

# Fatherhood & Children's Remote Learning During Covid-19 Pandemic: A Narrative Inquiry of a Balinese Full Time Dad

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## ABSTRACT

Relational power supremacy is determined by culture, which impacts women's and men's capacity to make decisions in the family and community. As a part of strong patriarchal culture, Balinese men's involvement in parenthood deals with their self-concept and identity. Although there has been a growing literature discussing fatherhood in many cultural settings, a limited study focusing on how men in strong patriarchal culture transmit their full-time fatherhood has been conducted. Besides, the emergency shifting of learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic conveys more hitches to shelter. The present study examined whether and how Balinese fathers' parenting styles may influence attachment style and their children's remote learning activities. By using attachment theory, a qualitative approach of analysis was carried out using a narrative inquiry. A father with children who are having remote learning activities was recruited as the participant of this study. Unstructured interviews were used for data collection and recorded using a voice recorder only. The recording was then transcribed and analyzed using collaborative thematic narrative analysis. The results indicate that fathers' parenting style, their perception about the fatherhoods, their coping strategies, and responses from the society were related to the attachment style and children's remote learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Fatherhood, Children's Remote Learning, Patriarchy, Narrative Inquiry*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the development of parenting research has focused on the deconstruction of gender and power relations in the family structure. The alteration has led fathers' awareness of their children's development [1][2][3] and their involvement [4][5][6][7] to contemporary societies in this 21<sup>st</sup> century [8]. As one of the effects of feminist movement that had been to get more women (mothers) into the workplace was the situation where the increasing number of full-time fathers gradually became normal [9]. Consequently, parenthood involvement has been shifting [10][11], and the mother is not always the primary nurturer in the family. Crespi & Ruspini then conceptualized fathers' roles have been changed from mainly financial provider into simultaneously provider, guide, friend, playmate, carer, and nurturer [8]. Related to the advancement of fathers' roles within the family, scholars have become more

concerned in studying fatherhood in different contexts and cultures [12][13][14].

Defining fatherhood is, therefore, seen as something fluid and contextual. In the lenses of self-concept and identity, the concept of fatherhood cannot be separated from culture, beliefs, and values within the society. Talking about Balinese culture, which has incredibly complex culture [15], with patriarchy belief, man is positioned as the family leader who should provide financial needs, security, and authority. These roles give an identity that men have a higher dignity within the family. Apart from being the head of the family, Balinese men, as members of a collectivist society, also have responsibilities in the social relations of the Balinese custom society (including extensive big family called *Dadia*, *Banjar*, and *Desa Adat*), which also demands their time and dedication. The demands of these multiple roles of fathers challenge their identities [16].

However, along with contemporary movements, Balinese men also start to get involved in parenting. Fathers' involvement has been conceptualized with various qualities that characterize their involvement in childcare [17][18]. It can be seen from their cognitive and emotional responsiveness within the family [19], their commitment to caring the future generations [20], as well as to the social, economic, and cultural context in which they define their identity [21]. Generatively, fathers are expected to be as approachable, nurturing, and capable as mothers in responding to the signals and needs of their child and also able to personalize the roles of teachers, providers, and protector in the ever-expanding world of the children [22][23][24]. In Balinese society, it is another challenge for men to deal with this expectation of fatherhood.

Talking about fathering or paternal caregiving, it offers different parenting styles compared with mothering or maternal caregiving. Fathers commonly offer children the opportunity to further explore the world by playing [25][22][26] in a masculine way that prioritizes evolving attachments [27][28]. However, fathers' involvement and their parenting styles differ critically between diverse cultures [29][30]. Dwairy et al. thought that childcare strategies are conveyed within cultures, and those local cultures transmit robust consequences for shaping fatherhood practices [31]. Many studies have been conducted in a collectivist culture, like Asia in general and Indonesia in a specific context, show that the effect of parenting style on children's change is more culture-dependent [32] contrasts with what happens in individualistic cultures in western countries. Thus, investigating how fathers in Balinese collectivist culture show individual parenting styles and build their children's attachment is crucial.

Paternal caregiving, especially by stay-at-home fathers, which occurs intensively, can foster attachment [33][34]. Some studies found that attachment built by paternal caregiving is secured and affects children's early childhood development [35][36], cognition, and emotional regulation well [22][37]. Therefore, fatherhood increases the possibility that children will raise empathy, problem-solving, and temperament to care for others [38].

Furthermore, a new context due to the COVID-19 pandemic brings another challenge for stay-at-home fathers to deal with their children's remote learning. Although there are growing numbers of literature discussed on how parents provide cognitive and emotional support for children's success in virtual learning [39][40][41][42][43][44], there is no study discussed how collectivist stay-at-home father's parenting style, which is more culture-dependent, affect the attachment to the child and how it can support his child remote learning. Thus, this study aimed at examining whether and how Balinese father's parenting

styles may influence attachment style and their children's remote learning activities.

## 2. METHODS

This study is a narrative inquiry that researches the participant's experience by maintaining an orientation to stories told by him/her [45][46]. By inquiring participant's stories about their experiences of fathering in building attachment and supporting his child's remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, narrative inquiry enables the researchers to take a particular view on the continuousness of his caregiving, the entirety of father-child attachment and supportiveness to his child remote learning from the point of collectivist culture of Balinese society.

