

## Teacher's Perception on Father's Involvement in Early Childhood Education and Development

Beatriks N. Bunga<sup>1</sup>, Maria Leonarda Luruk<sup>2</sup>, Indra Y. Kiling<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Early Childhood Education and Development Teachers Training, Universitas Nusa Cendana, <sup>3</sup>Department of Psychology, Universitas Nusa Cendana

e-mail: \*[beatriks.bunga@staf.undana.ac.id](mailto:beatriks.bunga@staf.undana.ac.id), [meyleonarda11@gmail.com](mailto:meyleonarda11@gmail.com),  
[indra.kiling@staf.undana.ac.id](mailto:indra.kiling@staf.undana.ac.id)

**Abstract.** Father have important role in young child's development. Active and regular involvement from father could give positive impacts to child development. In order to understand general description of father's involvement in Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) in Kota Kupang, the authors used teacher's perception as primary data source in this study. The objective of the study is to identify teacher's perception on fathers' involvement in ECED in Kupang City. Method used was qualitative with interviews as main data gathering technique. The results showed that father's involvement in ECED were still limited, proved by statements showing that mother has more active role in ECED compared to father. This is due to the lack of awareness and knowledge of father and other related stakeholders about the importance of father's involvement in development of their young children. Therefore there are some intervention that need to be applied by teachers in order to improve father's involvement in ECED that is to give counselling, home visit program, connecting book and also parenting program for fathers.

**Keywords:** *father's involvement, teacher's perception, Early Childhood Education and Development*

**Abstrak.** Ayah memiliki peran yang penting dalam perkembangan anak usia dini. Keterlibatan ayah secara aktif dan teratur dapat memberikan dampak positif bagi perkembangan anak. Untuk mengetahui gambaran umum keterlibatan ayah pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini (PAUD) di Kota Kupang, penulis menggunakan persepsi guru sebagai data primer dalam penelitian ini. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk mengidentifikasi persepsi guru tentang keterlibatan ayah di PAUD di Kota Kupang. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yakni kualitatif dengan menggunakan teknik pengumpulan data berupa wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keterlibatan ayah di PAUD masih kurang, dibuktikan dengan hasil wawancara dimana ibu lebih berperan aktif mengasuh anak dibanding ayah. Hal ini disebabkan karena kurangnya kesadaran dan pengetahuan ayah maupun semua pihak terkait pentingnya keterlibatan ayah dalam perkembangan anak usia dini. Oleh karena itu ada beberapa cara yang perlu dilakukan guru untuk meningkatkan peran ayah di sekolah yaitu memberikan konseling, mengadakan kunjungan rumah dan buku penghubung serta program pengasuhan anak untuk ayah.

**Kata Kunci:** *keterlibatan ayah, persepsi guru, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*

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### Introduction

Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) is a vital foundation of children development. ECED is crucial due to the fact that in this age children develop education-related skills and knowledge that prepare them to enter formal education. When children entered ECED, parents also need to contribute in the process, particularly concerning religion/spiritual education, attitude and moral development, basics in obeying rules and developing habits. Parents consist of father and mother that each have roles in the family. Most of the community members view that father's main responsibility is to provide for his wife and children, while mother is expected to take care of the house, prepare for daily meals and to nurture children (Duvall in Wahyuningrum, 2013).

A father means so much for their children. Whether a father succeeds or not in the community is not a big deal, a father is still a hero for their children. For children, father is a combination of a hero, tutor, advisor, protector, teacher, and also a friend. Father's unique contribution as the first and most important man in a child's life will have long term and meaningful consequences. This is stated by 90,3% people of United States according to a survey on year 1998, they agree that father has unique contribution which manifested in various forms such as support for wife and children, and also relationship with wife that could carry a message for their children (Dagun, 1990).

Indonesians have put more attention on the importance of father's role and presence for children. Even though awareness of father's role for children in the community has been growing, fathers are still rarely involved in parenting. Most of the fathers still depend on their wife on the matters of parenting. In a survey (Elia, 2000), 61% respondents stated that a father should be the main provider, 62% stated that a father should only be involved in the household matters when he had to, and 33% said that a father does not have to spare their time every day for children. This facts highlight father's lack of involvement in parenting especially in Indonesia.

