu focuses on activities such as playing and positive communication, while KB FIS involves fathers in school activities such as storytelling and special sessions. However, father participation in KB Mutiara Ibu is still low due to the dominance of mothers, while KB FIS has succeeded in increasing father involvement through flexible strategies, such as evening or online sessions.

The main challenge for both institutions is overcoming fathers' time constraints and the traditional perception that parenting is the mother's responsibility. KB Mutiara Ibu needs to increase socialization of the importance of the father's role, while KB FIS has accommodated time constraints with flexible schedules. Both agreed that changing the mindset of parents and institutional support are key to overcoming these obstacles.

The positive impact of the program is seen in improving parenting skills and children's social-emotional development. KB FIS showed higher effectiveness due to its contextual and applied approach, while KB Mutiara Ibu succeeded in building early awareness of the importance of father involvement. However, both schools need to continue to strengthen their strategies to reach fathers with time constraints and deep-rooted cultural perceptions.

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