

# “The Role of Fathers” in Early Childhood Language Development During Covid Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

The father is the head of the family who has a very important role. Apart from being a breadwinner, fathers also play an important role in all matters including early childhood language development. The Covid-19 pandemic has forced all sectors to adapt, including family life. Even father figures have to adapt their household to the rapidly changing conditions that result in a more intensive relationship between fathers and their children. The purpose of this study was to obtain a descriptive description of the role of fathers in children's language development, especially during a pandemic. The writing of this article uses descriptive methods and source analysis as the basis for research. The subjects of the study were 50 fathers who on average had children aged 5-6 years. By using qualitative data analysis and data collection used is observation and filling out questionnaires sent via a google form. The results of the study were that during the pandemic, fathers spent a lot of time playing with their children, such as guessing, telling stories, and watching cell phones together. In addition, some of them continue to work to meet the needs of their families without neglecting activities with their children even though the children are closer to their mothers.

**Keywords:** *The Role of Father; Language Development; the COVID-19 Pandemic*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Children are the foundation and hope of parents so they need to be prepared to be able to become quality human resources [1]. To realize this hope, parents have a very important role. Parents are the initial foundation in shaping children's character [2]. The influence that parents give when a child is under 6 years of age will determine the child's growth and development.

Growth is a change in body structure and size or changes in physical aspects. Growth is quantitative because of the effect of external or environmental influences. Growth can be directly seen in physical changes. While development can be interpreted as an increase in ability in the structure to be more complex and not visible directly but can be stimulated.

The development of basic abilities of early childhood is divided into 6 aspects of development, namely religious moral values, art, physical motor, social emotional, cognitive, and language. All aspects of development influence each other so that children become physically and mentally healthy individuals [3].

One aspect of development that is stimulated for AUD (early childhood) is language [4]. Language skills

consist of the ability to speak, read, listen, write, communicate and listen.

The experiences that children get at an early age can make children's lives more meaningful in achieving their future [5]. Early childhood is a critical period that is very important to always pay attention to.

Language is a symbol that is always used by a person in communicating with fellow living beings. Language is acquired through theory, stages and strategies. Language development is able to grow rapidly at this age so that it will produce children who can communicate actively with the people around them. They will be more interested in new vocabulary so that they will be able to increase children's vocabulary, develop and be able to express thoughts in spoken language, share experiences in simple ways with parents, teachers, peers or other people. The environment around children greatly influences the process of language development, be it the family, school or community environment [6].

The COVID-19 pandemic has been designated as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization or commonly known as WHO [7].

In the current pandemic period, everyone faces more difficult challenges than before [8]. Everyone has to struggle to meet the needs of their family, without exception a father. The role of the father is not only as a breadwinner [9]. Fathers have a role as the head of the family and also participate in children's education [10]. However, what is the father's role during this pandemic? Does the father still carry out his role of participating in stimulating the child's development?

In connection with the above, this article aims to review the role of fathers in early childhood development during a pandemic, especially in the language development of children aged 5-6 years.

**2. RESEARCH METHODS**

The writing of this article uses a descriptive method and analyzes information from the sources obtained. Data were analyzed by qualitative techniques. This study aims to determine the role of fathers and explain the solutions to problems that occur in the field. This research is also to obtain data and information from fathers' activities in developing children's language which was carried out during the covid-19 pandemic. The subjects of the study were 50 fathers who on average had children aged 5-6 years.

The data collection technique uses observation techniques during learning from home activities by looking at how fathers accompany their children during the pandemic which they share through social media accounts. Another data collection technique is by interviewing the fathers through questionnaires distributed via google form. What do they do to keep the child's language well stimulated even from home. The data collection instrument is the researcher himself who functions as selecting informants, collecting data and analyzing and drawing conclusions.

In presenting the data, the writer takes quotations from various references and analyzes them by including sources and then summarizes them for each topic that has been analyzed. This is of course with critical thinking and in-depth analysis of information.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Research Result**

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted, information about the father's occupation, recent education, and activities with children can be obtained.

**3.1.1 Father's last education**

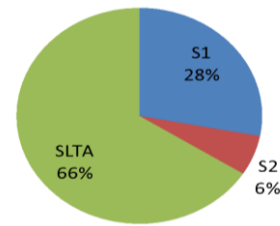


Figure 1. Father Education

The educational range of fathers who were participants in this study was grouped into 3 parts. The results showed that participants who graduated from S2 (6%), S1 graduates (28%), and senior high school and below (66%).

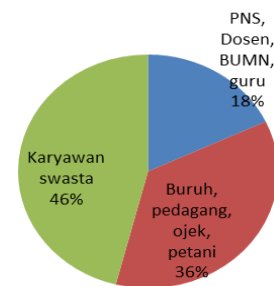


Figure 2. Father's job

The work background of the respondents is divided into 3 groups, namely private employees (46%), civil servants, lecturers, state-owned enterprises, and teachers (18%) as well as laborers, farmers, traders and ojol drivers (36%).