Other studies found that parents' involvement influence their children's education result in school, both in their academic achievements and also children's orientation to school (Izzo dkk. 1999; Shurnow & Miller 1999). Schools that involve parents in their education process, showed that there is a positive influence of parents program on student's behavior (e.g. reduced skipping school rates) and also an increase in student's attachment to school (Izzo dkk., 1999). This positive influence also reflected in the development of young children and their readiness to enter school (Marcoon 1999). Children also showed that they feel the school like their home

(Shurnow & Miller 1999). Father's involvement proved significant in improving children's education outcomes (Tekin, 2012). Parents that involved with their young children's education also showed improvement of communication between parents and children and also parents become more attentive to children's study activities in home. Parents' involvement also resulted in the increase of their involvement in school's decision making process (Haynes et al., 1989).

Father's regular and active involvements also influence children's psychological and emotional development. Father's involvement resulted in the decrease of behavioral problems in boys and psychological problems in girls. Moreover, father's involvements also help in cognitive development and reducing children mischief and harmful behaviors on poor families (McWayne et al., 2013). Gottman, Katz, and Hooven (in McWayne, 2013) found that father's management in children emotional development have positive influence on children's social relationship with their peers, even more than mother's influence. Father's involvement also positively affected their young children's behaviour regulation ability (Easterbrooks et al., 2014) and also social competence (Torres et al., 2014).

Father's role in Kupang City has been perceived as significant by people of Kupang City by previous studies (Soge et al., 2016; Kiling-Bunga et al., 2017; Bussa et al., 2018). Based on a preliminary study on 30 ECED posts/kindergarten in Kupang City, parents' involvement was still dominated by mothers compared to fathers. Observation in school showed that mothers were the one who take children to school and home, and also they were more active in consulting with teachers on children's development and issues. In a routine parent-teacher meeting (in which they called parenting program), mothers were mostly presence than fathers. In a discussion with teachers, it was found that from 25 children; only 2 fathers were involved actively with their young children's education in ECED. Father's involvement mostly showed in providing basic needs such as food, milk, snack, school uniform and tuition fee, some yous, books and once in a while taking their child home.

Study on father's involvement in ECED is still scarce in Indonesia, particularly in East Nusa Tenggara province. This study aims to close this gap of science by understanding how teachers perceive father's involvement and the form of father's involvement in ECED in Kupang City. Perception of teachers is important due to the time they spent with children in school, their perspective will also provide unique point of view in understanding father's role in ECED, and hopefully the results could help in developing programs to improve father's involvement in the future.

### Methods

This study employs qualitative approach in order to understand how teachers perceive fathers' involvement in ECED. Using purposive sampling approach, total of five ECED teachers participated in this study, consisted of four female teachers and one male teacher. The participant criteria were: 1. Teacher of ECED or kindergarten, 2. Resides in Kupang City, and 3. Have taught in ECED for at least five years. This study was done in randomly selected five ECED posts/kindergarten in Kupang City, which is the Pertiwi Setda Kindergarten, Soteria Kindergarten, Siloam Kota Baru Kindergarten, Pelita Kasih ECED post and Al Muttaqin Kelapa Lima Kindergarten. Data was gathered using interview session, using an interview guide that mainly concerned on teacher's perception on father's form of involvement in education. A voice recorder, and a book and pen were used in the data collection process. Informed consent were obtained in the rapport building process.

A 32 year old teacher named WI (initial name) in Pertiwi Setda Kupang Kindergarten was interviewed on Saturday, 7 November 2015. The interview was 45 minutes long. The interview was done inside a classroom in that kindergarten. Next participant interviewed was AO, aged 34 year old and a teacher in Soteria Kindergarten. AO was interviewed for 20 minutes in that kindergarten classroom on Monday, 9 November 2015.

