

## A TODDLER SPEAKS OUT: PHYSIC AND MENTAL ATTAINMENT IN A SINGLE PARENTING

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### ABSTRACT

*Deriving from many cases in a single parenting that effects the children's physic and mental development directs this study to be worth-conducting. This study aimed at investigating the toddler's physical and mental growth in a single parenting through qualitative approach. A narrative design was employed to reveal the untold story of a toddler in a single parenting through participatory observation. Then narrative analysis was applied based on these procedures: (1) observing the research object, (2) classifying the data, (3) interpreting data, and (4) (re)checking the data interpretation with the subject of research in order to search out verification (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Afterwards, the results were found that a toddler could meet his basic needs of life from a single parent through three aspects, such as child's physical-biological education, child's spiritual education, and child's socio-cultural education. Thus, this study has emphasized the potential of toodler's physic and mental attainment in context. Suggestions were then presented at the end of this article.*

**Keywords:** Single parent, Physic-Biological, Spiritual, Socio-Cultural, Children.

### INTRODUCTION

Research documenting children and gender has been carried out in various angles and it has still become an interesting issue to explore. Teachers and researchers from many countries drive the issue specifically from time to time. Lestari (2016) and Leman et al. (2005) studied parents' knowledge about sex education and gender for children. Committee on Injury, Violence, and Poison Prevention, Violence (2010); Juniawati (2015); and Yount et al. (2016) investigated the children abuse, the strategies to avoid children abuse, and early-age marriage that impacted to the increasing factor intimate partner violance (IPV), especially for women. Then another extensive studies on children is regarding the preschool education. Nowadays, children are directed to have early education since many preschool programs offer the quality of preschool instruction and curricula; besides, the advancement of technology at schools is

the exceptional reason to engage children in the preschool so they will invest their childhood education in the future and as a part of society (Kokkalia et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2014; and Yoshikawa et al., 2016).

Teachers and researchers are fond of studying the issue of children since they begin to experience individual changes of life that shape their characters and level of maturity. This is certainly interesting because this issue characterizes dynamism and each family shows different ways of educating their children. Research on children is also considered to have a continuous and progressive impact, both concerning with physical and mental aspects (Nurlaili, 2018; Suyanto, 2015). The child's golden age develops rapidly and is an prominent concern for parents to oversee their growth. At the childhood, parents are still easy to direct children to do positive activities because they interact more with their parents. Early childhood education in a family becomes a strong foundation that can determine the level of maturity when children enter adolescence, for example how children show a response when tackling a difficult situation for themselves. For those reasons, study on this issue turns to be very worth conducting.

The role of parents is verily important in educating the early childhood, both from mother and father, because the appropriate ways of parenting can build children's good character (Indrasari & Affiani, 2018). The domination of one party will certainly affect their physical and mental development. This condition often occurs, especially after parental divorce. Single parenting is one of the impacts of this problem and has become a social phenomenon in the society. Research on this issue has also been studied, particularly the single parent's model in educating children and its impacts on children's behavior because a mother must have responsibility and knowledge to reach the children's success of education (Anggraini et al., 2020; Golombok et al., 2016; Paramita, 2019; Rianawati, 2014; and Sukmaningrum et al., 2013). However, several things to note are that research related to children's behavior is still mostly done through a quantitative approach. This approach enables to represent the research object as a whole, but has not been able to explain the object in detail.

From the above-mentioned, it becomes urgent to study children's behavior of a single parenting in a distinct approach. Moreover, a little attention is undertaken in the portrait of physic-mental, spiritual, and socio-cultural aspects which are prominent to build children's physical and mental attainment. An interesting study revealed that good education parentings are those who focus on healthy soul in order to build mental aptitude intellectual, mental emotional, and mental social (Waston & Rois, 2017). Thereby, this study intends to

investigate deeply a little boy under 5 years who is being looked after by a single mother by means of understanding physical and mental attainment based on perspective of Islam.

## **METHOD**

This study aimed at investigating the boy toddler's physical and mental attainment in a single mother family based on some aspects which was categorized into three points. 1) Child's Physical-Biological Education, 2) Child's Spiritual Education, and 3) Child's Socio-Cultural Education.

The participant was selected due to the close relationship between the researcher and the participant's mother of this study which then employed a narrative approach through participatory observation. This approach is deemed effective to tell an untold story comprehensively by getting engaged to the participant's life. Direct observation through the child's family contact was done to obtain complete informative data. Also, it was employed deliberately by means of the consistency of data collection. In addition, the narrative data analysis was executed by following the sequence of qualitative procedures: (1) observing the research object, (2) classifying the data, (3) interpreting data, and (4) (re)checking the data interpretation with the subject of research in order to search out verification (Creswell & Poth, 2018)

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Child's Physical-Biological Education**

Meeting the primary needs of children is the responsibility of parents, especially a father. However, in the case of single parenting where a father does not provide for his children, so a mother must meet these basic needs as an impact. Regarding the child being studied, he obtained the basic needs such as eating, drinking, and formal education from his mother. Based on observations, child's physical growth and development will increase in line with his age. Researcher followed the development of the participant from the age of 3 to 5 years. In two years, there are many changes in the child's needs that parents must pay attention to, such as the freedom of time to play, recognition need of work done, the variations of playing media. Researchers from America have argued that playing with infants or toddlers is able to rescue their physical abuse or traumatic from bad experience as well as cure their mental helath (Mortensen & Barnett, 2016).

