

# Fathering In Relation With Father's Educational Level And Occupation In Semarang-Central Java: Indigenous Psychological Approach

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## Abstracts

*Father as the breadwinner of the family must have roles on nurturing the children. The way of father's nurturing, or so-called fathering, may differ, depends on several presences of social context. The aim of this study is to describe fathering in relation with father's educational level and occupation. A total of 1424 undergraduate students living in Semarang (male = 444; female = 980) completed an open-ended questionnaire developed by Kim (2010) that asks how their fathers nurture them. The data was analyzed using indigenous psychological approach of analyzing the content of open-ended responses, categorization of the responses, and cross-tabulating with background information. The results indicate that fathering has no relation with father's educational level, but has relation with father's occupation. Implication of the results will be discussed.*

**Keyword:** *fathering, nurturing, parent-child relationship*

Fathers were often assumed to be on the periphery of children's lives and so of little direct importance to children's development. However, since the mid-1980s, the 'discovery' of the role of father involvement in particular, has been one of the major themes in child developmental research and psychological research on fathering. Fathering is becoming an achieved social relationship, rooted in new expectations that fathers should engage with their children as physically and emotionally involved carers (Edwards et al., in Flouri, 2005).

According to several studies (conducted cross-sectionally), fathering has an essential impact on children's later development. The evidence shows that fathering was significantly influence children's mental health, academic achievement, social and economic outcomes, aggressive behavior, interpersonal relationships, and family relationships (Hakoama & Ready, 2011; Flouri, 2005; Beaty, 1995).

## Fathering

The type of fathering has changed over time and varies considerably between cultures (in Flouri, 2005). For instance, during the colonial period in USA, fathers were the primary parent and had ultimate say in matters of the child. The advent of industrialisation in nineteenth century redefined the roles of fathers, with the role of fathers becoming predominantly that of 'provider'. All European countries have also historically given patriarchal authority to the father, although the form that this has taken has varied. In Swedish, fathers in dual-earner families are probably most highly involved, spending an average of 10.5 hours per workday and 7.5 hours per non-workday with their infants, almost as much as the mothers do, whereas American fathers have been reported in some studies to spend around 3 hours per day interacting with their infants, and in others to spend around 15 to 20 minutes (Lamb, in Flouri, 2005).

Several models of determinants of fathering have been proposed (Pleck & Stueve, in Flouri, 2005), and although their results varied, most of them have looked at the role of five major components, including contextual factors, father's characteristics, mother's characteristics, coparental relations, and the child's characteristics (Karras et al., in Flouri, 2005). According to the study conducted in Netherlands, fathering may differ, depends on several presences of social context, value orientation, and family of origin of the father (Duindam & Spruijt, 1997).

## Javanese Family: The Context

Indonesia is a country in Southeast Asia and Oceania. With 17,508 islands, of which 6,000 are inhabited, Indonesia is the world's largest archipelagic state. Its five largest islands are Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, New Guinea, and Sulawesi. The population based on 2000 national census is 206 million, and the Indonesian Central Statistics Bureau estimates a population of 222 million in 2006.

Indonesia is a culturally complex and diversified country. Apart from the official language Bahasa Indonesia, more than 250 different languages are spoken, and over 300 different ethnic groups exist. The largest ethnic groups are Javanese (45%), Sundanese (14%), Madurese (7.5%), and coastal Malays (7.5%) (CIA, in Albert et al., 2005).

The Javanese values of respect and the maintenance of social harmony (*rukun*) are basic principles of normative and moral guidance for social interaction within both the family and the community. One of Javanese proverb said that "*Tentrem lankabegjan*" means harmony would bring peaceful and happy feeling (Albert et al., 2005). The strong emphasis on *rukun* has marked the typical Javanese as inexpressive, avoiding social and personal conflict (Geertz, in Zeitlin et al., 1995).

The family, as the first place for children to learn models for social relationships, works in preparing children to act as full members of Javanese society. Socialization within the family has implications that permeate both individual personality and the entire social system. The moral components of familial institutions are internalized by the child during the earliest years and are significant forces motivating the child's behaviour later (Geertz, in Zeitlin et al., 1995).