Next participant interviewed was LR, a teacher aged 40 year old in Siloam Kota Baru Kindergarten. The 21 minutes long interview was done in a classroom in that kindergarten, on Monday, 9 November 2015. One of the author also interviewed a teacher which also a founder of Pelita Kasih ECED post, named RK, 39 year old. The interview was done on Monday, 9 November 2015 and took 30 minutes. Due to RK's request, the interview was done at RK's house. The last participant interviewed was UV, aged 27 year old, a teacher in Al Muttaqin Kindergarten. The interview took 21 minutes to complete and was done in an office located in the kindergarten. The whole process of the study was done between July 2015 to December 2015. The main questions in the interview were related to teachers' perception on father's involvement in ECED, forms of father's involvement and non-involvement, how to improve father's non-involvement and how the children that have and does not have father's involvement in the school. The results analyzed with thematic analysis technique and an audit trail was kept to improve study quality.

### Results

Thematic analysis on transcribed verbatim resulted in seven main themes discussed below:

### ***Teacher perception father's role in ECED***

Based on interview results, there were various opinions on father's role in ECED. According to WI, AO, and RK father has important role in ECED, due to children needs of love and care from father, participant said that fathers were involved in picking their children up, attending meetings in ECED, participated as committee members and also in various events. This result shown by a quote from WI,

*"Father's role in ECED is important and fathers in here have been involved in many ways like picking up and delivering their children, in meetings, committee, and also in supporting events in ECED like competition for students." (WI)*

LR mentioned that father's role in ECED is crucial, especially in showing responsibilities to put their children in school, communicating often with teachers about their child's development and progress in school. While UV specifically said that father is needed in ECED process because mother can play a single role in raising and nurturing children, as shown in quote below:

*"Father's role for their kids, umm, so their roles are much needed, in the context of that mother would not be able to raise and nurture children without help from father." (UV)*

### ***Form of father's involvement in ECED***

Father's involvement in ECED based on WI and RK's opinions are to support learning activities in ECED by providing funds, providing equipment needed for school, picking up child, attending meetings and also taking care of children in home. This is reflected in a quote from WI that said:

*"Well, what father must do to support child development is like, supporting learning process in ECED by providing fund and also school's equipment, also by picking up child, and also by attending meetings held by school." (WI)*

AO also said that father could become a good example for child by helping child to learn, as stated here:

*"Well, everything that child might need from a father, father has to present, father has to become an example for child, helping them in learning letters, numbers, particularly when mother is busy." (AO)*

Meanwhile LR and UV said that father could be involved in the ways of communicating with teachers about their child's development and progress, also by being active in motivating and pushing their child. This could be identified from this statement:

*"Well just like I said, actively communicating with teachers on child development, be more active in motivating their child, in studying, making*

*friends, providing budget for school's needs and also school necessities."*  
(LR)

#### **Father's proactive role in ECED**

Results of interview from five participants in four schools showed that mothers were more proactive in ECED, and if they have to compare, only few numbers of fathers have shown proactivity in ECED as quoted here:

*"I don't know about situation at home, but when looking at current facts, mothers were the most active in nurturing their child, fathers (role) were limited in just picking up child, and there were also mothers who pick up their child. If I have to compare, if there are 10 fathers, then maybe only one father that was involved in ECED, moreover that is caused by the mother is currently out of town, making the father active, but mostly in here mothers are the one who are more active."* (WI)

It is interesting to notice that participants mentioned in one school were fathers and mothers play a more equal role, even said that fathers are more active compared to mother found in quote below:

*"In this school fathers (are more active), especially in my class, just like I said that based on the result of home visits, the roles are like fifty-fifty, but most fathers have taken more roles because mothers are busy, well fathers are also busy but they can spend more time for children, fathers are the one who pick up their children, consulting about their child's development, updating their children's progress in home and also show good cooperation with teacher in school."*(UV)

#### **Causes of father's inactivity in ECED**

According to interview results, it is shown that inactivity from fathers were influenced by their workload in their job, and also influenced by low motivation from father. WI, AO and RK specifically mentioned that mothers were closer with their children because fathers were busy with their work. LR also said that fathers shown minimal communication with their children as stated in quote below:

*"Can also be due to their (fathers) work, they are busy with their job and that makes them rarely communicating with their children, they only think about putting their children in school and nothing more."* (LR)

#### **Improving father's role**

There are several ways identified by participants to improve father's role in ECED. WI and LR said that teachers also involve parents in school events, especially fathers in various extracurricular activities, for example in contests for students. WI stated in quote that:

*"So in our school, we tried to involve fathers in extracurricular (activities) like in competition in Indonesia independence day on 17 August, fathers and students compete in making the most flags in order to triumph, that made fathers participate and support event also pushing their children's confidence in competition. It teaches children teamwork and improve*

*relationship with fathers. Other than that, we also consult students' progress with fathers, either directly or by connecting book. " (WI)*

Further, AO said that teacher can make home assignment as a media to improve father and child relationship. RK said that teacher give counseling and guidance when they meet father in school. Meanwhile UV said that teacher can make parenting program special for father, doing home visit three times per semester and also connecting book.

