

# Father's Role in Shaping Character of Responsibility in Early Childhood

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## Abstract

*Purpose:* This study explores how fathers' involvement in early childhood care influences the development of responsibility character in young children. By focusing not only on the frequency of paternal presence but also on the quality of father-child interactions, it seeks to fill gaps in existing research that often overlooks contextual factors such as work demands and family structure.

*Methodology:* Employing a qualitative design, the research collected data through in-depth interviews and naturalistic observations of children and their fathers, deliberately sampling families with varying levels of paternal engagement. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns in fatherly involvement and to trace how these patterns relate to young children's emerging sense of responsibility.

*Results:* Findings reveal that limited father involvement—often driven by busy work schedules or complex family circumstances—negatively impacts children's acquisition of responsibility traits. In contrast, fathers who consistently engage in high-quality interactions—such as shared problem-solving, age-appropriate chores, and guided reflection on actions—foster stronger responsibility in their children.

*Applications/Originality/Value:* By highlighting the critical role of consistent, meaningful paternal engagement, this study provides actionable insights for parenting programs, early-childhood educators, and policymakers aiming to support character development. Its context-sensitive approach underscores the need for workplace policies and community resources that enable fathers to participate more fully in early childcare, ultimately promoting the growth of independent and responsible individuals.

## Introduction

Children are a gift from God Almighty that should be cherished, protected, cared for, and loved by every family (Elia, 2000). Starting from birth to the age of 6 years or called early childhood will experience very rapid development, so it needs special attention from the family to accompany the growth and development process (Tatminingsih, 2016). The family is an important institution that plays a role in the growth and development of children and as the first education for children (Wahy, 2012).

The process of growing and developing children requires careful attention. According to Islam, maintenance or nurturing means taking care of children, providing all kindness, providing education, and preventing birth and mental dangers so that children are able to live and be responsible for themselves (Yasin, 2018). Therefore, the process of child growth and development cannot be separated from the involvement of parents, and is the responsibility of every parent which in essence cannot be transferred to anyone else except for something deadly.

Parents are the main and first educators for children because it is from them that children begin to receive education (Waroka, 2022). Both fathers and mothers have a very important role in parenting. Fathers not only act as authority figures, but also as figures who provide emotional support, provide examples of good behavior, and are involved in the child's daily activities. The role of a father, in addition to meeting the needs of the family as a whole, must also play a role in paying attention to the development of the environment around the child (Syafiqoh & Pranoto, 2022). Children whose fathers are involved in their parenting will have good social and cognitive skills, as well as high confidence (Prasetyo, 2011). Therefore, the role of fathers in childcare has a significant impact in shaping the future and welfare of children.

The responsibility for childcare does not only lie with the mother but also with the father. However, the fact that happened was the opposite, that the responsibility of educating was only directed to the mother and father was responsible as the breadwinner. In a family in Indonesia, the role of fathers in childcare is often ignored (Giantara et al., 2019).

According to Lamb et al revealed that fathers' activities in parenting activities include: Paternal Engagement which is intended for a father to be able to interact with children by sharing experiences that have been done before, this activity can be done such as playing to spend time at the same time. Paternal Accessibility, which means the existence of time that fathers deliberately spend specifically for their children. Paternal Responsibility, which means that fathers understand how

to meet the needs of their children, such as providing for the future of their children (Cabrera, N.J., & Tamis-LeMonda, 2002).

Every child has the potential to have a character according to their nature. In the guidelines for character education in early childhood education, it is explained that character is a habit or habit to do good things. The character of children is highly dependent on the environment and parenting style (Suradi, 2018). As explained by Bronfenbrenner in developmental ecology theory, children are influenced by their environment, including the family, school, and society in which they live, which shapes their character and behavior over time (Yunita, 2019).

