

## Father Involvement in Children's English Learning at Home

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### ABSTRACT

This study scrutinizes fathers' involvement in children's English learning at home. Employing a case study, this study involved four fathers aged between 31 and 45. The data were collected using in-depth interviews. The findings of the study indicate that there are several inhibiting and supporting factors for parenting self-efficacy (PSE). These factors include support and communication with partners, child characteristics, media influence, knowledge and education, culture and social values, and workload. In addition, PSE contributes to fathers' involvement in English learning at home. PSE can also be a protective factor from various obstacles and resource limitations. Fathers with high PSE can turn challenges into opportunities. This study also reveals that fathers' involvement efforts still need to be improved so that family functioning will be more optimal.

**Keywords:** parenting self-efficacy in fathers, father involvement in children's English learning, elementary school students

### ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini meneliti keterlibatan ayah dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anak di rumah. Dengan menggunakan studi kasus, penelitian ini melibatkan empat ayah berusia antara 31 dan 45 tahun. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan wawancara mendalam. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada beberapa faktor penghambat dan pendukung untuk parenting self-efficacy (PSE). Faktor-faktor ini meliputi dukungan dan komunikasi dengan pasangan, karakteristik anak, pengaruh media, pengetahuan dan pendidikan, budaya dan nilai-nilai sosial, dan beban kerja. Selain itu, PSE berkontribusi terhadap keterlibatan ayah dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris di rumah. PSE juga dapat menjadi faktor pelindung dari berbagai hambatan dan keterbatasan sumber daya. Ayah dengan PSE tinggi dapat mengubah tantangan menjadi peluang. Penelitian ini juga mengungkapkan bahwa upaya keterlibatan ayah masih perlu ditingkatkan sehingga fungsi keluarga akan lebih optimal.*

**Kata kunci:** parenting self-efficacy pada ayah, keterlibatan ayah dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris anak, siswa sekolah dasar

### A. Introduction

The family is the first environment for a child's development. In this regard, parents are responsible for fulfilling the child's care and education needs. Ideally, a father and a mother have an equally important role in

caregiving duties. However, many children still grow up without a father's involvement (Emerson et al., 2021). This phenomenon is known as fatherlessness. According to Lamb (1975), fatherlessness refers to the absence of a father's role in parenting, both physically and psychologically. In Western

countries, this fatherless phenomenon often occurs because fathers and mothers are usually not bound by marriage (Flouri et al., 2015). Interestingly, in Indonesia, most fathers and mothers live in marriage. However, the presence of fathers in parenting is often not optimal. This phenomenon cannot be separated from the traditional view of mothers who play a primary role in childcare and household management. At the same time, fathers are more prioritized to meet financial needs (Duvall, 1977). This view is still widely held by Indonesian society today.

The absence of fathers in parenting is an essential concern because child development is highly dependent on the active role of both father and mother (Khairunnisa & Nurdianto, 2022). Therefore, a change in perspective is needed in society regarding the role of fathers in the family so that efforts to involve fathers in parenting can be more optimal. One manifestation of father involvement in parenting is meeting the child's needs from an educational aspect. A father can be actively connected to teach children at home. This concept is known as involvement. Father involvement is a belief, attitude, or activity connected to the child to provide the learning support needed (Weiss et al., 2010).

English is one of the important subjects for children to learn, so fathers need to be involved in providing the necessary learning support. This is because English language proficiency is a competency required in the era of globalization to face the challenges of the world of work and the development of the times. Learning English from an early age, including at the elementary school level, significantly impacts students' ability to master English in the future. Based on the second language acquisition theory, children tend to have more optimal cognitive abilities and flexibility when learning a new language at an early age (Krashen, 1985). Furthermore, other studies also show that learning English at the elementary school level can help children improve their communication skills, self-confidence, and cross-cultural understanding (Cameron, 2001).

A father must be involved in his children's English learning education at home. Teaching English as a second language at home has various benefits, such as improving children's communication skills, expanding cultural understanding, and opening up future career opportunities (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). However, the involvement of fathers to be actively connected in learning English is partly determined by how confident the father is in his ability to care for, including guiding children effectively. Fathers need confidence in their capacity to carry out parenting tasks to face various obstacles that arise during the parenting process (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). This psychological aspect is also called parenting self-efficacy (henceforth, PSE).

