

# **The Single Father Parenting Model in Children's Religious Education in Tanjung Alam Village Asahan Regency**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to understand the parenting model applied by single fathers in the religious education of their children in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency. This phenomenon is interesting to study because single fathers carry the dual role of breadwinner and educator, facing challenges of limited time, energy, and social support. The study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation, then analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results indicate that single fathers apply a combination of authoritative and directed permissive parenting models. The authoritative approach is evident in the provision of strict rules regarding worship accompanied by role models, while directed permissive is evident in giving children the freedom to choose additional religious activities such as TPA (Teaching and Religious Study Groups). Parenting strategies are implemented through targeted communication, habituating worship, and utilizing small moments to instill religious values. This study found that the success of children's religious education in single-father families depends not only on the father's role but also on environmental support and consistent role models. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for single-father families and related parties to strengthen children's religious education amidst limitations.

**Keywords:** Parenting, Single Father, Religious Education

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## Introduction

The family is the first and primary educational environment before a child is exposed to formal education. One aspect that significantly determines the formation of a child's personality is religious education, which serves as a moral, ethical, and spiritual foundation in daily life. (Rahma, 2020) Before children attend school, all their values, habits, and outlooks on life are formed in the home environment. (Mukarromah et al., 2020) This is where children begin to learn to speak, behave, and understand what is considered right and wrong.

Among the many things children need, religious education plays a crucial role. Religious values instilled from an early age will form a solid foundation for morals, ethics, and life direction. (Rosliani Lubis, 2023) (Nainggolan & Lubis, 2023) Religious education in the family not only teaches the procedures for worship, but also forms habits of honesty, empathy, respect for others, and living life responsibly. (Abriellia & Muthohar, 2024) When these values are instilled, children will have a strong foundation for facing life's challenges in the future.

Religious education is not only limited to knowledge of teachings or worship rituals, but also includes the habit of being honest, empathetic, respecting each other, and being able to distinguish between good and bad. (Sufiani et al., 2022) When religious values are instilled from an early age, children have a strong moral foundation for facing life's challenges. It's easier to guide them to be disciplined, responsible, and maintain good relationships with others. (Harahap & Siregar, 2020) In other words, religious education within the family not only teaches about God but also shapes children's perspectives and behaviors to align with good values in everyday life. (Somad, 2021)

However, establishing this foundation is not always easy, especially when the family role is played by only one parent. Ideally, childcare is carried out by both parents, with the father and mother playing complementary roles. (Rakhmawati, 2015) Fathers generally act as role models in terms of discipline, responsibility, and protection, while mothers play a significant role in providing affection, emotional attention, and daily care. (Utami, 2021) However, in social reality, there are certain circumstances where children are raised by only one parent, whether due to divorce, the death of a spouse, or other factors.

This research focuses on single-father families. As a single father, responsibilities are multiplied. A single father must earn a living, manage a household, and simultaneously be an educator and role model for his children. Balancing time between work and childcare is a significant challenge. In Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency, this phenomenon is evident. Although the community still upholds religious and family values, single fathers often struggle to ensure their children's religious education continues. Limited time, energy, and social support force them to find creative ways to ensure their children are not deprived of moral and spiritual guidance, even when growing up without a mother at home.

Tanjung Alam Village was chosen as the research location because it provides not only a theoretical overview but also a daily reality experienced by some families. Village life, which still upholds religious values and a sense of family, is indeed an important social asset. However, for single fathers, maintaining their children's religious education is no simple matter.

Some of them must leave early to work in the fields, gardens, or migrate to the city, while their children still need support in learning the Quran, performing religious services, and understanding daily moral teachings. Limited time often forces them to seize every available moment for example, offering advice during mealtimes or engaging their children in discussions about religious values while doing homework.

Besides time, energy and social support also pose challenges. Not all single fathers have extended families who can consistently supervise and educate their children. As a result, they must think creatively to ensure their children are not deprived of moral and spiritual guidance. Some involve neighbors or local religious leaders, while others rely on activities at the mosque or TPA (Quran Education Center) as a substitute for their in-person presence.

These efforts demonstrate that even without a mother figure at home, single fathers in Tanjung Alam Village continue to strive to ensure their children grow up with strong religious values, recognizing that this is the most important foundation for their future. This raises important questions: what parenting model do single fathers in Tanjung Alam Village actually implement? What strategies do they use to instill religious values in their children? And what obstacles do they face in the process? Answering these questions is the primary objective of this research, providing a concrete picture that can serve as both a lesson and inspiration for single father families across the region.