## Javanese Parenting

In Javanese culture, parenting is a responsibility of both father and mother. This responsibility appears in a bilateral and nucleating kinship system among Javanese. Javanese parenting aims to educate the children to become “human beings” (*dadi wong*), which means respected members of society.

In Javanese, the love given by biological parents to their children is incomparable and there is no substitution (Jay, in Zeitlin et al., 1995). Before the age of five or six, children are provided by their parents, especially the mother, with nurturance, unconditional emotional support, and love, (Magnis-Suseno, in Zeitlin et al., 1995).

A Javanese child does not have an intense relationship with the father until the child begins to walk. Geertz (in Zeitlin et al., 1995) observed that, during that period, father starts to play with their children, feed and bathe them, and cuddle them to sleep (a bond of warmth and affection).

The permissiveness noted earlier towards children younger than five or six years is mainly to structure affairs so as to minimize the emergence of impulses disruptive of social life. The child is considered *durung Jawa* (not yet Javanese) or *durung ngerti* (not yet understand), so the use of force or punishment for incomprehensible mistakes is considered useless (Geertz, in Zeitlin et al., 1995).

Young children remain close to their fathers only until they are about five years old. After that they are taught to approach him more formally and to stay respectfully away from him. Although a Javanese child is seldom punished by his father, the father is accorded much respect. The ideal for his children: he should lead them with a gentle though firm hand, not interfering with their petty quarrels, but being always available to give solemn sanction to his wife's punishment of disobedient children. The shift in the father's role from one of affection and warmth to one of distance and reserve, although it is only one step in the whole series of events by which the child learns the specific Javanese concepts of self-control and respect, is probably the most significant because of the crucial place of the father in the child's emotional life (Geertz, in Zeitlin et al., 1995).

## Value of Children

In Java, large families traditionally have been desirable. Some studies argue that the high value placed on fertility is mainly due to expected economic returns (Williams, in Zeitlin et al., 1995) that parents receive in the form of additional labour power and security in old age.

Koentjaraningrat (in Zeitlin et al., 1995) noted that having many children is perceived as prestigious; a man can have as many children as he can afford. The number of children a man has also increases his status at work. Also, in social etiquette, those with more children should be addressed in formal terms, even if their age, education, and experience are the same.

Koentjaraningrat and Geertz (in Zeitlin et al., 1995) describe children as a source of family warmth, joy, and happiness. The Javanese believe that children bring luck and happiness and that if there is warmth in the family there will be calm and peace in the heart.

In Javanese society, children of both sexes are equally wanted. Preferential treatment based on gender has never been noted in Indonesia, except for education for boys.

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### **Indigenous Psychological Approach**

Indigenous psychology is a development of psychological science that attempts to understand human behavior without denying the context of the behavior occurring. Therefore, knowledge, skill, and belief that people have about themselves are explored from their own perspectives. Theories, concepts, and methods are developed correspond with psychological phenomena (Kim et al., 2006). According to Kim and Park (2006), the development of indigenous psychology aims to create a more rigorous, systematic, and universal science that can be theoretically and empirically verified.

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### **Method**

This study was conducted in Indonesia to describe fathering in relation with father's educational level and occupation. Using indigenous psychological approach, an open-ended questionnaire was developed and administered to a sample of undergraduate student living in Semarang-Central Java. The indigenous psychological method encapsulated the context in which parent-child relationship was happened. The goal of this study was to describe the pattern of fathering and to capture the differences of fathering in relation with father's educational level and occupation.

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#### Questionnaire

The questionnaire developed by Kim (2010) was used in this research. Open-ended questions consist of items that ask, "Describe how your father takes care of you." All of the participants' responses to open-ended questions were typed into a master list.

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#### Sample

Participants in this study included undergraduate students (mean age = 19.29; SD = 1.332) and live in Semarang-Central Java, Indonesia. The total amount of 1424 undergraduate students, consist of 444 male and 980 females, participated in this study.

tudents aging from 17 until 25 years old -Central Java, Indonesia. The total amount sand 980 females, participated in this study.