PSE refers to parents' beliefs about their parenting abilities (Bandura, 1997). Meanwhile, Montigny & Lacharité (2005) stated that PSE is the belief held by parents about their ability to organize, manage and carry out various tasks related to parenting. PSE is an essential factor that can motivate fathers to be optimally involved in parenting (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The findings of Jones & Prinz (2005) showed that fathers with high levels of PSE are more likely to be actively involved in their children's learning process, including supporting their children's English development. Fathers with high PSE will tend to create a conducive learning atmosphere, teach children effectively, and provide consistent motivation (Coleman & Karraker, 2003).

This study explores the dynamics of father involvement in English learning, including how PSE develops for fathers. Previous studies have reviewed many studies of involvement and PSE using quantitative methods. This study uses qualitative research methods to make the results more in-depth and meaningful. In addition, this study tries to reveal challenges and opportunities on how fathers play a role in parenting.

## B. Research Method

Using a qualitative case study, this study gathered the data from four participants. The participant's criteria in this study were a father who had elementary school-aged children aged 7 to 12 years. The participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were done to gather the data on PSE in fathers, the involvement of fathers in learning English at home, and PSE towards father's involvement. The data collected were then analyzed using thematic analysis.

## C. Result and Discussion

Based on interviews with four participants, three major themes were obtained based on the thematic analysis results: 1) PSE in fathers; 2) Father's involvement in English learning at home; and 3) PSE towards father's involvement.

A total of 4 participants of all male genders were involved in this study. The age range of participants was between 31 and 45 years. Their last educational background varies between junior high school, high school/vocational school, D3, and S1. Demographic characteristics also varied. Some participants worked as teachers, private employees, and traders.

**Table 1.1 Themes and Sub-Themes**

Themes	Sub Themes
PSE in fathers	Supporting factors for PSE in fathers
	Inhibiting factors of PSE in fathers
Fathers' involvement in children's English learning	Overview of fathers' involvement in children's English learning
PSE on father involvement in children's English learning	The positive impact of PSE on father involvement in children's English learning

The interview results found that there were inhibiting and supporting factors for PSE in fathers. The factors that could

inhibit or support PSE in fathers include support and communication with partners, child characteristics, media influence, knowledge and education, culture and social values, and workload. One participant said that media can also increase his capacity in parenting *"Yes, I often see social media, on IG or YouTube about parenting. Now I know what to do and what not to do. Yes, even though the theory sometimes doesn't really match reality, the child is still often fussy, how can I not get angry, I'm also tired. But I still look for social media that contains good content for parenting, so in other words, if something happens, the child doesn't get carried away and I still try to be a good father every day"* (R2). Furthermore, there were also participants who thought that the child's characteristics also influenced their motivation in parenting *"Yes, it's like this, fortunately the child is easy to tell. At school, the child is also not fussy, so if taught, he quickly connects"* (R2). In addition, a wife's support also increases a father's confidence in parenting. This is expressed by one participant: *"Luckily I have an understanding wife, not easily blaming. So if I'm happy, she's happy, and vice versa. That's why I'm also happy to take care of children, meaning helping her too"*.

Furthermore, other participants revealed their obstacles to being involved in parenting. One participant said that he was quite awkward when doing parenting tasks, especially if other people watched him, *"Yes, when I'm about to feed my child on the porch, sometimes it's awkward if the neighbors see me."* (R4). This also shows that society still strongly holds a patriarchal culture that positions the role of men as working to earn a living without needing to be involved in the parenting process. Another participant said that the burden of work at the office was a factor that hindered connecting with children, *"Yes, I work in an office. So it's hard to meet my child. I leave in the morning, come home at dusk. The child is also tired all day, both are tired. So what else can I do..."* (R3). In addition, some considered knowledge to influence their involvement in parenting *"If it's really the one who takes care of the child, to the point*

*of cooking, feeding, bathing, yes I have but rarely. More often, it's the mother. Well, how come, I don't understand either. Rather than making mistakes, it's better not to leave everything to the mother" (R4). Another participant revealed that the wife also contributed greatly to their role in parenting. The participant revealed that the lack of communication with the partner sometimes made him reluctant to take care of the child "Sometimes I don't understand either. For example, if the child has a problem with his father, the father will be the one to blame. Rather than making things complicated, it's better to just not give the mother a chance. Well, children tend to be fussy. They might fall even though they've been properly looked after. But if you blame them for a long time, it'll be tiring too" (R4).*