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Single Father Parenting**

Parenting is a process involving parental responsibility to meet the physical, emotional, social, and moral needs of children. In general, the role of parenting is often associated with the presence of both parents. However, in reality, many children grow up with only one parent, whether due to divorce, the death of a spouse, or other life decisions. (Lorenza et al., 2023) One form of parenting is single father parenting.

A single father is a man who assumes the role of sole parent in raising children, without a partner as a mother figure in the household. He assumes full responsibility for both the economic aspects and daily caregiving. According to (Nurzabrina & Netrawati, 2023), single fathers not only act as breadwinners but also as primary caregivers, educators, and role models for children. Cultural traditions often position fathers as figures who focus on meeting financial needs, while mothers are considered more dominant in emotional and parenting aspects. However, in the situation of single fathers, the boundaries of these roles become fluid. Fathers must:

- a. Provide for the child's material needs.
- b. Being a listener and providing emotional support.
- c. Managing and supervising children's education.
- d. Providing values and role models in daily life.

### **2.2 Children's Religious Education**

Religious education is an important foundation in the formation of a child's character and morals. From an early age, children are at a developmental stage that is highly sensitive to the values, role models, and habits acquired from their immediate environment. Religious education is not only interpreted as teaching dogma or religious rituals, but also as a process of instilling spiritual, ethical, and humanitarian values that will guide children's lives in the future. (Casika et al., 2023)

Children's religious education is a conscious and planned effort to instill religious teachings, moral values, and noble character in children, both through formal education in schools and informal education in the family and community. According to (Syafanah et al., 2024), religious education includes the process of guiding, directing, and fostering children to know God, love the truth, behave well, and position themselves according to the teachings of their religion.

The family is a child's first school. This is where they learn about prayer, worship, and moral values through daily interactions. Parents, as primary educators, play a crucial role in:

- a. Setting an example in daily worship practices and behavior.
- b. Getting children used to religious activities from an early age.
- c. Instilling moral values such as honesty, empathy, and responsibility.
- d. Modeling is key, as children more easily imitate real-life behavior than simply receiving verbal instructions.

## Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research is to deeply understand the experiences, strategies, and challenges faced by single fathers in raising their children in Tanjung Alam Village. Through this approach, researchers can capture the stories, meanings, and contexts behind each parenting action, rather than simply measuring or calculating data. The research was conducted in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency. This village was chosen because it has a social character that is strong with family values and religiosity, as well as the phenomenon of single fathers actively raising children. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

## Results

### 4.1 Parenting Models Implemented by Single Fathers

Based on interviews and observations conducted by researchers, it was found that single fathers in Tanjung Alam Village tend to combine two parenting models: authoritative and directed permissive.

#### 1. Authoritative

The authoritative parenting model of single fathers in Tanjung Alam Village is clearly evident in the way they establish firm rules regarding religious observance. For example, children are required to perform the five daily prayers on time and recite the Quran every night. These rules are not simply conveyed but are implemented together, so that children see their father's direct example. For them, simply giving orders is not enough. Children need to see that worship is part of the family routine, not a burden or punishment. Therefore, many fathers immediately invite their children to pray in congregation at home or at the mosque upon returning home from work. When evening comes, they sit together to recite the Quran, even though they are sometimes tired after a long day.

This approach creates two things at once: discipline in carrying out religious commands and an emotional closeness between father and child. Children not only hear advice but also feel together and see a consistent example. In this way, religious values are instilled not only through words, but also through the experiences and habits they experience every day.

This is evident when fathers establish firm rules regarding religious observance, such as the obligation to pray five times a day or to recite the Quran every night. They strive to be role models by participating in religious observances with their children.

#### 2. Directed Permissiveness

A directed permissiveness model is seen when fathers allow their children the freedom to choose which additional religious activities they wish to participate in. For example, children are free to decide whether they want to attend the Islamic Religious Education (TPA) in the afternoon, attend the children's religious study group (Masyarakat Taklim) at the mosque, or join the mosque's youth activities on the weekends.

This freedom does not mean that fathers are hands-off, but rather that it is deliberately given so that children learn to make decisions and feel responsible for their choices. This way, children's involvement in religious activities is no longer driven solely by orders, but rather by personal desire and awareness.

