ENHANCED A CHARACTER EDUCATION SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Rahayu Dwi Utami[1], Rita Nofianti[2], Dora Febriana

Universitas Pembangunan Panca Budi
Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia
dwirahayu957@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Date received : Revision date : Date received : <hr>*Keywords:* Character, Early Childhood, Single Parent	Enhancing character education within single-parent families is of utmost importance. Introducing and cultivating character education in young children should be prioritized from an early age. The early stages of infancy offer optimal opportunities for providing meaningful emotional stimulation. Exploring the parenting techniques within single-parent households can contribute to character education for children. This research utilizes a qualitative approach with a focus on phenomenology. Primary and secondary data sources, including observations, interviews, and documents, were employed to gather relevant information on this research topic. The interactive analytical model developed by Miles and Huberman was utilized to analyze the data, employing techniques such as data reduction, data visualization, and data verification to draw conclusions. The primary finding of this study reveals that despite their limitations in terms of knowledge and experience, single-parent households place significant emphasis on character education during early childhood. Religious teachings and imparting the importance of discipline are integral aspects of character education. However, economic and sociocultural barriers hinder single-parent households from dedicating sufficient quality time to their children's meaningful character development.

INTRODUCTION.

Diverse perspectives exist regarding the concept of a family unit and its impact on a child's personality and happiness. While some believe that having both a father and mother in a family is crucial, others prioritize quality time spent together over quantity. The importance of family in character development, particularly in young children, is widely recognized. Parents serve as role models and have a lasting influence on character development. The family is considered the primary institution for character education, serving as the first and smallest social group in a child's life. Despite the multifaceted nature of the family, children find joy when their families are together. Ideally, children should grow up in a secure and stable family environment with the active involvement of both parents. However, when parents separate, it can disrupt the happiness and well-being of children, as the primary role of character education falls on both parents.

The family plays a significant role in socialization and character development, and character education in Indonesia emphasizes the need for long-term efforts

involving families, parents, and the community. However, the changing dynamics of families, including the rise in divorce rates, have resulted in an increasing number of single-parent households. Single parents face challenges in raising and educating their children, as they must fulfill both parental roles alone. Therefore, it is important to investigate the educational efforts and obstacles faced by single-parent households in children's character education. This study focuses on character education within single-parent households and the factors that hinder single parents from raising morally upright children.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to investigate early childhood character education in single-parent families and identify the factors that hinder its implementation. The research was conducted in Klambir V Village, located in the Hamparan Perak District of Deli Serdang Regency. A purposive random sampling technique was employed to select single-parent households with children aged 5 to 6 as the informants for the study. The data collection process involved conducting open and candid interviews, characterized by a sense of kinship, as well as direct observations to gather primary data. The interviewer visited the respondents' homes and schools during their spare time to inquire about strategies for cultivating good character in young children. In-depth information was obtained through the interviews, utilizing an interview guide to explore the topic comprehensively. Additionally, secondary data was gathered by reviewing journal papers, statistical information, and online news sources. The data analysis followed the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, employing the interactive analysis paradigm developed by Miles and Huberman

RESULT.
3.1. Single Parent Religious Education in Character Education

It is universally acknowledged that parents aspire to provide their children with an abundance of love and attention, demonstrating boundless care. However, various external factors, such as divorce or death, can impede the level of care provided to children in separated families. In the context of single-parent families, which may consist of only mothers and children, fathers and children, or even extended family members like grandparents, it becomes challenging to offer undivided attention to the children. Despite these obstacles, single-parent families still strive to provide their children with undivided attention and affection, sharing the same ultimate goal as intact families.

Within single-parent households, early character education involves incorporating religious teachings and discipline into the upbringing of children. Religious education holds a fundamental position as a source of guidance on proper behavior in both the family and society. By instilling religious education from a young age, it is believed that children's character can be nurtured. Religious teachings serve as a filter through which children can navigate away from undesirable behaviors. Therefore, single-parent families consider religious instruction as a moral foundation for their children.

Through interviews with single-parent families regarding their child-rearing practices, it was found that parents often make an effort to share stories with their children, particularly before bedtime. They provide guidance on religious values, aiming to foster devout personalities, a commitment to prayer, a habit of behaving appropriately (apologizing, saying excuse me and thank you), care for others, and adherence to religious teachings. The ultimate aim is for the children to grow into responsible and valuable members of society. Single-parent families also pay close attention to shielding their children from negative influences in their environment (SO, January 10, 2021, Early Childhood Character Education).

According to the previous statement, character education for young children in single-parent families primarily begins at home through storytelling and giving instructions based on religious values and Islamic teachings. The intention behind this is to instill positive contributions to society, both within the family and the community. It is important for parents to closely supervise their children's activities outside the home, paying attention to their peers, playmates, and the overall environment at school and home.

