Early Character Education For Children In Single-Parent Families (Parenting)

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Abstract

It is crucial to introduce, instil, mould, and get acclimated to character education for young children as soon as feasible. Early infancy, when people are in the prime of their lives, is a perfect time to provide the best stimulation, particularly in the emotive realm. Investigating parenting single parent homes can help with character education for children. This study employs a qualitative methodology and phenomenology. Using both primary and secondary data to get pertinent information about this research issue from observations, interviews, and documents. The interactive analytical model developed by Miles and Huberman was used to evaluate the data and draw conclusions through data reduction techniques, data visualization, and data verification. This study’s main finding is that, despite their limitations in terms of knowledge and experience, single–parent households provide a lot of attention to early childhood character education. Religious instruction and teaching young children the importance of discipline are both part of character education. Economic and socio–cultural barriers to early childhood character education also prevent single–parent households from having adequate time to spend with their children in a meaningful way

Key words: Character, Early Childhood, Single Parent

Introduction

Many people will hold different perspectives on what it means to be a family unit. Some of them believe that having a father and mother as part of a family will unquestionably offer a child its own personality and pleasure. Some believe that spending quality time with family members is more important than spending a lot of time with them in a day (quantity time). A dysfunctional family is always despised, but on the other hand, some people find it heartwarming to see their entire family together when they go home. Character development takes happen in families, especially with young children. Everyone agrees that the family is the primary institution for character development. Parents serve as examples for their children by modelling moral behaviour every day (Thomas Lickona, 2013). The first educators in a child’s character education are their parents, both the mother and the father. They also have the longest–lasting effects on how characters are developed. The family is the first and primary school for children and the smallest social group in the community (Imron et al., 2021). Family is a multifaceted idea (Nur Amalia Elementary School Teacher Education et al., 2023). Children experience their own satisfaction when their families are
all together. All children should grow up in a family environment where the father and mother play their respective responsibilities in giving them a sense of security and stability, but if done individually, it becomes fairly difficult to achieve. The family is the foundation of all children (Gupta & Kashyap, 2020). But what happens when the parents split up and no longer reside at home? Of course, this will feel burdensome and interfere with the happiness of the children, and life will feel clumsy. While the mother and father play the primary roles in character education (Rafii et al., 2021).

There is no denying that the family plays a significant role in socialization and character development of children. Character education in Indonesia nowadays also entails making significant, systemic, and long-term efforts to increase and strengthen awareness of and the conviction that character development is essential to the future well-being of all Indonesians (Rahayu Dwi Utami et al., 2020). Character education takes the form of integrated learning that involves families, parents, and the community. Character education is rigorously managed through planning, implementing, and assessing its implementation (Sutarman et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the family’s function now has significantly changed. Many families have issues that ultimately lead to divorce. Even in the US, one out of every two active marriages has ended in divorce. The raising of children by single-parent households (single-parent fathers or mothers) is currently a social phenomenon that frequently happens in society, especially in Indonesia. In addition to being a decision, becoming a single parent can also happen for a variety of circumstances that the Almighty cannot change (because the spouse dies). Nonetheless, is the most important contributing factor to divorce? This is in line with statistics from the Indonesian statistical office, which show that the number of divorce cases in the nation increased by 53.50% from 2020’s level of 291,677 cases to 447,743 instances in 2021. Loss of parental participation, or the time parents spend with their children reading, completing homework, or just hearing about their experiences at school, is a common consequence of divorce (Oishi, 2013). As a result, many children have to grow up under the tutelage of a single parent. Family integrity undoubtedly affects parenting, education, and particularly the character of children. An unbroken family allows for the fulfillment of affection, children’s independence and issues, as well as their children’s obedience to their parents. Nonetheless, many are found in incomplete homes with independent children, where love for the children is not fully realized, and where the children have issues and are not obedient (Sukiyani and Zamroni Character Education in the Family Environment et al., n.d.). Of course, single parents will run into a number of issues with parenting and raising children. This is due to the fact that only one individual must play a dual role in raising and caring for children.

