

Single Parenting Strategy in Developing Children's Spiritual Intelligence in Bangun Sari Village, Asahan Regency

Mhd. Habibu Rahman

Abstract

This study aims to understand the parenting strategies employed by single parents in developing the spiritual intelligence of their children in Bangun Sari Village, Asahan Regency. The research method used was a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation with several single parents and their children. The results show that despite facing economic and social pressures, single parents continue to strive to instill spiritual values through various strategies. First, they familiarize their children with regular religious practices such as prayer, Quran recitation, and group prayer, both at home and in the community. Second, they provide role models in daily life through patience, honesty, and hard work. Third, they maintain warm and intensive communication with their children as a form of emotional support and the instillation of spiritual values. Fourth, they utilize social support from extended family and religious leaders to strengthen the internalization of religious values. The findings also reveal that financial constraints are not a barrier but rather serve as an educational tool to teach the meaning of gratitude, prayer, and effort. Thus, single parenting strategies in Bangun Sari Village play a crucial role in developing children's spiritual intelligence, ultimately strengthening their resilience and preparedness to face life's challenges.

Keywords: Single Parents, Parenting, Spiritual Intelligence, Children

Mhd. Habibu Rahman

Master of Islamic Religious Education, University of Pembangunan Panca Budi, Medan
email: mhdhabiburahman@dosen.pancabudi.ac.id

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<https://proceeding.pancabudi.ac.id/index.php/GIE>

Introduction

The family is the first place where a child learns about life. It is there that children experience love, attention, and protection, which form the foundation for their physical, emotional, and spiritual growth. (Rakhmawati, 2015) Through daily interactions within the family environment, children begin to understand the meaning of togetherness, learn to distinguish between right and wrong, and develop self-confidence. Therefore, the family is often referred to as a child's first school, before they are exposed to the wider world.

Essentially, the ideal parenting process involves both parents. The father's and mother's presence is balanced; the father typically plays the role of protector and assertiveness, while the mother tends to provide tenderness, attention, and emotional closeness. (Novita & Budiman, 2015) This combination of roles supports the development of a child's wholeness, both physically and spiritually.

However, reality does not always live up to expectations. Some families must live with only one parent, whether due to divorce, the death of a spouse, or other factors that prevent one parent from being present. This condition gives birth to single-parent families, where all responsibilities, whether economic, social, or emotional, must be borne alone. (Lorenza et al., 2023) This situation certainly requires special strength and strategies so that children continue to receive proper care, especially in the formation of spiritual values that are important provisions for their lives in the future. (Nainggolan & Lubis, 2023)

Becoming a single parent is not an easy choice, but rather a situation that often comes unexpectedly. Roles that should be carried out by two people must be shouldered alone, making the burden of responsibility much heavier. Single parents are not only required to meet the family's economic needs, but also must be able to provide affection, emotional care, and moral and spiritual guidance to their children. (Ulfa, 2023) In their daily lives, they must play a dual role, as breadwinner and educator, as a figure who provides both firmness and tenderness. (Mika Oktaviana, 2022) This situation often results in fatigue, both physically and psychologically. Nevertheless, many single parents strive to provide healthy, loving, and valuable parenting for their children.

Amidst all the limitations, single parents' determination to safeguard their children's future is a source of strength. Through a parenting style full of patience, role models, and prayers, they strive to develop the character of their children so that they become strong individuals, have noble morals, and have spiritual intelligence. (Ayun, 2017) Thus, even though they grow up in a family that is no longer intact, children can still develop well and have strong provisions to face life's challenges in the future. One of the most important aspects of parenting is the development of spiritual intelligence. (Mhd. Habibu Rahman, 2024) Spiritual intelligence is not merely knowledge of religious teachings, but goes deeper than that, namely a child's ability to understand the meaning of their existence, find meaning in every life experience, and use good values as guidelines for their actions. (Damayanti & Solihin, 2019) Children who possess spiritual intelligence are typically more self-controlled, respectful of others, and able to maintain a balance between worldly and spiritual needs. (Zannatunnisya, Abdi Syahril Harahap, Asmidar Parapat, 2024)

Amidst the currents of modern life filled with competition, pressure, and temptation, spiritual intelligence serves as a foundation that strengthens a child's steps. When children have a strong sense of values, they are not easily swayed by their environment and are even able to view every challenge as a learning process. (Budiyanti, N., Komariah, K. S., Parhan, M., Islamy, M. R. F., & Nugraha, 2022) With spiritual intelligence, children can determine their life's direction more clearly, live their days mindfully, and grow into individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess character and wisdom. (Ika Ika et al., 2024)