Despite being a divorced widower, AD's father shares Mrs. SO's belief in introducing religion to children from an early age. He teaches his 5-year-old son about religious education and encourages participation in religious activities, such as fasting during Ramadan, even if it is for a shorter duration. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of kindness towards others, whether at school or home, through acts like sharing toys and food. AD's father believes that early religious instruction is crucial to prevent misbehavior, conflicts with parents, and troubles with friends. Thus, he instills values of fasting, prayer, avoiding fights, sharing, and honesty in his son (AD, January 12, 2023, Early Childhood Character Education).

Since children's thinking is still in the pre-operational stage, early character education is not a straightforward task. Therefore, single-parent households must consistently make efforts to help children accept their parents' instructions, ideas, and advice in line with religious teachings. As demonstrated in the previous example, children are taught to pray, fast, and engage in other religious activities as part of introducing religious education. Through daily activities, children gradually become accustomed to both religious education and character education, integrating them into their behavior. The objective of single-parent households is for character education to be gradually accepted by children, followed according to parental guidance, and develop into positive habits that are firmly established until adulthood.

Mrs. CA, a single parent and teacher, emphasizes the importance of character education for young children, particularly in single-parent families. She believes that the early years are crucial for shaping a child's character, as they are highly receptive to imitating their parents' behavior. Mrs. CA asserts that parents should serve as role models and set good examples for their children to follow, ultimately leading to voluntary obedience to their instructions (CA, January 14, 2023, Knowledge of Early Childhood Character Education).

In single-parent households, the parent must guide and teach their children to act in accordance with rules, including telling the truth, assisting others, refraining from lying, and treating friends with respect, all of which align with religious teachings (KA, January 16, 2023, Early Childhood Character Education). It is evident from KA's

mother's explanation that she prioritizes providing her child with a strong education grounded in religious values. The mother emphasizes kindness towards others and pays attention to her child's interactions on a daily basis. This illustrates the high expectations that single-parent families have for their children's character development. They aspire for their children to be pious and possess positive traits.

The aforementioned highlights the importance of educating offspring in the Muslim faith. It emphasizes the significance of conducting oneself well in social interactions with both parents and friends. Mrs. KA, like many single parents, focuses on imparting moral values and discouraging the mockery of peers in everyday experiences with her child. This showcases the high expectations single parents have for their children's religious upbringing. Early character education initiatives in single-parent homes can benefit from emphasizing the cultivation of positive actions and habits in children.

Various religions provide teachings on morality, ethics, and the value of performing good deeds and avoiding evil behavior (Yaumi, 2014). Character education is a collective effort aimed at fostering good character based on fundamental principles that benefit both individuals and society (Thomas Lickona, 2013).

3.2. Early Childhood Discipline Character Development

In single-parent families, it is the responsibility of the single parent, whether it be the mother or father, to instill discipline in early childhood. Due to the absence of a second parent, children in these families may lack discipline in basic areas, such as cleaning up after themselves or putting things back in their proper places. Through interviews and observations, it has been found that single parents provide daily care by teaching their children tasks like making beds, putting away towels after bathing, and tidying up toys after playtime. Single mothers employ various parenting techniques, including involving their children in household chores and teaching them practical skills. For example, Mrs. SO guides her children on how to make a bed, put away towels, and organize toys when she has spare time. Furthermore, she employs a special technique to address mistakes made by her child (SO, January 10, 2023, Discipline Character Education Efforts).

Single-parent families also emphasize discipline and teach their children the importance of even the smallest lessons. They establish time limits for playtime, study time, and other activities. AD's father emphasizes starting with small tasks, such as putting away a towel after bathing or getting dressed independently for school, to instill discipline from an early age. When the child is capable of performing these tasks, they are rewarded with affection and things they enjoy (AD, January 12, 2023, Discipline Character Education Efforts).

The explanations above demonstrate that single-parent families prioritize discipline in their children's upbringing through everyday activities, despite their deep affection for them. This is not done out of cruelty or a lack of love, but rather to help children develop habits aligned with expectations.

Contrary to CA's mother, who began instilling discipline in her child at the age of four through routine activities like enforcing bedtime, timely meals, and not allowing the child to litter or neglect cleaning up toys, single parents take different approaches based on their circumstances (CA, January 14, 2023, Discipline Character Education

Efforts). Their intention is to help their children adapt to a structured and organized life in the future.

Overall, single parents recognize the importance of instilling discipline through regular activities and setting expectations, aiming to teach their children to be responsible and develop good habits

The explanation provided above highlights the efforts made by single-parent households to instill discipline in their children at an early age, with the aim of shaping their behavior to align with societal norms. Children tend to imitate and behave according to their parents' expectations, emphasizing the importance of parents being good role models and exemplifying the desired behavior. While knowledge-based education plays a role in instructing children, it is the examples and role models that truly motivate them.

In the case of KA's mother, who has a 3-year-old child, she has not yet fully ingrained the character of discipline but has introduced it in a simple manner using terms that children can easily understand (KA, January 16, 2023, Character Education Efforts).