Although a child is looked after by a single parent, establishing harmony with the child is very important for his emotional and intellectual development. In this way, single parent is able to train the soul and emotions of the child indirectly through a game. Because in practice,

the involvement of parents in playing will strengthen the bonding with children, for example by inviting jokes like friends, compromising, and giving rewards. Playing with them can also be seen as the potential to hone their cognitive and affective abilities, for example by telling stories with parents as a partner. As stated by Bai et al. (2016) who has conducted a study on 31 families, children will show positive emotion because of family involvement such as emotion, touched, and the participation in their activities. In other words, the family attendance to the children's childhood will impact positively on their adolescence period. So, single parent must be able to take advantage of their children's opportunities to play to maximize the learning process. Through games or playing, a child can obtain both of advantages and disadvantages. It will be based on the parent's ways of educating.

In addition, sharpening the affective aspects for children becomes the first thing done before cognitive aspects. First, the child is given the understanding that he was raised by a single parent through communication according to his age. From this, it turns out that the child will better understand the condition of their parents and can place himself as a child raised by a single mother. The result of observation confirmed that appropriate communication from single mother raised the child's awareness and maturity of the current condition. Second, the single mother in this study considers that the child is a friend to share with, so there is a lot of communication that makes the child to be more mature and responsive, for example by being a good listener in each communication. Previously, Gross (2002) found that human great challenge in life is completely regulating emotions which almost everyone is difficult to manage it. According to his research, the successful emotional management is generative. It means that the strategies to manage emotions will have consequences on the other aspects of life.

### **Child's Spiritual Education**

Religious education instilled by parents from an early age on their children is needed because religion is a way of life for every human being. Some things that were found during the observation were that a child raised by a single mother has the right to obtain a good religious education from his early age. This spiritual cultivation is divided into three things. *The first* is to introduce children to the sources of Islamic education, namely the Qur'an and As-Sunna. In order for a child's spiritual needs to be met, he learns to know Allah SWT and the prophet Muhammad SAW through the values of life from these two Islamic sources. Like what is narrated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, "Train your children to acquire three characteristics: love of your Prophet, love for the Prophet's household and reciting the Quran;

for the bearers of the Quran will be in the shade of the Throne of Allah on the Day when there will be no shade except His, with His Prophets and His chosen ones.” [At-Tabaraani] *The second* is imitating the spiritual activities of parents. The best and ideal teaching for children is to give an example. In this study, a mother as a single parent acts as a role model for her child. So when the mother advises the child to be kind, then the mother must do it first, for example by inviting the child to pray, recite the prayer, and help others. Here, children are also given an understanding related to the reward of good deeds that he did not be in vain. *The Third* is religious education related to improving children's morale. In the context of this study, children are educated to understand boundaries as Muslims, for example being introduced about genitalia, how to talk to friends and older people, telling the truth, and fairness.

Waston & Rois (2017) previously stated in his research with Prof. Dr. Zakiyah Daradjat namely the importance of embedding spiritual education in children from early age because it is the foundation for human's life in the world and the hereafter. Besides, the level of spiritual education will also influence the children's mental health (mohammadyari, 2012). So, it is undoubtedly that teaching spiritual to children from infant will be useful for their life in the future, like what is stated by the Prophet Muhammad SAW: “Command your children to perform prayer when they are seven years old, and beat them for (not offering) it when they are ten; and separate them in beds.” (‘Amr ibn Al-‘Aas).

### **Child's Socio-Cultural Education**

Single mother understands that physical-biological and religious education given to children from childhood will affect their lives in the future, where a child no longer spends his time with family, but they will become part of the society through social interaction. This is proven by his social attitude at school where he looks more mature than his friends. For example he dares to say no to things that are not good and dares to advise his theme if an unpleasant action occurs. This finding has been supported by Gavrilov et al. (2012) that socio-cultural education given to the early age of children is able to build their initiation to join attention and to be responsive to their environment. On the other hand, researchers observed that the child showed a very cooperative attitude with his parents when at home. For example, when parents feel tired after work, then the child tries to finish what he needs himself, such as reading books, watching television, cutting packs of food, and even doing religious activities. The role of parents here is to monitor that what the child is doing is within good deeds, of course with the aim at sharpening the child's maturity. The mother reiterates that the

conditions of child raised with and without fathers are different. This condition is not to be regretted by the mother, but rather becomes an opportunity to become a stronger woman.

Human development, including the children growth, needs social and cultural interaction because it plays an important role in the children development of higher order thinking skill as well. As Parker (1979) asserted, “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)”.

## CONCLUSION

The study related to children is dynamic because each parent provides different ways of education. Surely, the role of parents is crucial related to their physic and mental health. However, the condition turns to be different when a child is looked after by a single mother. This case is very common as a social phenomenon. Through participatory observation, it was found that not all single parent is failed in providing the children needs. There some aspects that are important to be given to the children, such as child’s physical-biological education, child’s spiritual education, and child’s socio-cultural education. Three of those aspects have correlated each other to assist children building physic and mental development.

More studies related single parenting are required regarding the parent’s roles in facilitating effective emotional experiences in the family that meet the unique needs from children’s mental abuse. Then, future observational researches about children’s development in a single parenting should be sustainable and focus on highlighting the family socialization of positive emotion in laboratory.

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