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Reinforcement Approach of Fatherly Personality through Participation in Parenting Programs

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Abstract

Reinforcement of fatherly personality is an important issue which needs to be given attention in order to overcome problems related to household and family. This is because there is evidence which shows that today in Malaysia family problems and cases are associated with the father such as irascibility, neglect of responsibilities, child abuse, incest and so on. Hence, this research is conducted to identify respondents among fathers who participated in parental programs as a step toward reinforcing good fatherly personality and to analyze the factors for fathers' lack of involvement in parenting programs and activity. This is a quantitative research using a survey study of 70 respondents who were selected through stratified random sampling among fathers at the National Population and Family Development Board (hereafter mentioned as LPPKN). Data obtained through questionnaire is descriptively analyzed using SPSS. Research results find that the majority of respondents who participated in parenting programs in efforts to strengthen good fatherly personality achieved a mean score =3.49. However, there are fathers who lacked involvement in parenting programs based on certain factors such as preoccupation with career, laziness, presumption that such programs are unimportant, disinterest, forced participation by employers, unavailability of babysitter for children, unavailability of information on program, stress, financial problem and unattractive program contents and topic. Research implications may help fathers reinforce their fatherly personality towards family well-being. Research also suggests that Malaysian authorities responsible such as LPPKN, Department of Social Welfare (JKM) and so on organize parenting and family programs so that knowledge of the Islamic approach to strengthen fatherly personality may be applied.

Introduction

A good fatherly personality has positive implications for child development (Brobeg, 1988; Balan & Rahimah, 2010; Melati et al. 2010) socially, emotionally and cognitively (Papalia & Olds, 1993). In addition, parental personality is found to have a significant relationship with self-esteem, personality structure, adolescent psychosocial and academic characteristics (Carlson et al., 1990; Enright et al., 1980; Abdul Halim, 2000). Further, good parenting style and high parental involvement in upbringing may improve feeling of acceptance, and positive relationship between parents and offspring can even reduce anti-social behaviour among children (Culp et al., 2000). Baumrind (1989) through his study conducted found that a peaceful family atmosphere and some good characteristics of authoritative upbringing will produce adolescents with positive attitude such as being responsible, confident, creative, curious, sociable and successful. Therefore, a father as head of family should have a good fatherly personality so as to be a role model in life for his children.

In the Behavioristic theory explained by Robert D. Nye (1992), one's personality is the product of the process of individual learning about the environment without involving aspects of natural human instincts in forming behaviour. This is in contrast with the Islamic perspective which is more holistic because while it does not exclude the role of culture and environment in the forming of individual personality, it, however, at the same time emphasizes on elements of human nature, i.e., al-Qalb (Heart), al-Ruh (Spirit), al-'Aql' (Intelligence) and al-Nafs (Carnal Self) which form individual personality such as way of thinking, emotion and behaviour. Every aspect becomes an inner element or component of personality which is more influential before the manifestation of a person's external behaviour (al-Ghazali, 2000; Fariza et al., 2013). Hence, it becomes a necessity for a father in the present time to apply a certain method and approach as an initiative to stabilize good personality in the interest of family well-being.

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A reinforcement approach of fatherly personality was constructed in a study by Izzah Nur Aida & Salasiah (2015) who explained that a father's personality may be strengthened by acquiring and applying in-depth religious knowledge, self-reflection, high self-determination, tazkiyah al-Nafs (purification of self), getting the social support of wife and family, good influence of companions and environment (al-bi'ah) as well as participation in parenting programs. This article only focuses on the aspect of participation in parenting programs as an approach to reinforce good fatherly personality.

Problem Statement

Reinforcement of fatherly personality is an issue which needs to be given attention and focus in order to overcome domestic and family problems in Malaysia. There is evidence which shows that family problems and cases which occur today are related to the father. For instance, there are fathers who do not properly fulfill their paternal responsibilities such as failure to give sufficient maintenance to the wife and children, to provide a comfortable place of stay, to pay house rental and so on (Raihanah, 2012). There are also fathers who are irascible or irritable, beat their wives and quick to pronounce divorce for the slightest mistake or for trying to discuss to seek and suggest a solution to their problems (Mohd Izhar Ariff & Zaini, 2009). At the peak of marital crisis between spouses, each will present their case for divorce to the Qadi's office or court (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 2013), whereas, a marital conflict which ends in divorce may adversely affect and stress the lives of children. This indirectly devalues family love and affection and weakens the national aspiration of Malaysia in efforts to achieve Vision 2020 as one of its challenges is to foster love and affection in the family institution and build a caring society.