Consequently, it is highly intriguing to investigate and do research on the educational efforts and impediments in single-parent homes in children’s character education. Consequently, this study emphasizes two key points: character education practised in single-parent households and circumstances that prevent single-parent families from raising morally upright children.

Method

The goal of this study, which employs a qualitative methodology and a phenomenological perspective, is to explore early childhood character education in single-parent families and the variables that prevent it. In the Hamparan Perak District of the Deli Serdang Regency’s Kambir V Village, this research was carried out. Using a purposeful random sampling technique, single-parent households with children aged 5 to 6 were chosen as the informants for this study. The two (two) forms of data collection approaches are open, frank, and kinship-filled interviews and primary data collected through observation. When the interviewer had spare time, they visited respondents at their homes and schools to ask them questions about how to instil good character in young children. Interviews are conducted in order to learn more. The interviewer used an interview guide to get in-depth general information on the topic matter that would be submitted, and secondary data was found by looking at journal papers, statistical information, and internet news sources. The data analysis process went through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drafting using the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis paradigm (Sugiyono, 2015).

Results and Discussion

Early Childhood Personality Education in Families with Single Parents

Religion Education

In essence, it goes without saying that all parents desire and hope to show their children the most love possible at all times. Offering without boundaries endless amounts of love and attention. However, other influencing variables reduce the care given to children in divided families as a result of divorce or death. Due to the fact that families are now only made up of moms and children, fathers and children, or even close relatives, grandparents and even grandmothers may not be able to provide their children their complete and undivided attention. Even though the end objective is the same, the care provided to full families and single-parent families is obviously different. Families
with single parents likewise aspire to be able to provide their children with their undivided attention and undivided affection, despite any obstacles.

In single-parent households, early character education includes teaching children about religion and discipline. Because religious education is the most fundamental item and a source of teachings on how to behave in social life, both in the home and in society at large, it is assumed that religious education that is implanted and moulded from a young age will be able to educate children’s character. Children can use religious instruction as a filter to steer clear of undesirable behaviour. As a result, single-parent families make religious instruction a moral pillar for their children.

Based on interviews with a single-parent family on how they raise their children, it was discovered that parents usually make an effort to share stories with them, especially right before bed. Give children direction on religious values so that they develop devout personalities, a desire to establish prayers, a habit of always acting right (saying sorry, excuse me, and thank you), concern for everyone, and obedience to all religious teachings so that later they can mature and become useful members of society. Also, single-parent families pay close attention to prevent children from being impacted by an unsuitable environment (SO, January 10, 2021, Early Childhood Character Education).

According to the aforementioned remark, character education for young children in single-parent families still begins primarily at home with the telling of tales and giving of instructions in accordance with religious values and Islamic teachings. This is done in the hopes that children will be able to contribute positively to society, both inside the home and in the neighbourhood. When supervising all of your child’s activities outside the house, pay attention to who they hang out with, who their playmates are, and what their environment is like at home and at school.

Although AD’s father is a divorced widower, he shares Mrs. SO’s belief that religion should be introduced to children as early as possible. He teaches his 5-year-old son about religious education and other religious activities, such as fasting during the holy month of Ramadan, even though it only lasts for half a day. Also, in terms of being kind to other people, whether in a school setting or even at home. As an illustration, think of sharing toys, food, and other items. He continued by saying that religious instruction is given early on because people are afraid that if youngsters do not comprehend religion, they will grow up to be mischievous, fight with their parents, and bother their friends. As a result, AD’s father instils in him the values of fasting, prayer, refraining from fighting with his peers, wanting to share toys, and not lying (AD, January 12, 2023, Early Childhood Character Education).

Because children’s thinking is still in the pre-operational stage, early character education is not a simple task (Drs. Sudarna, 2014), therefore single parent homes must make an ongoing effort to train children to accept their parents’ instructions, ideas, and advice in accordance with religious laws. According to the assertion made in the aforementioned example, children are taught to pray, fast, and engage in other religious activities in order to introduce religious education. In this manner, children must receive and become acclimated to both religious education and character education connected to behaviour through basic daily activities. The objective of single-parent households is that character education for young children can gradually be accepted by children, followed as per parental instructions, and developed into positive habits that are securely anchored until the kid reaches adulthood.