The character of responsibility is a person's ability to recognize and fulfill the obligations and duties assigned to him, both personally and socially. The character of responsibility in children includes the ability to recognize and understand the consequences of their actions and account for them, the willingness to take over the right actions and decisions, and take responsibility for the results (Adrian James, 2008). Individuals who have a strong sense of responsibility tend to be more reliable in carrying out their duties, both in personal and social environments so that they tend not to harm others and make others comfortable (Hasanah, 2023). The benefits of a responsible attitude are that with a responsible attitude, a person will be trusted, respected, and liked by others (Haryani et al., 2019). Therefore, character development is an important responsibility in preparing individuals to face the challenges of daily life and contribute positively in society.

Although there have been many studies that have discussed the important role of fathers in parenting, previous studies have often focused on general aspects of fathers' involvement without delving into specific contexts, such as the type of work or family structure. Some studies also tend to emphasize quantitative engagement (how often dads are present) without looking at the quality of the interactions made. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by exploring more deeply the influence of father's involvement in shaping the character of children's responsibility in certain situations, such as the role of fathers as entrepreneurs or single parents.

In the Aisyiyah Bekangan Kindergarten Environment, we observed that students without the involvement of their fathers in their upbringing have a tendency to have a less developed attitude, in our observation is the attitude of responsibility. Some examples are still not going to school without explanation, not taking care of their own personal belongings, being indifferent to the final result of the activities carried out. Therefore, the researcher wants to describe the role of fathers in raising children, so that an attitude of responsibility is built from an early age in children.

Based on the above background, the author is interested in describing the role of fathers in childcare in the formation of responsible characters, especially children at an early age, because early childhood care is still greatly affected by stimulation from parents and the environment. The type of work and family structure also affect the quality of father-child interaction.

## **Method**

This research method uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative research aims to explore, discover, and explain the traits and characteristics of social influences that cannot be explained, measured, or explained by a quantitative approach, namely surveys (Khumairoh, 2020). Qualitative research is a research step that produces descriptive data in the form of written or audio information, as well as the behavior of the observed person (Rizky Fadilla & Ayu Wulandari, 2023). On the other hand, the definition of qualitative approach research is based on the post-positivist philosophy that researchers use (not experiments) to study the state of important natural objects from data sources (Intan Hayati, 2022).

The place of this research was carried out at Aisyiyah Bekangan Kindergarten, which is located in Bekangan village, Nogosari district, Boyolali Regency. This study describes the role of fathers in the formation of early childhood responsibility character in the Aisyiyah Bekangan Kindergarten environment.

The object of research is the phenomenon or thing being studied, in this case the role of fathers in the formation of the character of early childhood responsibility. Researchers will examine how fatherly involvement affects the formation of children's responsible character at an early age (usually between 0-6 years). The object of this research includes aspects such as: the involvement of fathers in children's daily activities, the influence of father-child interaction on children's emotional and social development, fathers' contributions in character education, responsibility at home, the role of fathers as moral and ethical models for children.

The research subjects are individuals or groups that will be observed or interviewed to obtain data. In this study, the subjects of the study were fathers and children who were students at Aisyiyah Bekangan Kindergarten group A where the children seemed to experience obstacles or difficulties in following the learning process at school.

The data obtained from the results of observations and interviews are then presented in the form of sentence descriptions to make it easier to understand according to what is obtained in the field. Then data reduction will be carried out, and continued with the presentation of data, then drawing conclusions.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Results**

The researcher conducted a study in group A of Aisyiyah Bekangan Kindergarten which has a total of around 26 students. But this study only focuses on children who in the observation of the researcher have a tendency to have a less developed attitude of responsibility. The attitudes that can be seen include often not going to school without information, not being responsible for their own personal belongings, not being responsible for the results of the activities they have done. The researcher focused on children A and B. In initial observations, A was more likely to behave differently than most of his peers. In the researcher's observation, A's attitude of responsibility is still very low. This can be seen from his personal belongings that are always left everywhere and cannot actively follow the learning properly.