#### Coding

The coding process to all participants' responses was performed by four coders. The coders discussed each response to make sure what the theme that appear from the answer and then put it into a certain category. An answer would be considered into a particular category when all four coders agreed that it belonged to this category. The responses that could not be slotted into an existing category were considered as "other" category which included less than 15% of total responses. Then all categorized responses were ordered base on the frequency of response, and afterward were discussed to group them into great themes. Table 1 list the grouping categories.

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#### Data analysis

Based on great themes that emerge in categorization, statistical analysis including cross-tabulation was performed with background information.

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## Results

The educational level of father's participants were elementary (8.1%), junior high (6.4%), senior high (32%), bachelor (40.4%), and postgraduate (13.1%). The occupation of father's participants were professional expert (6.7%), professional (38.1%), employee (16%), entrepreneur (20.9%), entertainer (0.2%), semi-skilled labor (1.5%), skilled labor (2.7%), labor (7.1%), and unemployed (6.8%).

The pattern of fathering perceived by participants is shown in table 1. The frequency of each response and its percentage (in brackets) are displayed. The right column presents the frequencies and percentages of responses based on participants' sex.

Table 1. Pattern of Fathering

Categorization	Total	Participants' sex	
		Male	Female
<b>1 Fulfilling Emotional Needs</b>	<b>509 (35.7)</b>	<b>141 (31.8)</b>	<b>368 (37.6)</b>
Giving attention	284 (19.9)	86 (19.4)	198 (20.2)
Giving love	115 (8.1)	30 (6.8)	85 (8.7)
Protecting	57 (4.0)	8 (1.8)	49 (5.0)
Understanding	53 (3.7)	17 (3.8)	36 (3.7)
<b>2 Fulfilling Physical Needs</b>	<b>305 (21.4)</b>	<b>95 (21.4)</b>	<b>210 (21.4)</b>
Fulfilling physical needs	232 (16.3)	84 (18.9)	148 (15.1)
Physical presences	73 (5.1)	11 (2.5)	62 (6.3)
<b>3 Giving Direction</b>	<b>243 (17.0)</b>	<b>77 (17.4)</b>	<b>166 (16.9)</b>
Teaching	114 (8.0)	42 (9.5)	72 (7.3)
Giving advice	73 (5.1)	21 (4.7)	42 (5.3)
Giving discipline	56 (3.9)	14 (3.2)	52 (4.3)
<b>4 Giving good care</b>	<b>101 (7.1)</b>	<b>34 (7.7)</b>	<b>67 (6.8)</b>
<b>5 Fully sacrificing</b>	<b>75 (5.3)</b>	<b>23 (5.2)</b>	<b>52 (5.3)</b>

Qualitative data analysis displays that the pattern of fathering perceived by participants can be categorized into five themes, which were fulfilling emotional needs, fulfilling physical needs, giving direction, giving good care, and fully sacrificing. Each category can be describe as follows:

First, fulfilling emotional needs means fathers' completing immaterial needs of the children. Fulfilling emotional needs comprehends fathers' roles to give attention, to give love, to give protection, and to give understanding to their children.

Second, fulfilling physical needs points out father's granting material needs of the children. Fulfilling physical needs consist of fathers' success in providing whatever the children want and be with the children physically (physical presences).

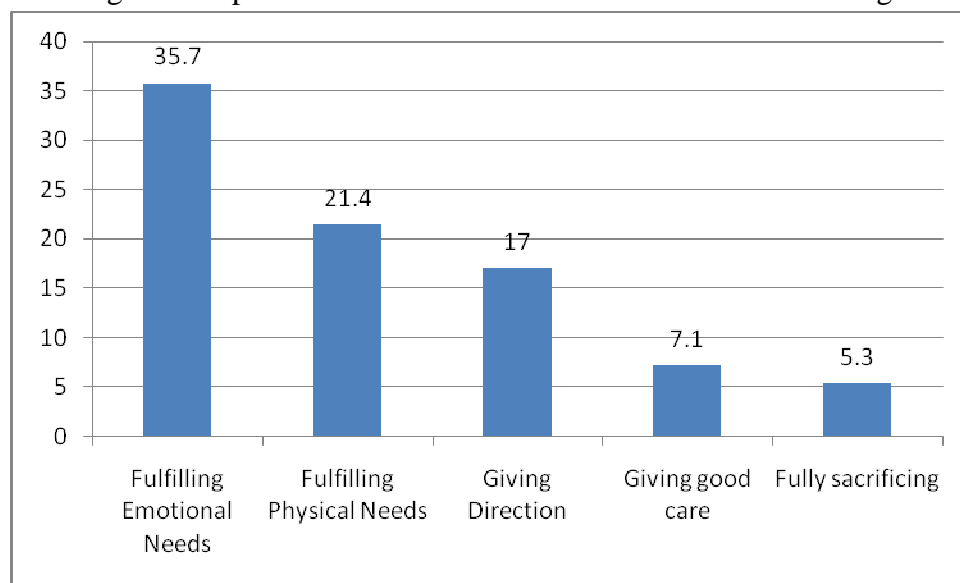
Third, giving direction is one of the fathers' role as the leader of their family. Fathers have responsibility to give good direction to their children. Giving direction consists of fathers' teaching, giving advice, and giving discipline.