**3.1.2 Activities that fathers do during the pandemic with their children.**

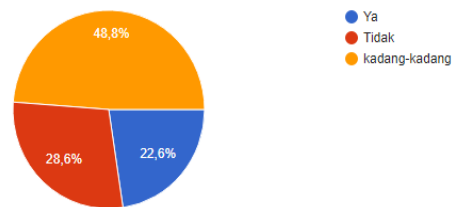


Figure 3: Book Reading Activities

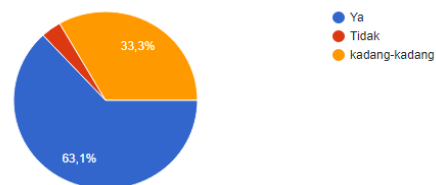


Figure 4. Spending time talking with children

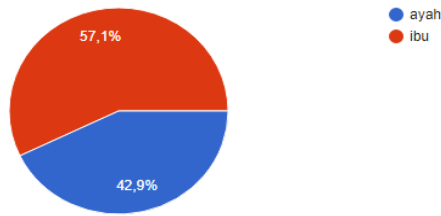


Figure 5. Closeness of Children to Father and Mother

Based on the results of interviews and observations, the results obtained from the various activities of fathers as well as the activities of fathers and the closeness of fathers to their children.

Fathers continue to carry out routine activities whenever they come home or are near their children. The activities that fathers do are varied, such as telling stories with their children, watching TV/mobile phones together, listening to children's stories, and reading books together. This activity is still carried out by fathers even though father has just returned to earn a living. This is done to stimulate the child's development with the guidance and supervision of the father at home.

Respondents stated that they still spend about 2-6 hours with their children a day. However, from filling out the questionnaire, it was found that 57% of children were closer to their mothers. Continuous cooperation between fathers and mothers is needed in stimulating children even during the pandemic.

### 3.2. Discussion

Based on the data that has been concluded above, fathers are needed to stimulate children's language development and not only apart from the role of mothers. But in reality the role of fathers is still minimal in the development of children's language even though fathers play a very important role in parenting and educational problems. The current parenting model provides a very wide opportunity and space for fathers in the parenting process [11]. The role and support of fathers in early childhood care greatly affects all aspects of children's development until their transition to adolescence [12].

The limitation of activities is due to the government's policy to reduce the fast-transmitting outbreak. This forces all parties to do many things from home including work and children's education.

Language is a communication tool that we usually use in everyday life, because language for humans acts as a tool in conveying our thoughts and feelings to others, and acts as a tool in understanding and recognizing the feelings and thoughts of others. Language is one of the most important ways to express feelings and thoughts.

Language skills consist of several stages of development such as listening skills, speaking skills and

literacy skills. When we talk to children, children will be able to digest and absorb all the words spoken by other people. The ability to write is an ability that is strongly influenced by the ability to speak, so that children are able to put it in written form. Reading ability consists of complex activities involving various skills, such as recognizing letters and words, connecting with sounds, understanding meaning and drawing conclusions about the meaning of reading.

Language development includes several phases starting from screams and shouts, sporadic chatter and continued with systematic babbling through uttering and imitation. These phases develop into vocabulary gradually, the structure and pattern of sentences increases, and finally the child is able to express what is inside him. Children's language develops as children get older.

Parents play a very important role in assisting and stimulating all aspects of children's development at home [13]. All components must work together to create a pleasant learning atmosphere during this COVID-19 pandemic. Fathers and mothers can share activities with their children on matters relating to rules, learning and playing together and other support.

Involvement in playing and learning activities with children will make children more competent when compared to peers whose fathers are not involved in parenting. Fathers who are accustomed to asking logical questions will make their children have better language skills in their interactions [14]. Children are more provoked to ask a lot of questions, use more vocabulary and produce longer sentences.

Fathers indirectly influence children's language through interactions with children, such as reading story books, playing guessing games, singing together and accompanying children to play and learn [15].

## 4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, all sectors cannot be separated from the impact of moving activities to stay at home. Fathers are required to be able to do everything so that the family economy and even children's education continues. Various ways are done by fathers to meet the needs of families and children. In addition, parents collaborate with each other in meeting needs during the pandemic. Fathers have many roles in carrying out their duties, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic. The father's roles include the head of the family, breadwinner, role model and accompanying his child. This role is carried out with the business that has been owned.

Language is one aspect of development that must be possessed by a child. The importance of language skills for early childhood is able to make everyone take an important role both parents, teachers and the environment around children. This paper examines the

role of fathers in children's language development during the pandemic

As a recommendation for the future, good communication, cooperation and coordination are needed between all parties. Fathers should not only provide care to mothers and educational institutions without careful calculations. Fathers must appreciate the achievements of their children for the efforts they have made while at home and continue to accompany their children even though the economic situation is difficult.

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