This issue is very important to be emphasized in order to instill praiseworthy qualities among fathers for the benefit of the children and family. This is because there are fathers who practise negative qualities or lack applying good values in themselves which may influence the attitude, thinking and behaviour of their children. For example, a father who is irascible, cursing and swearing, miserly, tells untruths, pits against others, prejudiced, indifferent to children's growth and development, and coarse and harsh in bringing up children (Abu Nur Muizuddin, 2004). This situation indirectly creates an unhealthy environment for children's development and sets a bad example for children who are inclined follow what parents do, whether good or bad.

In addition, the issue of reinforcing fatherly personality should be given appropriate attention in order to deal with criminal cases involving fathers such as incest between fathers and daughters (Salina Nen et al., 2012), physical abuse cases increasingly committed by fathers (Khadijah Alavi, 2012; Mohd Salleh, 2003), cases of fathers selling their daughters (Lukman Hakim, 2005) and so on. This has opened the eyes of society to the issue of child abuse and victimization which has become increasingly critical. What is worrying is that this has led to other problems when negative implications appear in victimized children such as sexual victim's loss of trust in others, depression, suicidal tendency, low self-esteem, guilty feelings and anger, sense of alienation from society or family, substance abuse and so on (Fizwani et al., 2008), whereas children are important human capital for the family, society and nation, who must be developed optimally through providing a safe and conducive environment (Noremy, 2011).

Hence, the above discussion of issues involving fathers generally reflects a loss of fatherly personality and good moral character today, very far from the paternal responsibility for the right to religious education for children. This situation may give rise to disorder and chaos in the family, contradictory to the guideline of Islamic teachings. In this regard, the issue clearly happening today is why is there inadequate research on a solutions or remedial measures and approach to overcome this issue? Where has the good fatherly personality taught by the Prophet (pbuh) disappeared to? Essentially, a father is the head of the family responsible to protect the whole household, set a good example and guide the family to Allah SWT (Amla et al., 2010).

There are various efforts taken by concerned parties to raise awareness in fathers through campaigns, seminars, workshops, lectures on family and so on concerning paternal responsibility for maintenance, love and affection and protection for children (Nora, 2004; Amran et al., 2012), however, such programs still lack response from fathers (Fawwaz, 2015). Whereas, Aminah Abdul Rahman as Director-General of LPPKN in the year 2009 explained that to empower themselves as great fathers, knowledge of paternal parenting is necessary to be learnt and practised in order to be the protector and the best source of reference for family members (LPPKN, 2009). Therefore, it becomes imperative for fathers to participate and involve themselves in parenting programs and family activities to empower and reinforce their personalities towards building family well-being. The issues of this research are: do fathers participate in parenting programs as a step to reinforce paternal personality? And what are the factors which cause fathers to be less involved in organized parenting programs and activity?

Research Obectives

On examining the research issues posed, this research is conducted to achieve the following objectives:
1. To identify respondents among fathers who participated in parenting programs as a step in reinforcing fatherly personality.

2. To analyze the factors for fathers' lack of involvement in organized parenting programs.

Research Methodology

This is a quantitative research using the survey study method. 70 respondents were selected from among fathers who participated in parenting courses at the National Board of Population and Family Development (hereafter referred to as LPPKN). LPPKN was selected as research location because it is a government agency under the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Development (KPWKM) which is active and frequently organizes educational parenting and family programs in Malaysia (Fawwaz, 2015). Selection of research respondents is by stratified random sampling among fathers who attended four parenting/family programs and courses organized by LPPKN held between January and June 2015. The programs selected as research sample are two, 1 Malaysia Family First programs and two Family@Career programs. The rationale for selecting these four programs is that more fathers satisfactorily participated in these four programs compared to other programs of LPPKN during the period. The main instrument used in data collection at the location is the questionnaire which was tested for reliability before its distribution.

Table 1:
Reliability Analysis of Research Measurement Tool

No.	Instrument	*alpha (a) Value*	Level of Reliability
1.	Reinforcement Approach of Fatherly Personality through Participation in Parenting Programs	0.947	Good
2.	Factor for Fathers' Lack of Involvement in Parenting Programs	0.970	Good

As the *alpha cronbach* value for each variable exceeds 0.6, the research instrument has good consistency and reliability and is acceptable (Sekaran, 2003). The data obtained through questionnaire is descriptively analyzed using Statistic Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 and presented in the form of percentage, frequency and mean.