Fourth, giving good care indicates that fathers are considered to be able to play an important role as a needs provider, commonly.

Fifth, fully sacrificing means that fathers will do everything in order that completing needs of their children. Fathers place their children in a manner and strive to give their children the best.

From the qualitative analysis, five themes emerged as the pattern of fathering perceived by participants. The five themes include fulfilling emotional needs, fulfilling physical needs, giving direction, giving good care, and fully sacrificing. The distribution for each category is presented in Figure 1. The figure shows that fulfilling emotional needs gets the highest frequency as the pattern of fathering perceived by participants.

Figure 1. Proportion of Each Theme of The Pattern of Fathering



To determine whether fathering is influenced by father's educational level or/and father's occupation, cross-tabulations were performed. The result shows that neither father's educational level nor father's occupation differentiated fathering.

## Discussion

Result shows that fulfilling emotional needs become the most pattern of fathering perceived by participants. Fulfilling emotional needs represent emotional value that Javanese parents want to give their children. Emotional value becomes the basis of parenting, including fathering, among Javanese. One of Javanese proverb said that, "*anak iku dadi ganthelaning ati*", means that child is always in parent's heart (Astiyanto, 2006).

Since emotional value becomes the basis of Javanese parenting, Javanese father is expected to make the child happy (*seneng*), so that the child receives what he or she wants (Geertz, in Albert et al, 2005). Therefore, Javanese father attempts to fulfil everything the child needs and wants, whatever his education and occupation is.

The result that shows neither father's educational level nor father's occupation differentiated fathering indicates that fathering in Javanese culture is more influenced by the value, especially the value of children, which is passed down over generation. As a consequence, a higher or lower education and occupation of the father yield the same basis of fathering.

### **Conclusion and Implication**

Several models of determinants of fathering have been proposed, and although their results varied, most of them have looked at the role of five major components, including contextual factors, father's characteristics, mother's characteristics, co-parental relations, and the child's characteristics (Karras et al., in Flouri, 2005). According to the study conducted in Netherlands, fathering may differ, depends on several presences of social context, value orientation, and family of origin of the father (Duindam & Spruijt, 1997). This research has found that the major factor of fathering in Javanese culture is the value of children.

The value of children in Javanese culture is an inheritance that passed down over generation. Until now, this value is still held by most of Javanese parents and influences Javanese parenting, including fathering.

This finding has essential implication for parenting behavior. Children will have more feelings about being cared by their parents when their parents succeed to fulfil their emotional needs, including needs of attention, needs of love, needs of protection, and needs of understanding. Therefore, it is important for parents to fulfil such of needs in order to create harmonious parent-child relationship.

This study has some limitations. First, unbalanced proportion of participants' sex which male participants less than 35% of total amount of respondents. Second, there is high distribution of participants whose the fathers accomplished bachelor degree and senior high school, and whose the fathers have occupation as professionals, entrepreneurs, and employees. Third, this study was limited to undergraduate students. The extended research to lower level student from senior high, junior high, and elementary is needed. Fourth, due to parent-child relationship is characterized as reciprocal, likewise fathering. This study only reveal fathering from child perspective. However, the next study should be able to reveal fathering from both child and parent perspectives.

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