#### ***Party who help in improving father's role***

WI, AO, LR, RK and UV said that teachers can help fathers by giving counselling and guidance particularly in education matters. Fathers' friends could also help by informing fathers about their child development in ECED. Family members could help in motivating fathers to fully involved with ECED process, while mothers can help in explaining the benefit of parenting and also ECED.

#### ***Child with and without care from father***

WI and AO said that children who get more attention and care from their father's involvement in ECED would have different results when compared to children who have less attention. They looked braver, happier, more independent, coordinated and more easy to be regulated.

*"Well of course, they (children who get more attention) looked more courageous, confident, happy and independent." (WI)*

LR also said that children will have neater appearance and also more well-equipped, but these children also tended to be spoiled and lazy. RK mentioned that children look more confident, brave and obedient. In other side, UV stated that children look more ignorant from others.

According to WI, AO, RK and UK, children who have lesser attention from fathers tended to be attention-seeker, asking illogical questions, trouble maker, disturbing friends, feel inferior, shy, not confident, doubtful and rigid. LR further said that children looked moody, secluded, silent, poor body hygiene, but also shows curiosity in class and also independency.

### **Discussion**

According to interview results, it is identified that teachers perceive father's involvement in ECED as crucial due to their importance in child development. In nurturing their child, father and mother both has equal role and cannot be separated, meaning that mother cannot single handedly take care of their children without father.

Cabrera et al. (2000) said that father's involvement in ECED can be materialized in engagement, shown when father picking their child up from school; accessibility, shown when father taking care of their child in home, be a good example for their child by helping their child study, and also be active in supporting and motivating their child; responsibility, shown when father support learning activities by providing money needed, and also school equipment for child, attending meetings and communicating intensively with teachers on child development. However it also found that many parties have not yet theoretically understand father's involvement form, so they only explain based on their own understanding.

Out of five schools involved in the research, teachers from four schools stated that mothers shown more active role compared to fathers, but there was one particular school that said that father and mother has more balanced roles even though father looked more active somehow. This is resulted from workload from father's job and also the lack of motivation. Children who are cared by their fathers were also found different when compared to children who are less cared by their fathers. This result similar like what Cabrera et al. (2000) has stated, which is four categories of factors influencing father's involvement in ECED that consisted of father's motivation to be involved in their child's life, skills and confidence as father, social support and stress, and institutional factors (e.g. job characteristics).

This study identified that teachers, friends, mothers, and children could help improve fathers' involvement in ECED. Other than that, government also plays an important role in facilitating programs that applied to improve father's role. This study also specifically mentioned some ways that could be done in order to improve father's role in ECED which is providing counselling and guidance for father, parenting program from father, home visit three times per semester, and also having connecting book in school.

This study has provided some insights and also practical recommendation in improving father's role in ECED. However this study also has some limitations. Small number of participants means lack of in depth knowledge obtained. Meanwhile future study could also consider involving other stakeholders other than teacher so that perspectives gained could be richer.

### **Conclusion**

Father has important and unique role in supporting their youngchildren in ECED. A regulated and active involvement from father can resulted in positive impact for child development. Result of this study show that many stakeholders are yet to understand the real meaning of father involvement in ECED. Currently it is also identified that

there is a lack of father's involvement in ECED, particularly in Kupang City. The lack of awareness on the importance of father's involvement may also reflect in other districts in Kupang City's vicinity.

#### *Suggestion*

It is suggested for all related stakeholders to continue their effort to improve fathering, and other concepts related to father's involvement in their children life. Programs like peer support, parenting program, and support from workplace is needed to ensure improvement in father's involvement. Some specific suggestions from participants can also be read and applied in place with similar settings like Kupang City.

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