Mrs CA is a teacher who is a single parent; her spouse passed away when their child was 3 (three) years old. He asserted that the most fundamental lesson that needs to be established and shaped from a young age is character education for young children. Because the early years are the prime time for a child’s growth and development, stimulation of young children is simple. The traits of children who want to copy what their moms do, which is why parents should set good examples for their children to follow and serve as role models for them so that, in the end, children would voluntarily obey their mothers’ instructions (CA, January 14, 2023, Knowledge of Early Childhood Character Education).

From the aforementioned explanation, it is clear how the single-parent families in Klambir V Village make a concerted effort to teach their children character lessons as early as possible so that they are less likely to be influenced by undesirable behaviour and actions that are not supported by religion. This can be observed from the hopes stated by both single-parent mothers and fathers for improved character education for children, as religion does demand all adherents to instil a love of learning in their offspring from an early age.

In a household with only one parent, the single parent must guide and teach the children to always act in accordance with the rules, including telling the truth, wanting to assist, not lying, not making fun of their friends, and other good behaviour as prescribed by religion to help the children develop positive personalities being Muslims (KA, January 16, 2023, Early Childhood Character Education). It is clear from KA’s mother’s explanation that they must provide their children the best education possible since they are religious. Always be kind to everyone, and pay attention to how children interact with each other on a daily basis. This demonstrates the high expectations single-parent families have for their children. I hope his son is holy and has a decent disposition.

The adage above explains why Muslims are required to educate their offspring. Perform well when engaging with others, including your parents and friends, so that you are still taken notice of in general encounters. Mrs. KA bases her lessons on everyday experiences with children, such as acting morally and refraining from making fun of her playmates. This demonstrates the high expectations a single parent, like the mother of the KA, has for her child, who will grow up to be a person of faith. Early childhood single-parent homes might benefit from character education initiatives in a new way by emphasizing the habituation of positive deeds in children.
Religions of various kinds provide lessons on morals, ethics, and the value of doing good deeds and refraining from evil behaviour (Yaumi, 2014). Character education is a concerted effort to help people develop good character based on fundamental principles that are beneficial to both individuals and society (Thomas Lickona, 2013).

**Early Childhood Discipline Character Development**

A single-parent family must be fully provided for by a single parent, either the mother or the father, in order to instil the character of discipline in early childhood. Children are being influenced by this circumstance to lack discipline in very basic areas. For instance, placing trash where it belongs after toys have been used, cleaning up toys after they have been used, etc. Based on interviews and observations, daily care provided by parents includes teaching the child how to adjust the bed and put on the towels after taking a bath. Single-parent women use a variety of parenting techniques, some of which include helping children with daily chores around the house and teaching them how to make beds and fold towels. Like Mrs SO, she will instruct and guide her children on how to truly make a bed, put towels away after taking a bath, and put toys back in their proper places after they have finished playing with them when she has spare time or free time. And Mrs SO instantly used a special technique with her child when she made a mistake (SO, January 10, 2023, Discipline Character Education Efforts).

Families with only one parent also teach their children how to be disciplined, which helps them learn even the smallest lessons. They also set time limits for their children's playtime, study time, and other activities. As AD's father noted, I always start teaching my child from the smallest things, like putting a towel in when he finishes a bath or wearing his own clothes and shoes if he wants to go to school, to ensure that they become second nature from childhood onward. And when the child is capable of doing all of that, I reward them with cuddles and things they like (AD, January 12, 2023, Discipline Character Education Efforts).

The explanation given above makes it clear that single-parent families still discipline their children through everyday activities, even though they adore them dearly. This isn't done out of cruelty or a lack of love for their children; rather, it's done to help children get used to acting in accordance with expectations.

Contrary to CA's mother, I instilled discipline in my child beginning at the age of 4 (four) through routine activities that I repeated often enough for it to become a habit for my child, like the bedtime routine I enforce, eating on time, and refusing to let the child me throw trash anywhere or pick up my own toys, as I previously demonstrated. This is done to help the youngster become accustomed to life in a structured and tidy manner in the future (CA, January 14, 2023, Discipline Character Education Efforts).

