



## Father's Role in Improving Early Childhood Leadership Character Education

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### Abstract

Character is the psychological, moral, or ethical traits that distinguish one person from another. Leadership is the ability to influence people to be willing to follow guidance or obey one's decisions. The purpose of this study was to determine the understanding of the role of fathers about leadership character education for early childhood. Qualitative research researchers use because the object under study takes place in a natural setting and aims to know, understand, and appreciate carefully and in more depth about the role of fathers in improving early childhood leadership character education at RA Nurul Abror Cibinong. This study shows the results that the father becomes a role model and determines the direction and rules of the family to make children grow and develop their character for the better. Future research is expected to find more qualified factors and solutions to guide fathers as role models in the family.

**Keywords:** *Early Childhood, Father Engagement, Joint Caring, Leadership Character*



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## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education is an initial process of shaping attitudes and character to grow and develop well and optimally, requiring the involvement of families, teachers, and the community to achieve these goals. Teachers play an essential role in this educational process because the teaching profession holds a respected position in society. This requires teachers always to pay attention to their attitudes, behavior, and actions, as they will consistently serve as role models for the surrounding community.

Early childhood leadership is a context in which responses to laws and standards, employment issues, the needs of children, families, and communities are challenges in the daily work of leaders. According to the Childcare Education and Care Industry Reference Committee (2020), the growth of this sector in Australia will result in an average salary increase of around 22% for childcare providers by 2023. To fill leadership positions and manage other challenges, one of the issues that must be

addressed is having early childhood education and care (ECEC) professionals with the necessary qualifications (Childcare Education and Care Industry Reference Committee, 2020a, 2020b). The factors influencing this industry are quite complex, and leaders in ECEC lead in evaluating service quality that benefits children, adults, and staff.

Leadership studies in ECEC are relatively young (30 years). Initially, research focused on defining leadership through typologies and characteristics, roles, and tasks of leaders (Hayden, 1996; Nupponen, 2006; Rodd, 1996). The focus was mainly on the individual position or leader as a hero. These studies laid the empirical foundation for early childhood leadership and, most importantly, revealed the unique nature of work in this sector. While interest in the roles, responsibilities, and characteristics of leaders remains (Aubrey et al., 2013; Ho, 2011; Rodd, 2013), there has been a shift toward understanding relational leadership and how it is interpreted and enacted within social and cultural contexts (Hard, 2006; Nuttall et al., 2016; Ord et al., 2013), and through models such as distributed leadership (Heikka et al., 2013, 2021; Waniganayake et al., 2017), pedagogical leadership (Palaiologou and Male, 2018), and shared leadership (Stamopoulos, 2012).

Research on early childhood leadership has also emerged in response to ongoing global changes. For example, the role of Educational Leaders in Australia (Fleet et al., 2015; Grarock and Morrissey, 2013; Martin et al., 2020; Rouse and Spradbury, 2016; Sims et al., 2018; Stamopoulos and Barblett, 2018; Zhou and Fenech, 2022) and the continuing impact of workforce challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic (Logan et al., 2021) have driven new empirical work.

The role of fathers has emphasized and facilitated their involvement in child-rearing amid changing societal structures, as well as a series of new laws and regulations (Adler & Lenz, 2016). Studying how people communicate with each other shows that women's contributions to communication with their children differ from those of mothers. Compared to fathers, women are more likely to ask questions, speak in more complex language, and seek more explanations (Lovas, 2011; Rowe et al., 2004). In modern society, children are accustomed to complex social contexts, including primary and secondary education, as well as sports clubs and university sports teams. Teachers, parents, and other children increasingly enter children's lives. Some children can fully participate and enjoy social interactions, while others are less adept at socializing or have issues with externalizing or internalizing behaviors, making it challenging to interact healthily with others. Parent-child interaction during the first three years likely significantly impacts a child's social and emotional development and their ability to recognize or resolve authority-related issues (e.g., Carpendale & Lewis 2004; Lamb & Lewis 2010; Möller, Majdandi, de Vente, & Bögels, 2013). More attention is being given to specific aspects of adult-child interactions, namely the "trust policy" of adult-child relationships, which emphasizes the need for adults to treat children as individuals with their own needs rather than entities that must be met (Meins 1999, 2013).