Literature Review

Good paternal personality may be fostered and guided by applying a certain approach and method. This method and approach to strengthen good fatherly personality was stated by Hisham Altalib (1992) & Nik Abdul Rahman et al. (2007), that is, by participating in parent education programs or family activity. Noremy (2011) in his study also suggested that parents, specifically fathers, involve themselves actively in organized parenting programs so that they may gain parenting knowledge, training and skills to enable them to properly carry out their responsibilities and be protectors for their children. This is supported by Mohd. Nasir (2005) who explained that individuals, specifically fathers, if allowed to continue with undesirable personality without specific training and education, will remain with such personality and habitual behaviour such as irritability, irascibility, selfishness and so on. In this regard, fathers need to continuously attend parenting programs, training and education as an approach or method to reinforce excellent fatherly personality.

Ishammudin (2009) in his writing submitted Clarke-Stewart's opinion in an article entitled Professional Issues in Parent Education which outlined five main causes why parents need parenting skills. The reasons given are that parents are the main influence on children's development, schools are ineffective in shaping children's behaviour and minds and the family institution is subject to more challenging social pressure. In addition, there is evidence that many parents are ineffective in carrying out their responsibilities and there is new scientific research-based discovery of how to bring up children based on scientific research. Thus, parenting programs are recommended as a mechanism to ensure required knowledge of better parenting skills, specifically paternal, may be channeled and acquired.

According to Judith L. Evans (2006), programming experience reinforces the importance of working with parents and families in order to maximize child outcomes. In the late 1990s, the World Health Organization (WHO) commissioned a review of programmes seen as effective in improving the health, nutrition, and psychological development of children in disadvantaged circumstances. Besides that, the broad objective within parenting programmes is to create awareness of the importance of the caregivers' role in relation to supporting children's growth and development, and to strengthen or modify caregivers' attitudes, beliefs and practices in relation to caring for a child. While all children need the care described above, the way in which the needs are manifested and the way they are provided for will differ from culture to culture. However, ultimately parent programmes should empower caregivers in ways that will improve their care of and interaction with young children and enrich the immediate environment within which children live. Evans (1999) also said that the term parenting programme is being used to cover both parent education and parent support programmes. Even though the terms are often used indiscriminately, it is important to understand the difference between them. Parent education is any training or learning activity provided for parents. Parenting is only one category of content that can be taught in a parent education course. Other content might be related to literacy, skill development, management, etc. that is being provided to increase parental skills to

increase family income and well-being. On the other hand, parent support provides those engaged in parenting with information on how to give children the kinds of parenting they require to   maximize their potential.

This is in tune with the view of Miskawayh (1966) that behaviour is not static and it can accept reform whether towards goodness or badness through education, training, law, regulations, guidance, advice, discipline and so on. A person has the potential to change his personality whether in the short or the long term. Al-Ghazali (2000) also held a similar view in saying that behaviour is flexible and may be nurtured to be honourable with suitable training and education. Zaydan (2002) said that parenting programs may be implemented through talks, study classes, lectures, dialogues, activities with family and so on. Hence, previous studies found that participation of fathers in parenting programs is important for strengthening good fatherly personality in the family.

<div align="center">Research Results and Discussion</div>

One of the research objectives is to identify respondents among fathers who participated in parenting programs as a step towards reinforcing fatherly personality. Research results show the majority of respondents agree that item ' I strive to improve myself by getting involved in parenting programs' scored a mean value = 3.49 (95.8%, 67 persons) is a step and method to strengthen their fatherly personality.

Table 2
Reinforcement Approach of Fatherly Personality through Parenting Programs

No.	Statement	Percentage (%) & Frequency (N)				Mean
		Very Untrue of Myself	Not True of Myself	True of Myself	Very True of Myself	
1.	I strive to improve myself by getting involved in parenting programs.	0	4.3% (3)	42.9% (30)	52.9% (37)	3.49

<div align="center">Source: 2015 Questionnaire</div>

This finding is in line with Fawwaz's view (2015) that the importance of fathers' involvement in family courses and programs is to strengthen their role and function. Furthermore, various modules and activities have been planned and implemented in parenting programs, specifically in LPPKN, to help fathers upgrade their parenting skills in the family. Nonetheless, there are some fathers who do not follow such programs (4.3%, 3 persons). This is due to several factors which have been identified, such as pre-occupation with career, laziness, presumption that such programs are unimportant, disinterest, forced attendance by employers, unavailability of babysitter for children, no publicity information for programs, stress, financial problems and unattractive contents and topic of parenting programs.