The explanation given above demonstrates the efforts taken by single-parent homes to establish a disciplined character in children as early as possible in order for them to later be expected to be able to behave in accordance with social norms. Children, in particular, behave as expected by their parents to ensure that "the fruit doesn’t fall far from the tree." Naturally, parents must control themselves to be good role models for their children or potential heirs. Education-based knowledge instructs, but what motivates are examples and role models.

Because my child is only 3 (three) years old, it is different with KA's mother; she has not seriously ingrained the character of discipline in her child. Nevertheless, I have presented it to my child in a simple method by offering simple education with terms that children can readily grasp (KA, January 16, 2023, Character Education Efforts).

Early childhood discipline can involve immediately imposing standards as input, typically through instructions, without explaining why this is the case or what the repercussions would be. Children who receive chastisement in this manner will grow up to be obedient. In contrast to disciplining, the value is implemented gradually to raise awareness before enforcing the rules that have been jointly agreed upon. Children who receive this kind of discipline will grow up to obey and be accountable. In addition, the legacy that parents leave behind will be repeated in the following generation through the examples they establish (Drs. Sudarna, 2014).

The area where moral education fails is in discipline. Setting expectations, having children take responsibility for them, and responding to their deviances by modelling appropriate behaviour and encouraging children to follow it are all part of discipline. Being tough and direct with discipline doesn’t equal being unkind. When we yell nonstop, our children learn to fear us rather than concentrate on what they want to do wrong and how to correct it. Discipline must demonstrate to our children that we believe in their capacity for improvement and that they will continue to be decent people even when we aren’t there to reprimand them (Thomas Lickona, 2012).

The best method to deal with discipline issues is to prevent them before they arise. Prevention is the key to anything to do with discipline (Koenig Larry J, 2018). The basic tenet of positive discipline is to instil in children a sense of intrinsic comfort in doing good deeds and contributing to society. According to conventional wisdom, the best incentives for motivating children to perform better are rewards. While many children will be inspired by gifts, they will eventually yearn for higher rewards. Parents, in our opinion, prefer to spend time with children who have mastered self-discipline over those who rely solely on rewards and punishments (Allen Elizabeth Jane & Cheryl Marilyn, 2005).
Factors Preventing Single-Parent Families from Raising Character in Early Childhood

Character education in early childhood is a process that will take time to complete, especially in single-parent homes when just one person fills the position of either the mother or the father as the sole parent and becomes the support system for the family while also having to raise the children. Even for a family that is still together, raising children who still respect moral principles takes effort and a strong commitment from everyone. According to the observations and interviews, single-parent families have a number of challenges while educating young children's character.

Due to their hectic schedules, single parents, who serve as the foundation of the family, find it challenging to manage time day and night to watch over their children's daily interactions or behaviour. Single parents are willing or even have to work hard for the life of their children because they must raise and send them to school without the assistance of their husbands. Early childhood character education was found to be hampered by a number of issues, according to the findings of interviews with single-parent households in Klambir V Village. The findings of interviews can be used to identify inhibiting factors:

Cultural Social
Social culture is a component of daily living. Human behaviour is always influenced by social and cultural factors. Because people are social creatures that prefer to connect with others in social situations as well as their environment, most human activities are performed in groups. Life in society is a manifestation of one's social identity that must be planned carefully and as effectively as possible to avoid social challenges. In general, socio–culture refers to the interactions between people, communities, and society, while culture also refers to human activity in the form of symbols that give community activities important meaning. These symbols can be expressed through works of art and literature, customs, and traditions, among other things. Social culture and culture, in general, are so strongly intertwined.

In the field, it was discovered that people do not always get along well with one another. Some people in society are judgmental of others because single-parent families are viewed negatively, which leads to tension and breaks down relationships. The majority of those who are close to me have a very low opinion of me; they always see widows negatively, accuse me of being conceived because my child attends the best private school in town, and assume that I won’t be able to support him or her. Nonetheless, despite the fact that I am a little trader who lives alone, I will make an effort to ensure that my child has a quality education (SP, January 18, 2023, Obstacles to Early Childhood Character Education).