Based on the results of the interview with A's father, the role of the father greatly affects the formation of the character of responsibility for a child. Fathers as parents are responsible for educating, nurturing, and raising children to be good individuals and have positive character. Father A has tried his best in parenting. However, the condition of A's family is not like most children in general, his mother had died when A was 3 years old. This condition makes A's father play the role of a single parent. Father A's daily activities started from waking up at dawn to prepare food for family breakfast, then taking A to school and then continuing to work until the afternoon before returning home. Housework, which should be a portion of a housewife, is also done by A's father, so that a lot of time is used for work both at home and outside the home.

A's daily life while at school shows that the sense of responsibility in him has not been awakened, it is shown by the frequent absence from school even though he is not sick or disabled. From the attendance data of group A students for 1 month, A has not entered 6 times. In addition, A also showed inability or difficulty in participating in learning activities during school hours. During the teaching and learning process at school, A looks indifferent and acts arbitrarily on his own, not heeding instructions or directions from the teacher's mother. This makes A very different from other friends.

A similar condition also occurs in student B. In the researcher's observation, the character of responsibility B has also not been developed. Based on information from teachers in group A, B did not want to participate in learning activities according to the teacher's direction. Often they don't want to carry out the directions from the teacher's mother, they like to play by themselves. According to group A teachers, this year is B's second year in group A because indeed to be promoted to class B, they have not been able to take part in learning like their friends. From observation, B actually could, but his willingness to carry out his direction and responsibility for something was still very low.

After interviewing B's father, the researcher received information that B's father was a food businessman. B's father owns a food stall business. It happens that the food stall is owned by many buyers. But all the stall work is done by Father B and his wife, because they do not have employees. The activities of stalls starting from shopping for raw materials, cooking, and selling them are very time-consuming. The stall, which is located not far from house B, is open from morning to night. And every day B was left at home while his father guarded the stall. So that the time for parenting B is not optimal.

## **Discussion**

Based on the results of observations and interviews, both A and B showed a character of responsibility that was not optimal. In condition B, his father's involvement in parenting is very lacking because his father is busy managing a food stall business. As a result, B is rarely given simple tasks at home and tends to avoid responsibilities, such as tidying up his personal belongings or helping with household chores. This condition makes B not show a strong awareness of daily responsibilities.

The situation faced by B reflects Baumrind's (1991) theory of parenting patterns, where uninvolved parenting can have a negative impact on the development of children's character (Alexis J, 2000). Baumrind argues that children who grow up in an environment where caregivers provide little direction or responsibility tend to have a good understanding of their obligations. In addition, research by Lamb in 2010 confirmed that the active involvement of fathers in parenting is closely related to the development of children's responsibilities (Sairah & Chandra, 2022). In the case of child B, the lack of time spent by the father to provide examples and tasks related to responsibility has the potential to hinder the growth of the attitude of responsibility in him.

A father who is considered successful in the development of his children is one who is able to carry out the role according to the socio-cultural expectations and demands as well as the condition of his family (Hauari & Hollingworth, 2009). In the case of child A, although the father has tried to play an active role as a single parent after his mother dies, the father's involvement in the aspect of responsible parenting is also less intensive. Single parents are parents who nurture and raise their children without the presence or support of a partner (Duvall, 1985). Child A is often left to carry out daily activities without direct supervision or guidance, so he does not understand the importance of completing his personal tasks. Child A is also rarely given the opportunity to carry out responsibilities at home, such as tidying up his room or preparing his own school needs.

Research by Pleck (2010) shows that even though single fathers have a double burden as breadwinners and caregivers, the quality of father's involvement still plays an important role in shaping children's character (Nugrahani et al., 2021). Pleck suggests that fathers who are able to involve children in daily activities, albeit limited, are able to help children develop an attitude of responsibility. In the case of child A, even though his father plays the role of a single caregiver, the lack of clear direction regarding responsibilities makes A not fully understand the obligations and roles that must be carried out.

From these two cases, it can be seen that the lack of direct involvement of fathers in parenting both because of busy work as experienced by father B, and because of the double burden of being a single parent as experienced by father A, has a significant impact on the delay in the development of the child's responsible character. This is in line with Bronfenbrenner's (1986) theoretical view of ecological systems, which states that the interaction between individuals and their immediate environment, such as the family, plays an important role in children's social and emotional development (Mujahidah, 2015).