Bangun Sari Village in Asahan Regency is a concrete example of how single parents struggle to raise children despite their limitations. Amidst the social and economic dynamics of rural areas, single parents have their own strategies for instilling spiritual values in their children. This strategy is interesting to study because it can provide insight into family resilience and enrich the discourse on parenting patterns in the context of non-intact families. Based on this background, this study attempts to examine the parenting strategies of single parents in the formation of children's spiritual intelligence in Bangun Sari Village, Asahan Regency, with the hope of providing new understanding and inspiration for parents and education practitioners in supporting children's growth and development.

Literature review

A single parent is a father or mother who carries out childcare without the presence of a partner. This condition is usually caused by divorce, the death of a spouse, or other factors that force one parent to assume all family responsibilities. From a sociological perspective, single parents are considered broken homes, but they still fulfill the basic family function of meeting the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of their children. (Utami, 2021)

Unlike complete families, single parents face more complex challenges. They must be the primary breadwinner to meet economic needs, provide emotional care, such as affection, support, and a sense of security, guide their children morally and spiritually, ensuring they maintain a sense of direction and good values, and manage dual roles (as both father and mother), which often leads to physical and psychological exhaustion.

Every parent has the responsibility to provide a good life and develop their child's intellectual potential. One of the most important intelligences to develop is spiritual intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is a person's ability to find meaning in life, understand the purpose of their existence, and use noble values as the basis for their thinking and actions. (Sabiq & Millah, 2017) In children, spiritual intelligence is evident in curiosity about God, sensitivity to the value of goodness, and the ability to express gratitude, empathy, and self-control.

According to Danah Zohar & Ian Marshall, spiritual intelligence (Spiritual Quotient/SQ) is the intelligence to address issues of meaning and value, and to place behavior within a broader and more meaningful context. For children, this intelligence helps them understand "why I should do good" and "what every event in life means." Spiritual intelligence provides the foundation for a child's holistic development. Spiritually intelligent children are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess a kind heart, are able to cope with life's pressures, and have a clear direction in their actions. In the family context, spiritual intelligence makes children more resilient in facing challenges, upholding honesty and responsibility, being sensitive to others, and having an optimistic and hopeful spirit.

Research methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. The qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on an in-depth understanding of parenting strategies implemented by single parents in shaping children's spiritual intelligence. The case study was used to comprehensively explore real-life experiences and practices in Bangun Sari Village, Asahan Regency. The research was conducted in Bangun Sari Village, Asahan Regency. The location was selected based on the large number of single-parent families facing challenges in parenting. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Results

Based on research conducted on 10 single-parent families in Bangun Sari Village, it was found that the parenting strategies they employ to foster their children's spiritual intelligence are quite diverse, but they share a common thread: an emphasis on religious values, role models, and emotional closeness.

1. Religious Approach

Most single parents in Bangun Sari Village prioritize regular worship as the primary foundation in raising their children. Praying five times a day, reading the Quran, and praying together before bed are not only seen as obligations, but also as ways to shape their children's hearts to always be close to God. In daily practice, parents not only command but also invite their children to worship together, so that children feel that spiritual activities are a warm moment of togetherness, not just rules to be obeyed.

Beyond home, parents also strive to involve their children in religious activities in the neighborhood, such as children's Quranic study groups, Quranic recitation at the mosque, or Islamic events in the village. This allows children to learn spiritual values not only from their families but also from the community. Through these experiences, children become accustomed to seeing worship as something natural, enjoyable, and part of their social lives. In this way, single parents hope to instill strong religious values, providing moral and spiritual support for their children when facing life's challenges.

2. Role Modeling in Daily Life

For single parents in Bangun Sari Village, being a strong role model is not a choice, but a necessity. Although they often face economic pressures and unsupportive social views, they strive to appear strong in front of their children. They demonstrate this resilience through patience in the face of hardship, honesty in earning a living, and perseverance in their work despite limited results.

For children, these attitudes become more valuable life lessons than mere verbal advice. Children see firsthand how their mothers maintain a smile even when tired, or how their fathers avoid taking shortcuts and breaking rules to make ends meet. From this, children learn that spiritual intelligence is born not only from prayer and worship, but also from daily behaviors that reflect faith: honesty, patience, and hard work. By serving as a positive role model, single parents not only shape their children's character to be spiritually strong, but also instill the belief that every difficulty can be overcome with effort and trust in God. This attitude gradually becomes a mirror that children emulate, forming a solid moral and spiritual foundation within themselves.