Fathers recognize that motivation that grows from within is more lasting. Therefore, they usually only provide light guidance, such as explaining the benefits of attending the

Islamic Religious Education (TPA) or Islamic study group (Masyarakat Taklim), and then let their children decide for themselves. If the child chooses to participate, the father will provide full support, starting with driving them to the location, preparing equipment, and offering praise after the activity is complete.

This approach creates a warm, nurturing atmosphere while encouraging the child's independence in practicing religious values. The child feels valued but is still guided to ensure their actions align with the teachings they embrace.

#### **4.2 Strategies for Instilling Religious Values**

According to interviews, single fathers have limited time because most of them work in the fields or trade. Despite this, they utilize small moments to instill religious values, such as:

- a. Providing advice during mealtimes.
- b. Inviting children to discuss stories of the prophets or moral values from everyday events.
- c. Arranging a schedule for children to participate in Quranic recitation at the mosque or TPA (Islamic Day Care Center).
- d. Encouraging children to participate in village religious activities, such as working together to clean the mosque before Ramadan.

This strategy demonstrates that even though time spent with children is limited, focused communication and habituation remain key to religious upbringing. Focused communication means using every moment together wisely to convey religious messages, either directly through advice or indirectly through stories, questions, or casual conversation. For example, at dinner, a father could link a simple topic like sharing food to the Islamic teaching of charity.

Meanwhile, habituation means making religious values part of the daily routine. Even when busy, fathers still try to encourage their children to pray together, recite the Quran before bed, or recite a prayer together before starting their activities. This habit helps instill religious values naturally in children's daily lives, without feeling like a burdensome obligation.

With a combination of targeted communication and consistent practice, religious education can remain effective, even with limited time. Children learn that religious values are not just theory, but a real part of everyday life, always present, anytime and anywhere.

#### **4.3 Challenges Faced**

Some challenges identified based on the researcher's observations include:

- a. Limited time: Most fathers work full-time, so direct guidance is often limited.
- b. Lack of social support: Not everyone has an extended family to help supervise their children.
- c. Environmental influences: Peer interactions sometimes convey values that are inconsistent with religious teachings.

Despite these obstacles, single fathers, despite their limitations, do not remain silent. They strive to find creative solutions to ensure their children's religious education continues, even though they cannot always provide direct guidance. One way is by entrusting their children to local Quranic teachers. Fathers usually choose teachers who are well-known to the family and are believed to have a sound understanding of religion. This way, children continue to receive regular guidance, both in reading the Quran and understanding Islamic values.

The role of single fathers in children's religious education in Tanjung Alam Village requires a combination of discipline and warmth. The parenting model implemented aligns with the concept of authoritative parenting, which is considered effective in shaping children's character by being firm in setting rules while still allowing them space to grow up feeling secure and valued. (Kusnadi & Agustin, 2019).

The fact that fathers utilize small moments to instill religious values demonstrates that the quality of interaction is more important than the quantity of time. This aligns with the view that religious education at home does not always require a long duration, but must be consistent, relevant, and delivered through example.

Furthermore, the involvement of religious leaders and religious institutions in the village has proven to be a significant supporting factor. The presence of a TPA (Teaching Day Care), a mosque, and village religious activities help fill the void that fathers may not be able to fully fulfill due to time constraints. Therefore, it can be concluded that the success of single fathers in Tanjung Alam Village in educating their children about religion depends not only on the father's personal role, but also on the synergy between the family, the social environment, and local religious institutions

## Conclusion

This research shows that single fathers in Tanjung Alam Village play a crucial and challenging role in their children's religious education. Despite having to shoulder the dual responsibilities of breadwinner and educator, they strive to instill religious values with full awareness and commitment. The parenting model they employ tends to combine an authoritative approach with firm rules and role models, along with targeted permissiveness, which allows children to choose additional religious activities according to their interests. This strategy is tailored to each family's circumstances, utilizing small moments to convey religious messages and making worship a part of their daily routine.

Despite limited time, energy, and social support, single fathers persist. They seek creative solutions, such as entrusting their children to local Quranic teachers or entrusting them to relatives, to ensure that religious education continues. Thus, the success of religious education in single-father families depends not only on the father himself, but also on the synergy between discipline, warmth, environmental support, and consistent role modeling. This story demonstrates that limitations are not an absolute barrier to raising children with a strong religious foundation as long as there is determination, creativity, and support from the surrounding environment.

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