There is some information on the relationship between mind-mindedness and children's social skills and well-being issues. Mind-mindedness is seen as a wise tool for adults to adjust their own needs and the needs of their children (Meins, 2013). In doing so, adults gradually increase children's trust in them, as well as self-awareness and socio-cognitive growth (McMahon and Bernier, 2017). Therefore, the younger

generation is expected to control their emotional growth and reduce the risk of interpersonal, emotional, and intellectual problems.

Given the above, it is the responsibility of both fathers and mothers to provide education from the early stages of development, particularly in self-recognition, language, character, and intellectual growth. The researcher raised this issue to understand how the father's role fosters self-confidence and character as a leader. Appropriate involvement of both mothers and fathers in child development has been linked to positive outcomes for children (Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008). Awareness of involving fathers in children's education is increasing in Indonesia. Nevertheless, in Indonesia, fathers' participation in children's education remains lower than that of mothers in schools. Moreover, there is still a lack of school programs focusing on fathers' participation in school-based activities in Indonesia, particularly in early childhood education.

Based on the background description above, the active and continuous involvement of the family, especially the father as a leadership figure in the family and community, is necessary for developing leadership character in RA/PAUD children. Therefore, the researcher examines the research titled "The Role of Fathers in Enhancing Early Childhood Leadership Character at RA Nurul Abror Cibinong.

## METHODOLOGY

Data collection in this research was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. An interview is a conversation with a specific purpose conducted by two parties: the interviewer, who asks questions, and the interviewee, who provides answers. According to Lincoln and Guba, as quoted by Lexy J. Moleong, the purposes of conducting interviews include: constructing understanding about people, events, organizations, feelings, motivations, demands, and concerns; verifying, altering, and expanding information obtained from others, both human and non-human (triangulation); and verifying, altering, and expanding the constructs developed by the researcher as member checks.

The technique used in the interview process was unstructured interviews, which are conducted without a strict list of questions. The advantage of unstructured interviews is that they can be conducted more personally, allowing for the collection of as much information as possible. Additionally, unstructured interviews enable the recording of affective responses observed during the interview and the filtering out of personal influences that may affect the interview's outcome. Psychologically, this type of interview is more relaxed and can feel more like a conversation, making it less tiring and monotonous for the informant. During unstructured interviews, questions are asked freely (free interviews) about general topics such as work, hobbies, daily activities, family habits, and more.

Following this, focused interviews are conducted where the questions do not have a specific structure but always center on one main topic. In this case, the focus is directed toward understanding the father's role in enhancing character education, particularly leadership, which is the focus of the research. In other words, interviews at this second stage do not use a structured instrument, but the researcher has created guidelines based on the research focus. Both methods are conducted openly (open interviews) in line with the open-ended nature of qualitative research and are aimed at informants considered key informants, namely fathers and teachers. In selecting

informants, the researcher asked the fathers of students at RA Nurul Abror to participate as the primary informants. For more structured interviews, materials were prepared in advance based on the research objectives. In certain situations, if the depth of the interview is insufficient, further probing may be conducted. However, this must be done persuasively, politely, and casually. The interview topics are always directed toward questions related to the research focus. This approach helps avoid digressions and ensures that no irrelevant information is gathered during the interview. Interviews can be scheduled in advance or conducted spontaneously as opportunities arise with the informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Researchers interviewed 4 fathers to get an initial picture of the role of fathers in improving early childhood leadership character education with a demographic description of the informants outlined in the following table:

Table 1. Demographic data of informants

Initials	Age	last education	Work
THE	36 TH	S1	Private officer
AA	40 TH	S1	Private officer
AD	37 TH	D3	ASN
AR	48 TH	SMEA	POLICE

After conducting thematic analysis of the data, several themes emerged as follows:

Father's understanding of leadership character education for early childhood.

Based on the data collection activities mentioned above, the researcher obtained the following research results:

Regarding how fathers describe their involvement with their children, that fathers leave it to their wives to accompany their children's studies. This is in line with the results of the interview with AZ who stated that "I have never been directly involved in leadership character education because I am busy working as an employee in a government agency." Do I follow the child's activities?" The same thing was also conveyed by AR, "Yes, outside of work time, if you have time for school pick-up and drop-off, then at home we communicate with each other and chat". There is also something different from the results of the interview with AD who stated that "I take turns with my wife to accompany the children when studying or doing activities."