According to the aforementioned data, ethnic diversity makes it so that the living environment has a significant impact on children. Many playmates make it challenging for children to control their behaviour, and when children argue, parents from the entire family frequently step in and act condescendingly by saying things like, "Let's not have to reply; he doesn't have a father,; therefore,, it’s only natural that he doesn’t have manners and ethics" (PA, January 20, 2023, Obstacles to Early Childhood Character Education).

Socio-economic
Socio–economic status refers to a person's standing within a social group and is based on factors including economic activity, education, position, and income. Socioeconomics is frequently the topic of several debates. Humans are frequently referred to as social beings in the social notion, which implies that they cannot survive alone without assistance from others. As a result, the social meaning is frequently equated with everything related to society. Socio–economic also refers to something involving economic activity to meet social requirements like food, clothing, and shelter.

As stated by DA's father, "Work is very important to me even though I work as a private employee in a company. If there is no job, where do I get the money to pay for my child’s schooling and other needs, this is what causes me to not have enough free time for my child," the majority of single–parent families do not have a steady job and income where work is really needed and expected by single parent families to cover and fulfill their daily needs. (DA, January 20, 2023, Character Education Barriers).

The same message was delivered by SI’s mother, who stated that in order for single–parent families to be able to provide for and educate their children while still attending school, a permanent job is really needed. I have to make as much money as I can by selling cakes and rice cakes (Iontong) in front of the house (SI, January 21, 2023, Barriers to Character Education). Although my child's parents are no longer married, the father of my child still provides for the children's maintenance and education, in contrast to AY’s mother, a single parent whose husband consistently sends money to fulfill her child's requirements despite the fact that the ex–husband, who is the children's father, bears full responsibility. But I must continue to work since I cannot constantly rely on others.

According to the findings of interviews with single–parent households, socio–cultural and family socio–economic issues are the main barriers to early childhood character education. Early childhood character education is significantly influenced by these two aspects. These two elements in this situation make character education for children more difficult. In actuality, youngsters receive ongoing character instruction through exemplary behaviour and habit. This is different, though, in that parents spend a lot of time away from the house working to provide for their needs and...
refrain from mingling with the neighbourhood due to the negative reactions received. As a result, when they return home, they are already worn out, which makes it difficult for them to instruct, guide, and offer advice intensively to children and the fewer options there are for single–parent families to raise morally upright children.

As a result, single–parent families encourage their children to work hard in school and receive a solid religious upbringing with little parental involvement. The Early Childhood Education Unit serves as the cornerstone for parents’ aspirations that their children will receive the instruction and care they need in accordance with the relevant curriculum. The development of children’s character will be greatly aided if parents are actively involved in their daily lives. Therefore it is believed that parents who serve as genuine role models for children are born from parents who are regarded as leaders in their family.

Conclusion

The discussion’s findings support and illustrate the following conclusions: First, single–parent families play a dual role in early childhood character education, serving as both fathers and mothers who take over the role of the family head because the father is too busy with other responsibilities and activities. In order to develop their children’s character, single–parent families ultimately entrust the Early Childhood instruction unit with their children’s religious instruction. Particularly with regard to early childhood character education, which incorporates religious instruction and instils the value of discipline in children, single–parent homes offer direction and leadership. Second, sociocultural and economic factors limit the amount of time that single–parent families have to interact, share stories, and communicate with one another, as well as engage in other activities that could educate, guide, and care for children. Character education has been effectively administered in young children by parents or households with single parents using habituation and exemplary approaches by setting an example. Even if the family is broken up, the father or mother still instils moral instruction in their children through extremely straightforward examples. Therefore, it is envisaged that future study will be highly useful if it broadly defines how different religious education models are represented in the character values learned from early childhood education units as well as specific actions that instructors can take to help develop the character of their young student from a family with a single parent in school.

References