3. Warm Communication and Emotional Closeness

Recognizing that they must simultaneously fulfill multiple roles, single parents in Bangun Sari Village strive to maintain emotional closeness with their children through warm communication. They take time, even in the midst of busy work schedules, to simply listen to their children's stories about school, their peers, or even the small woes of their daily lives. Through these simple conversations, children feel valued and cared for, fostering a sense of security and trust in their parents.

The advice they give is not complicated, but rather delivered in language that children can easily understand. Parents often connect life experiences with spiritual values, for example, reminding them that every problem can be solved with prayer, patience, and sincere effort. In this way, children not only receive advice but also feel emotional support that strengthens them. (Fikuri & Astuti, 2021)

This intensive communication ultimately becomes a crucial bridge for developing children's spiritual intelligence. Children learn that prayer is not just a ritual, but a source

of strength when facing life's challenges. Meanwhile, parents successfully instill the belief that there is always a way out of every difficulty, as long as it is accompanied by effort and trust in God.

Findings from Bangun Sari Village indicate that single-parent parenting strategies for developing children's spiritual intelligence rely not only on formal religious aspects but also through meaningful daily practices. Children from single-parent families are challenged to face limitations from an early age. Instilling spiritual values, such as sincerity, patience, and trust in God, strengthens them in facing difficult situations. This aligns with the theory of spiritual intelligence, which emphasizes children's ability to interpret life experiences positively.

Based on research that shows that role models are more influential than instructions, children more easily absorb spiritual values through observing their parents' behavior. Single parents who consistently worship, are honest in their work, and persevere in providing concrete examples of the meaning of spirituality.

Although most single parents in Bangun Sari Village struggle to meet their daily needs, financial constraints do not deter them from instilling spiritual values in their children. For them, religious education and developing spiritual intelligence are not something that requires a lot of money, but rather, role models, patience, and consistency in supporting their children.

It is precisely in these limited circumstances that parents often use life experiences as learning materials. When children ask for something they cannot yet afford, they teach them the meaning of gratitude for what they have, while reminding them that prayer and hard work are the path to better fortune. From this, children learn that limitations are not a reason to despair, but rather an opportunity to strengthen their faith and trust in God.

In this way, financial limitations, once perceived as weaknesses, are transformed into a tangible means of spiritual education. Children grow up understanding that happiness is not solely measured by material things, but by gratitude, prayer, and the belief that every effort will eventually bear fruit. The involvement of extended family and community leaders demonstrates that spiritual care for children in villages is not only an individual responsibility but also part of a collective culture. This social support enriches children's spiritual experiences and eases the burden on single parents.

Not all single parents are able to handle the role of parenting alone. Therefore, many involve grandparents, siblings, and village religious leaders in supporting their children's development. The presence of an extended family provides a sense of warmth and togetherness, while religious leaders often serve as references in instilling religious values. This social support helps children feel that they are being raised not only by one figure, but also by a caring environment. For example, a grandmother patiently teaches daily prayers, or a religious teacher who guides children in the prayer room. These experiences reinforce the spiritual values instilled by parents at home and expand children's learning opportunities beyond the immediate family.

Through this collaboration, children grow up surrounded by love and role models. Religious values are not merely discussed but are actually present in their daily lives through interactions with various important figures around them. This strong social support ultimately helps strengthen children's spiritual foundations, even if they come from single-parent families.

Conclusion

Single parenting strategies for developing children's spiritual intelligence in Bangun Sari Village include several strategies: (1) accustoming children to regular worship and involving them in religious activities; (2) providing role models through patience, honesty, and hard work; (3) maintaining warm and intensive communication so children feel heard and guided; and (4) utilizing social support from extended family and village religious leaders to strengthen

the internalization of spiritual values. The economic limitations experienced by most single parents are not a barrier. Instead, they often use them as a means to teach the meaning of gratitude, prayer, and effort in life. Children also learn to view difficulties not as burdens but as paths to grow closer to God. Thus, it can be concluded that single parenting in Bangun Sari Village goes beyond meeting children's physical needs, but also focuses on developing spiritual intelligence as an important provision for children in facing life's challenges and building resilience in the future.

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