PSE in fathers does not appear suddenly, but it can happen through a process. Several participants interviewed have expressed various obstacles that make it difficult for them to connect optimally with their children. However, several participants expressed that the many obstacles, on the one hand, can be an opportunity to be optimally involved in parenting. This is as expressed by the participant *"I am a high school graduate, and I don't know much about English lessons. But I also want to teach my child. So I often open English YouTube so I can teach my child" (R2). The participant expressed that he wanted to be involved because of his desire and drive to carry out parenting duties. He did this because he had a great motivation for his child to grow up to be a successful and educated person "I want education to be able to change my child's future, not like his father. So if my child learns, I will learn too. Moreover, nowadays there are cellphones and YouTube; anyone can learn there. It's different from when I was, so as long as there is a will, God willing, there is a way" (R2). In addition, some participants said that even though they had financial problems, this challenge did not make them give up. They said that they wanted to provide the best education so that they would become successful people in the future. "For me, the important thing is that*

*my child is smart. It's okay if I work hard; the important thing is that my child focuses on school. That's all" (R3). Then, the participant revealed a method that could be used to learn English "If I really get stuck and don't understand, then I'll take lessons. I once looked for information about English tutors who take lessons together, so the cost is not too expensive. Even though I can't always provide guidance, at least I facilitate" (R3).*

The presence of PSE in fathers positively impacts fathers' parenting. One participant expressed that the belief he had helped him manage stress that arose during parenting *"Alhamdulillah, yes, just go through it. You have to be sure, because if you are sure, whatever the problem, it can definitely be resolved. If you are stressed, take a break, don't worry about it" (R4). In addition, PSE also has a positive impact on fathers' involvement in the children's English learning. When a father has high PSE, he will have the confidence to carry out parenting, including facing various obstacles that arise during parenting. When a father can face parenting obstacles, he will be able to connect with his child better, including being involved in learning English. The presence of PSE also makes fathers have good resilience in parenting. Some positive impacts are feelings of joy and resilience in their involvement in parenting. The parenting that is carried out also feels easy "I often invite my child to communicate. Ask how it is at school, what homework needs to be done at home, how difficult it is. When children are often involved in communication, this also makes me know what their strengths and weaknesses are. In English, he likes it, but he is not confident in speaking it. I am worried that if he speaks English, his friends will talk about it because his school is in a village, not a bilingual elementary school. But I continue to support him there, I monitor his development" (R1).*

The task of parenting carried out especially by parents is a dynamic and complex process. The various challenges experienced by fathers, when involved in

parenting, can be a threat in itself when a father is unable to manage the problems that arise. Therefore, a father needs to have PSE. Some discussions regarding the sub-themes found in this study include 1) PSE in fathers; 2) Fathers' involvement in childrens' English learning at home; and 3) PSE towards fathers' involvement in English learning. The following is an explanation of the sub-themes:

#### 1) PSE in fathers

The role of PSE is important for a father. In this study, it was found that PSE is manifested by being able to manage stress, including being able to overcome the pressure that arises without having to vent it on the child, building a warm relationship with the child, and being actively involved in supporting the child's learning process. In addition, PSE is an important psychological aspect to develop for fathers. PSE can be a protective factor from various obstacles and resource limitations. This study found that limitations in terms of finance and education are not significant obstacles in efforts to support child development if a father has high PSE. PSE will help a father manage various obstacles during the parenting process (Bandura, 1997; Verhage et al., 2013).

PSE plays an important role in helping fathers be more adaptive in parenting tasks. According to Sevigny & Loutzenhiser (2010), fathers who have high PSE are more capable of managing stress, resolving family conflicts, and providing optimal support for child development. The results of this study are also in line with previous studies that fathers who have self-confidence in parenting or PSE tend to have better relationships with their families, build positive relationships with their partners and children, and strengthen emotional family bonds (Coleman & Karraker, 2003). Furthermore, children cared for by fathers with high PSE tend to show positive development, such as better emotions, increased adaptability, self-

confidence, and support for other aspects of social skills (Lamb, 2010). These findings show the importance of PSE for fathers. Family functioning will be better established when the father's role is optimal, including parenting.

In addition, this study also found the factors that influence PSE in fathers. One factor that can generate PSE in fathers is support from a wife. This is in accordance with Cutrona & Troutman (1986), who mentioned that support from a partner is the main motivation in carrying out parenting tasks. Support from a partner can also create self-confidence in parenting. Furthermore, PSE can also be formed due to knowledge and parenting. This is in accordance with Coleman & Karraker (2003), who stated that knowledge related to child development can help fathers feel more capable in carrying out parenting tasks and facing various obstacles.