Based on the above, it is known that the results of the interview show that there are fathers who are directly involved in children's learning activities and leadership character education, there are also those who only provide educational tasks to their mothers at home and there are also those who take turns with their wives when accompanying them. activities and learning activities of their children.

### **The strategy used by RA Nurul Abror's father to increase children's understanding of leadership character education.**

In the process of finding out the involvement and strategies used by fathers in their children's leadership character education, the researchers conducted interviews. Based on the data collection activities mentioned above, the researcher obtained the following research results: that the activities carried out or the strategies carried out were the introduction of figures, socialization with the environment and good social relations. This is in accordance with an interview conducted with AZ stating "You look for as many friends as possible, whether they are naughty or whether they are good. Don't follow the bad ones.". What AA has done differently is that it has not taught the leadership character as a whole about the figures. As stated "I haven't or don't teach it".

There is a different way that AD does in providing leadership education to children by being an example for children. As his statement "usually the first example is from the parents". While AR stated "yes give good examples in what is the name yes knowledge about the world of children for the future also especially the cool ones"

Paying attention to the methods and strategies used by fathers in educating their children about character, it can be concluded that the strategies start from providing examples and inviting them to socialize with the environment around them.

### **Barriers felt by fathers to be involved in early childhood leadership character education.**

From the results of the interviews, it was found that busy activities at work were the things that caused obstacles to accompanying children directly. This was conveyed by AZ "Sir, because time is limited, I try as much as possible to have time for the children". A different thing was conveyed by AA "I usually just make friends and join in with the children, and interact every day when I get home from work asking the children about school activities and other things."

A different tone was also conveyed by AD "if you are not focused and cannot put together a story in your mind, then if you tell a story you will quickly get bored." Meanwhile, AR stated that a child's world usually involves anger and disappointment, "it's the world of today's children, yes, we only watch YouTube, so we focus on the positive, if it's not their world, we just cut it off."

### **Factors that need to be developed in the role of fathers to improve character education**

From the interview results, it was found that things can be developed to develop character in children by building communication. In AZ's opinion, "if I pay attention to children, especially nowadays, they are very different from children in the past, today's children tend not to be lazy, rather weak, not just a bit jealous." This is also different from AA, who stated that he found no obstacles in interacting with his child, "actually, the father is leading the example." AD said almost the same thing "we watch together, even if it's not a story about an apostle or a friend, for example, we watch a Japanese cartoon, then we'll ask d' what the story is." According to AR, there is also a different statement that communication is important for being together with children. "After school, you can talk more and more clearly, even now, like parents, what is it called "talkative". Often just telling stories."

From the data obtained, the important role of fathers in improving character education is very necessary for children's growth and development. Children need direction and guidance from adults. Character formation is greatly influenced by education in the family. Young children acquire a variety of human abilities during the early childhood phase (Tucker, 2011), which are greatly influenced by their home environment, such as parenting styles, toys, family interactions, and sociocultural values (Tyler, 2003). Parents are the "main educators" who are tasked with providing information about religious, moral and cultural education as well as educating their children informally on how to read, write and count (Mathwasa & Okeke, 2016a, p.229). This continuity is marked by the inheritance of culture and character that has been possessed by society and the nation. In the process of cultural and national character education, students actively develop their potential (Syarif & Rahmat, 2018), through the process of internalization and appreciation of values; Elihami & Firawati (2017) become personalities in socializing in society, developing a more prosperous community life, and developing a more dignified nation. The important things that fathers can do for the character education process are to accompany children's learning. According to Suyanto (2011), character education is plus character education, which involves all aspects of knowledge (cognition), feelings and actions.

When it was confirmed regarding the father's involvement in character education, the father handed it over to the mother even though there was time that could be used to be with the child when learning and communicating. The quality and quantity of fathers' involvement in education plays an important role in children's growth and development (Zhang et al., 2019). Research from around the world shows that parents play an important role in children's development, and in different contexts (Joussemet et al., 2005; Mattanah et al., 2005; Zadeh and Im-Bolter, 2006). Parents have different ideas about parenting, about what they feel should be an important part of their children's lives, about the goals and values they consider important about children (Tuli, 2013). Parental attitudes are considered to determine children's educational attainment (Boonk et al., 2018; Shute et al., 2011). The role of the father has emphasized and facilitated his involvement in child care in the changing structures in today's society, as well as a series of new laws and regulations (Adler & Lenz, 2016).