The involvement of active and qualified fathers in providing tasks, role models, and guidance is indispensable to instill an attitude of responsibility in early childhood (Elan et al., 2022). Intensive fatherly involvement, even in the form of small tasks appropriate to the child's age, can help the child develop a strong sense of responsibility. Therefore, it takes more effort from fathers, including fathers A and B, to take the time and provide space for their children to learn and internalize the values of responsibility. The role of fathers in the formation of responsible character in early childhood is very important, especially when fathers have a central role in parenting, both due to work conditions and family situations (Tari et al., 2021). In this study, the two children who were the main subjects were A and B. Both have different family backgrounds, which also affects the development of responsibility characters in each of them.

Although the backgrounds of families A and B are different, they both show similar challenges in the formation of a character of responsibility. In B, the lack of involvement of the father who is more busy at the food stall makes the child feel that he does not need to be responsible for small tasks at home. Meanwhile, in A, the double burden that fathers face as a single parent reduces the opportunity to provide intensive direction regarding responsibility. Both of these conditions indicate that without active and consistent father involvement, both in terms of time and quality of interaction, children tend to have difficulty understanding the importance of an attitude of responsibility.

In this discussion, fathers need to optimize every opportunity to interact with children and create moments that can be used to instill the values of responsibility. For example, father B may try to involve the child in small activities at the food stall, such as helping to prepare cutlery or compiling a grocery list, which can give B an understanding of his role and responsibilities in the family. Meanwhile, father A can take advantage of the moment of togetherness at home to give small tasks that are appropriate for age, such as tidying things up or preparing school supplies, accompanied by praise and appreciation if the task is completed well.

Overall, this study shows that although both children have different family conditions, the lack of intensive father involvement has a significant impact on the development of their responsible character. The difference in family conditions between A and B shows that the involvement of fathers, both in terms of quantity and quality, has a great influence on the formation of the character of responsibility in children. Therefore, the role of fathers in providing examples, guidance, and strengthening attitudes of responsibility needs to be improved so that children like A and B can grow into more independent and responsible individuals.

The results of this study are of course still limited because it only involves two subjects in one location. While these findings provide an important insight, further research involving more children or in different settings would be very useful for obtaining broader and more in-depth results. That way, we can see if these findings apply more generally.

## Conclusion

This study aims to examine the role of fathers in the formation of responsibility character in early childhood. The results of the study show that limited involvement of fathers, both due to busy work and challenging family conditions, has a negative impact on the development of children's responsible character. Children who do not receive direct guidance and opportunities to carry out responsibilities in daily life tend to have a low understanding of the importance of responsibility. Previous theories and research support these findings, where the active involvement of fathers in parenting is directly related to the formation of a child's character, including responsibilities. Fathers who are able to provide direction, example, and opportunities for children to practice responsibility, both through small tasks and roles in the family, help children develop a stronger attitude of responsibility.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted, the role of fathers in childcare is very influential on the formation of responsibility character from an early age. When the involvement of fathers in childcare is less, the character of responsibility in children is also less developed. From an early age, children need more attention than a father. The father's contribution is very supportive in the formation of the character of responsibility. Therefore, there needs to be awareness in every parent, both mothers and fathers, that parenting is greatly affected by parental involvement.

Therefore, this study concludes that consistent and quality father involvement is essential in shaping the character of responsibility in early childhood. Fathers who are actively involved in parenting can have a significant positive impact on the development of children's responsible attitudes, ultimately helping them become independent and responsible individuals. However, the researcher acknowledged the shortcomings of this study, because it only involved limited subjects. To reinforce these findings, future research could be conducted to examine the long-term impact of fatherly involvement on child development. In addition, quantitative research on a larger scale can be conducted to explore the relationship between fatherly involvement and child development outcomes more broadly.

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