In addition, knowledge about child development helps fathers feel more capable of facing challenges (Coleman & Karraker, 2003). Support from partners and family can help fathers increase their self-confidence in parenting. Emotional support from partners can be the main motivation for fathers to be involved in parenting (Gao et al., 2013). Furthermore, the PSE possessed by fathers will also impact child development. Children raised by fathers with high PSE show better social-emotional development, such as self-confidence, adaptability, and social skills (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Fathers who are confident in parenting tend to have better relationships with their partners and children and strengthen emotional bonds within the family.

#### 2) PSE on father involvement

PSE contributes to fathers' involvement in parenting. Fathers with high levels of PSE tend to be more confident in carrying out their roles as parents, including fulfilling

expectations for successful parenting (Verhage et al., 2013). This study also reveals how a father with good PSE can turn challenges into opportunities to provide the best parenting needs for their children. This is interesting because the factors that inhibit involvement can be opportunities for fathers to get involved if they have high PSE. For some participants, various obstacles and problems that arise can be opportunities to optimize their involvement efforts. Several inhibiting factors such as fathers with limited financial conditions and low education levels are not obstacles for fathers to get involved. On the other hand, these conditions can trigger a father to provide better parenting and educational support. A father with high PSE has the hope that their children will be able to live better lives so that they will do various ways to meet their childcare needs.

Fathers with high PSE will be more able to manage various parenting tasks effectively (Troutman et al., 2012) and face challenges that arise during the parenting process (Bandura, 1997; Verhage et al., 2013). With the ability to overcome these obstacles, a father can establish a better relationship with his child (Theodile, 2013). The results of this study also debate previous research findings that parents with high economic and educational levels will be more involved, and vice versa (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Harding et al., 2015). These findings reveal that various problems and challenges will not be significant obstacles for fathers to be involved when fathers have good PSE.

PSE plays an important role in shaping fathers' parenting patterns. Fathers with high levels of PSE tend to be more active in supporting their children's education, including in learning English (Jones & Prinz, 2005). Strong self-confidence makes them more confident in helping their children understand language concepts, read books, and use English in everyday

home conversations. Research conducted by Su & Hynie (2011) found that fathers with high PSE tend to be more involved in their children's academic activities, including improving foreign language literacy. This is inseparable from fathers' belief that their involvement can positively contribute to their children's academic achievement. Conversely, fathers with low levels of PSE tend to feel less competent and prefer not to be involved in the process of educating their children.

### 3) Father's involvement in English learning

Fathers can play an active role in English learning through various ways, such as reading English books, communicating in English, and supporting children's academic activities (Cabrera et al., 2014). Fathers' participation is not only limited to formal activities at school but also includes daily interactions at home that provide a more natural and enjoyable learning environment. In addition, fathers' involvement in English learning can also be in the form of emotional and motivational support. According to research by Tamis-LeMonda et al. (2013), children who receive support from their fathers in learning tend to have a more positive attitude towards English and are more confident in using it. This involvement can also increase children's fighting spirit in facing academic challenges.

Several studies have shown that father involvement in children's education positively impacts their language skills. For example, a study by Duursma (2014) found that children who often read books in English with their fathers had a wider vocabulary than children who were only exposed to their mothers or the school environment. In addition, father involvement in English learning activities can also strengthen children's communication skills through richer and more varied social interactions.

Another impact is the increase in children's cognitive and social skills. Father involvement in English discussions can improve children's critical thinking skills and speaking skills. According to Cabrera et al. (2017), children who have a close relationship with their fathers in learning activities are better able to express ideas and better understand language.

#### D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the research results, several inhibiting and supporting factors of parenting self-efficacy (PSE) were found. These factors include support and communication with partners, child characteristics, media influence, knowledge and education, culture and social values, and workload. In addition, PSE contributes to fathers' involvement in English learning at home. PSE can also be a protective factor from various obstacles and resource limitations. This study found that financial limitations and low levels of fathers' education were not significant obstacles in their efforts to support children's education if a father had high PSE. This study also revealed that fathers' involvement efforts still need to be improved so that family functioning will be more optimal.

Based on the explanation that has been presented, the researcher makes several suggestions aimed at parents, schools, and for further research. For parents, especially fathers, this study is expected to provide an understanding of the importance of having parenting self-efficacy. With a high level of parenting self-efficacy, parents are believed to be able to face various challenges in the parenting process so that their involvement can take place optimally. For schools, the results of this study are expected to be a reference in compiling educational programs for parents, in order to increase awareness of the importance of the active role of fathers and mothers in supporting children's

education. For further research, it is recommended to focus on further exploration of the involvement of fathers and mothers at various levels of education. This is because the involvement of both parents is very important at all levels of education, although the form of participation can differ depending on the level.

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