When asked about obstacles in carrying out the role as a father to educate character, it was found that intense communication between father and child would influence the child's attitude and character development. This can be explained in social learning theory, where humans learn through socialization with their environment through interaction and observation of other people (Mathwasa & Okeke, 2016b). Father involvement can be interpreted as interaction between father and child, which is shown by his affection and availability around the child (Palm & Fagan, 2008). Parents are the "main educators" who are tasked with providing information about religious, moral and cultural education as well as educating their children informally on how to read, write and count (Mathwasa & Okeke, 2016a, p.229). Studying the way people communicate with each other shows that women's contributions to communication with their children differ from those of mothers. Compared with their parents, women ask more questions, speak more complex language, and ask for more explanations (Lovas, 2011; Rowe et al., 2004).

There are various types and methods that can be used by fathers to develop and improve the quality of early childhood character education. The involvement of

fathers who take part in raising and caring for children tends to have a positive personality, such as being ready to compete in the current era of globalization, having self-confidence in their abilities and being able to take risks and be responsible for all the risks they take (Cabrera, Tamis-LeMond, Bradley, Hofferth, & E lamb, 2000). The role of father and mother is really needed by children, not only children need the role of mother in caring for and nurturing, but the role of father is really needed to explain that a father has a role as a disciplinarian and is able to introduce outsiders through playing with father (Chae & Lee, 2011; Dumont & Paquette, 2012). Parents are aware of their duties in the development of children, but at the same time they need pedagogical information about the educational rights of their children. (Mojsovsja Koteva Tatjana. 2006). In this case, parents and the family as a whole play a role as direct leaders and supporters of the implementation of their children's education. Since this is one of the core influencing factors, it can be seen as a fundamental factor that undoubtedly has a greater influence on the development and creation of the human personality as a whole. Children always adopt the values and types of behavior of their parents. (Kasapi, Gjylmsere, 2013) However, if parents have a positive influence in their children's daily lives, and most importantly in their daily education, their future will be more beautiful and more successful. (Colanoiq, Vera. 1972). Fathers make a powerful difference in defining expectations and challenging children to do their best. (Constantine, Tammy. 1999). Thus, children learn their responsibilities and roles in the family, as they themselves grow and become parents, in which case they are ripe to play the role of father in this regard. With this theory, many studies have proven that the relationship between fathers and children becomes stronger. This relationship does not depend on the other two relationships, namely the relationship between father and child or the relationship between mother and child. (Cowan, C. 1992). The experiences given by fathers and mothers to children will help children to pass through the developmental stages in the early first year of life, including brain structure and function leading to cognitive, language and emotional development (Belsky, & De Haan, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

Based on everything discussed so far, we can conclude that the primary goal of this study is to understand the role of fathers in enhancing leadership character education in early childhood. The findings are quite varied. Fathers are foundational role models in areas such as responsibility, care, longing, affection, kindness, generosity, decisiveness, discipline, love, success, and all other aspects of goodness. As role models, fathers must be the main examples for their children and consistently maintain communication, whether directly (face-to-face) or indirectly (through phone calls or video conferences), to foster closeness with their children. Fathers also provide rules and positive discipline to help their children develop better character. They supervise their children's interactions with digital media (smartphones) or when accessing YouTube, whether for games or videos.

In addition to fathers, mothers also play a crucial role in their children's education when the father is busy fulfilling his duties as the head of the household, providing for the family. Mothers take on the responsibility of educating and nurturing their children, becoming learning and play companions, helping the children to grow into mature and responsible individuals. Regarding the role of fathers in enhancing

leadership character education, an important aspect is that fathers must continue to involve themselves in their children's education, even amidst the demands of work and family obligations. Fathers should be role models in fostering the traits of a good and wise leader. They should be learning and play companions for their children. Early childhood education institutions should provide education and understanding to fathers through parenting activities, guidebooks, or pocket books that can serve as references for fathers in interacting and communicating with their children. Additionally, they could create videos or tutorials on character education.

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