Research results show that item with the highest mean value is 'I have financial/economic problem to attend parenting programs" (mean=2.67) followed by item ' I am busy with my career' (mean=2.66), ' I get stressed in following parenting program', ' I am not attracted to the topic and contents discussed in the parenting program' (mean=2.63), 'I feel lazy to get involved in parenting program' (mean=2.61), 'I have no babysitter for the children to attend parenting program' (mean=2.60), 'I am forced by my employer to attend parenting program' (mean=2.59), 'I feel parenting programs are not important' (mean=2.57) and item 'I am not interested in parenting program' (mean=2.56), whereas item ' I did not get any information on parenting program' scored the lowest value (mean=2.51).

Table 3
Factors for Fathers' Lack of Involvement in Parenting Programs

No.	Statement	Percentage (%) & Frequency (N)				Mean
		Very Untrue of Myself	Not True of Myself	True of Myself	Very True of Myself	
1	I feel lazy to get involved in parenting program	12.9% (9)	34.3% (24)	31.4% (22)	21.4% (15)	2.61
2	I am busy with my career	5.7% (4)	42.9% (30)	31.4% (22)	20% (14)	2.66
3	I feel parenting programs are unimportant	22.9% (16)	24.3% (17)	25.7% (18)	27.1% (19)	2.57
4	I am forced by my employer to attend parenting program	17.1% (12)	31.4% (22)	27.1% (19)	24.3% (17)	2.59
5	I am not interested in parenting program	20% (14)	28.6% (20)	27.1% (19)	24.3% (17)	2.56

6	I did not get any information on parenting programs	15.7% (11)	35.7% (25)	30% (21)	18.6% (13)	2.51
7	I feel stressed when following parenting program	18.6% (13)	28.6% (20)	24.3% (17)	28.6% (20)	2.63
8	I have financial/economic problem to attend parenting program	17.1% (12)	30% (21)	21.4% (15)	31.4% (22)	2.67
9	I have no babysitter for my children to attend parenting program	14.3% (10)	34.3% (24)	28.6% (20)	22.9% (16)	2.60
10	I am not attracted to topic and contents discussed in parenting program	14.3% (10)	32.9% (23)	28.6% (20)	24.3% (17)	2.63

Source: 2015 Questionnaire

Based on the above analysis of mean score, majority of respondents agree that the item 'I have a financial/economic problem to attend parenting program' (mean=2.67) is the main cause for their lack of involvement in parenting programs, which scored 52.8% (37 persons). This finding is in line with the view of Zulkifli al-Bakri (2010) who explained that financial problem or unstable economy among fathers may cause them not to be involved in parenting and family programs. This is admitted by Fawwaz (2015) that parenting programs organized by LPPKN charge a fee of RM30 for cost of food and drink, notes, etc. in this regard, the researcher finds that it is possible that inconvenience of financial condition causes fathers to be in a dilemma whether to attend or not attend parenting programs, with the consideration that such amount of money may be better used for family requirements. Clearly, the financial factor is a cause of lack of fathers' involvement in parenting programs. However, there are some programs run by certain bodies in Malaysia which do not charge any participation fees. Therefore, the researcher suggests that fathers find and take such opportunity to gain essential and detailed parenting knowledge.

Respondents also agree that the item 'I am busy with my career' (mean=2.66) is a factor for fathers' lack of involvement in parenting programs, which scored 51.4% (36 persons). This is in line with the view of Adawiyah (2008) who explained that fathers give more attention to their work compared to acquiring knowledge in the interest of the family. Zulkifli al-Bakri (2010) also asserted that most of the fathers' time is spent in the office to settle work matters. This is supported by Fawwaz (2015) who stated that fathers do not attend parenting programs due to pre-occupation with career such that even time for family is also reduced and limited. According to Yusuf Ba'daroni (1996), Abdul Aziz (2013) & Heman Elia (2000), exemplary fathers will always find the opportunity to spend time with children and family members in doing common activities such as playing, communication, and so on.

Research results also find that respondents agree that the item 'I feel stressed following parenting program' (mean=2.63) as a reason for fathers' lack of involvement in parenting program which scored 52.9% (37 persons). This finding is supported by Md Yusof (2003) who asserted that the more attention is given in striving to meet a need, the higher the stress experienced. This means that when there is no equilibrium between a demand and the capacity to meet a need, the result is a negative effect in the form of stress. Holden & Ritchie (1991) stated that stress has a negative effect on parenting characteristics and it may influence parents to act beyond their control if they fail to manage stress. Stress experienced by an individual will cause him to feel frustrated, lethargic, and listless (Lokman & Kadam, 2011) until it becomes the reason and cause for fathers' lack of involvement in parenting programs organized.