The participant was recruited based on several considerations, (1) a stay-at-home father (full-time dad), (2) Balinese/from strong patriarchal culture, (3) experience intensive caregiving from pregnancy to school age, and (4) self-decided to be a full-time dad. These considerations show that being a stay-at-home father is not because of situational factors (e.g., working wife, jobless, etc.), but because of his inner self-decision for the sake of caregiving his child.

The data in this study were collected through several interviews. Before the initial unstructured interview, the participant is informed written consent. It was agreed that the recording would be voice only and the transcriptions encrypted by password. Pseudonyms would also be used to protect the identity of the participant. Then, the interviews were conducted six times from August 2020 to October 2020. Each interview lasted from 45-60 minutes to allow the participant to express the story freely. Beginning with asking his critical moment when deciding to be a stay-at-home father, the participants came to the story of his fatherhood journey. Question-probing and follow up stimuli are directed by his shared-stories. The interview venue was chosen in a private place with minimal interruptions. The follow-up interviews were then agreed with him to allow them to look at his data and researchers' interpretations. From this step, feedback from him was used to re-arrange the story and interpretation.

In the data analysis, collaborative thematic narrative analysis was used to determine the interview results' verbatim transcriptions. By considering the structure of the story, essential points in fatherhood such as participant's parenting style, perceptions of himself and fatherhood, strategies for overcoming problems, and social responses will be presented. Besides, stories related to experiences of distance learning mentoring will be an additional theme in this analysis. The data validation and saturation can be seen from the image results of the research team's analysis (interrater).

Furthermore, the story and interpretation results are given back to the participants to assess the interpretation.

### **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

#### ***3.1. Tend to be Authoritarian But Mostly Authoritative***

“Growing up in Balinese culture, I think the authoritarian parenting style is attached in my character. Discipline is undebatable, and I think what I have done is to shake the children's future. However, being a friendly father in some situations is also crucial. Giving them chances to share their feelings and stories can build a strong relationship among children and parents. We also debate and argue so much, but I give them the freedom to choose as long as they have clear reasons and know the consequences.”

#### ***3.2. I Have the Responsibility of Fulfilling Half of My Children's Heart***

"At the beginning, I decided to quit my job (as a banker) because no one can babysit my daughter. After she was 2yo, I started to work as an English teacher. However, when my second son was born with health problems, I promised myself that growing is my top priority. Fatherhood became a new yet exited challenges because I have to be committed to giving them full attention and still try to get some income from any online job (selling snacks, children's books, children's outfit, etc.)"

#### ***3.3. Stick with the Schedule but Give Them the Freedom to Explore More***

“Building routines become my only strategy to be a full-time dad. I set up any home activities schedule like waking up, taking a bath, having breakfast, learning and doing assignments, guided playing, taking a nap, free playing, shared reading, and praying. By doing those activities repeatedly, both my children and I can build a habit of parent-children relation.”

#### ***3.4. Proudly Present That I Am a Full-Time Dad***

“Shocking and unbelief expressions always come from friends, family, and college when they know that I quit my PNS (civil servant) job to be a full-time dad. Even in this modern era, many people think that quitting a job for ‘only’ being a fulltime dad does not make sense. However, for me, It is everything. It is about my children's' future, and I am proud to be part of the journey.”

#### ***3.5. Dialog is the Key to Learning***

The online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic is not maximumly efficient in building children's knowledge and skills if there is no extra effort and

attachment from parents. As the case in this study, Father plays an essential role in guiding and fulfilling the lack of interaction compared with face-to-face learning.

The first, second, and third themes explore the participant's parenting style to his children. A participant practices the balanced parenting style when viewed from the parenting style based on The Olson Circumplex Model [47]. The Balanced parenting style is characterized by warm and nurturing parents who are emotionally supportive, responsive to the children's needs, encouraging independence while providing supervision, consistent and fair in fulfilling discipline, and expecting age-appropriate behavior.

Based on the first, second, third, and fifth themes, it can be shown that the balanced parenting style creates good communication between children and fathers, fair conflict resolution in the family, greater confidence in parenting, and good learning routines for children. This result is supported by previous studies from Olson [47] and Olson and Wilde [48].

Furthermore, the fourth and fifth themes showed that participants develop secure attachment while interacting with their children. Secure attachment is also a bond that promotes a child's exploration and confidence, which is often related to the father's role [49]. It is supported by the children's behavior, who can easily make choices. His children can also think critically because the participant provides opportunities for his children to discuss the daily problems every day. This finding is in line with previous studies that fatherhood could create a secure attachment and influence children's early development [35][36], cognition, and emotional regulation well [22][37].

Regarding fatherhood in Balinese culture can be explained from the fourth theme.

Even though the participant came from a patrilineal culture where they demanded the father's role as the breadwinner, the history of the child's health conditions raised the father's parenting instinct. He was confident in his current role as a full-time father, even developing a secure attachment to his children. Hereinafter, he can fulfill the need to produce something and socialize through his role in Balinese society and do the online job.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

Parenting styles, father perception of his roles, coping strategy, and responses from the society also impact the children-father attachment and quality of the remote learning process.

Parental involvement (with any parenting style) is vital to be considered during this COVID-19 pandemic because it is parents who are the keys to educational success, not the teacher.

### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

NMA designed and performed research, analyzed data, and co-wrote the paper.

NWSM designed, performed research, analyzed data, and co-wrote the paper.

LAT analyzed data and co-wrote the paper.

KEKA designed research and analyzed data.

IGA designed research and analyzed data.

IKRA analyzed data and co-wrote the paper.

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