Early childhood discipline can involve immediate imposition of standards through instructions without providing explanations or discussing the consequences. Children who receive discipline in this way tend to grow up to be obedient. On the other hand, discipline can also be implemented gradually, raising awareness and enforcing jointly agreed-upon rules. Children who receive this type of discipline tend to grow up to be responsible and accountable individuals. The examples and legacy parents leave behind will be reflected in future generations (Drs. Sudarna, 2014).

Discipline is an area where moral education often falls short. It involves setting expectations, holding children responsible for them, and responding to deviations by modeling appropriate behavior and encouraging children to follow suit. Being firm and direct with discipline does not equate to being unkind. When we constantly yell at our children, they may develop fear rather than focus on understanding what they did wrong and how to correct it. Discipline should show our children that we believe in their capacity for improvement and that they will continue to be good individuals even in our absence (Thomas Lickona, 2012).

The best approach to addressing discipline issues is to prevent them before they occur. Prevention plays a crucial role in discipline-related matters (Koenig Larry J, 2018). Positive discipline aims to instill in children an intrinsic sense of doing good deeds and contributing to society. While rewards can serve as motivation for children, it is important to cultivate self-discipline and a sense of intrinsic satisfaction in doing what is right. Ultimately, parents value spending time with children who have developed self-discipline more than those who rely solely on rewards and punishments (Allen Elizabeth Jane & Cheryl Marilyn, 2005).

3.3. A Factors Preventing Single Parent Families.

Character education in early childhood is indeed a process that requires time and effort, particularly in single-parent households where one parent takes on the responsibilities of both mother and father. These parents become the sole support system for their family while also raising their children. Even in intact families, instilling

moral values in children requires dedication and commitment from everyone involved. Interviews and observations reveal that single-parent families face various challenges in educating their young children's character.

One major challenge faced by single parents is managing their busy schedules, which makes it difficult to constantly monitor their children's daily interactions and behavior. Single parents often have to work hard to provide for their children's needs and ensure they receive an education, without the assistance of a partner. These demands on their time can hinder their ability to focus on early childhood character education. Interviews conducted with single-parent households in Klambir V Village have identified several inhibiting factors in this regard.

3.4. Cultural Social

Social culture is an integral part of our daily lives, influencing human behavior in various ways. As social beings, people naturally seek connection and engage with others in social settings and their surrounding environment. Group interactions dominate most human activities. Life within a society reflects an individual's social identity, which requires careful planning and management to navigate potential social challenges. Socio-culture encompasses the interactions among individuals, communities, and society as a whole, while culture encompasses the symbols and practices that hold significant meaning for community activities, such as art, literature, customs, and traditions. Social culture and culture, in general, are deeply interconnected.

However, it is important to recognize that not all individuals in society get along harmoniously. Some people harbor judgmental attitudes towards others, particularly single-parent families, leading to tension and strained relationships. Single parents often face negative stereotypes and biases, which can impact their interactions with others. For instance, in the case of a widow who is a single parent, others may hold a negative perception and unfairly accuse them of being conceited if their child attends a prestigious private school. Assumptions may also be made about the parent's ability to provide for their child. Despite these challenges, single parents, like the one mentioned in the source, are determined to ensure their child receives a quality education, even if they are a modest trader living alone.

Additionally, the living environment influenced by ethnic diversity can significantly affect children. Having numerous playmates can pose challenges for children in controlling their behavior. Furthermore, conflicts among children may lead to parental intervention, where family members from various backgrounds may act condescendingly and attribute the child's behavior to their family situation, such as not having a father. These attitudes can hinder the development of manners and ethics in children.

In summary, social culture plays a crucial role in human behavior, but not all interactions within society are positive. Negative perceptions and biases towards single-parent families and challenges arising from ethnic diversity can impede early childhood character education. Nevertheless, individuals, like the single parent mentioned, strive to overcome these obstacles and provide their children with a nurturing environment for their education and development

Conclusion

The findings of the discussion support and highlight the following conclusions:

1. Single-parent families take on a dual role in early childhood character education by assuming the responsibilities of both mothers and fathers. Due to the father's busy schedule or absence, single parents become the heads of the family and play a crucial role in instilling character values in their children. They often rely on early childhood education institutions to provide religious instruction and reinforce the value of discipline. Single parents provide guidance, leadership, and direction in shaping their children's character.

2. Socio-cultural and economic factors can limit the amount of time single-parent families have for interaction, storytelling, communication, and other activities that contribute to character education. Despite these limitations, single parents effectively instill character education in their young children by employing methods such as habituation and leading by example. Even in broken families, whether the single parent is the mother or father, they still impart moral instruction to their children through simple and straightforward examples.

Based on these findings, future research could be beneficial in exploring various models of religious education and how they influence the development of character values in early childhood education. Additionally, it would be valuable to identify specific actions that educators can take to support the character development of students from single-parent families within the school environment

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