Research findings also show that the factor of lack of fathers' involvement in parenting program is also caused by item 'I am not attracted to the topic and contents discussed in the parenting program' (mean=2.63) which scored 52.9% (37 persons). Nevertheless, this finding contradicts the opinion held by Fawwaz (2015) who asserted that the program contents and modules compiled at the level of LPPKN headquarters help to guide and train fathers to play a proper role such as in the method of managing stress in educating children, comparing children's potential and performance, and knowing laws on child abuse and so on. This is discussed by Al-Wakil (1994) who explained that preachers or organizers should select suitable topics (contents) which can deal with target problems by suggesting appropriate methods of problem-solving. Ahmad Ghalush (1978) held the opinion that content matter appropriate for the level of the target audience (*mad'u)* is the basis for acceptance of preaching (*dakwah)*. Hence, it is very important to give attention to selection of content suited to the level of audience and knowledge of their social position and status. In this matter, the researcher suggests that the topics and issues discussed in parenting program be maintained and even augmented but presented, perhaps, using variety of techniques and media which are creative, light and more interesting.

Besides that, research analysis also finds that the cause of fathers' lack of involvement in parenting program is item 'I feel lazy to attend parenting program' (mean=2.61) which scored 52.8% (37 persons). This finding is also similar to that by Ab Aziz et al. (2006) who explained that participants or fathers prefer to only 'see and hear' or 'wait and see' or may be said to be lazy to involve themselves in parenting programs. In fact, fathers emphasize more on

other aspects rather than adding to parenting knowledge through family programs made available. They prefer social activities with friends (Lokman, 2015; Adawiyah, 2008) such as touring, fishing sports and so on.

In addition, research findings show that respondents agree with the item 'I am forced by my employer to attend parenting programs' (mean=2.59) which scored 51.4% (36 persons) as a factor for fathers' lack of involvement in parenting program. In other words, their involvement was due to their employers' directive, thus they did not come out of their own free will to improve their parenting skills. This finding was admitted by Fawwaz (2015) who stated that most participants received a directive from the employers obliging them to attend the parenting program. Ab. Aziz et al. (2006) also asserted that among the participants were fathers who attended the program not voluntarily but were made to do so by their superiors or employers.

Meanwhile, research results find the item 'I feel that parenting programs are unimportant' (mean=2.57) and item 'I am not interested in parenting programs' (mean=2.56) contribute to the cause of fathers' lack of involvement in parenting programs. This finding is supported by Abdul Munir (2014) who explained that the content of preaching (*dakwah*) or program knowledge which clearly calls to goodness and prohibits evil will still be rejected if the *mad'u,* specifically fathers, presume that the matter is unimportant, and even not suitable for their needs or interests, whereas Islam very much encourages Muslims to acquire knowledge as provision in this world and the hereafter (Jawiah Dakir, 2000). Fawwaz (2015) also stated that fathers feel that parental education programs are unimportant for them because parenting is a natural process which does not require learning. He also stated that the tremendous challenge of bringing up children in the present age which is too advanced in the fields of technology, gadgets, mass media and so on, requires a father to be have a variety of excellent parenting skills in order to lead the family.

In summary, research results find that almost all the research respondents selected from among fathers agree and practise the reinforcement approach of good fatherly personality through participation in parenting programs. However, there are various factors which cause them difficulty in attending parenting programs organized in the present time such as laziness, pre-occupation with career, presumption that program is unimportant, unwilling attendance forced by employers, disinterest, unavailability of program information, feeling stressed to follow program, financial problem, unavailability of babysitter for the children, and unattractive program topic and contents.

Conclusion

In conclusion, research results show that respondents among fathers participated in parental programs as a step towards strengthening good fatherly personality in the family. But however, research results show that among the factors which cause a minority of fathers not to participate and follow parenting programs are financial problems, pre-occupation with career, laziness, feeling stressed following the program, unattractive program contents and topic, unwilling attendance forced by employers, unavailability of babysitter for children, presumption that programs are unimportant, disinterest and unavailability of program information. It is hoped that this research may motivate fathers to practise the Islamic approach of reinforcing good fatherly personality, specifically through participation in parenting programs organized in Malaysia. It is also hoped that application of this knowledge may help fathers to guide their respective families towards well-being. This research suggests that Malaysian authorities responsible such as LPPKN, Department of Social Welfare (JKM) and so on, will organize, to the maximum possible, educational parenting and family programs based on Islamic knowledge and input to strengthen praiseworthy fatherly personality in the family.

Acknowledgement

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