

The Impact of Busy Work on Parents' Role in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the extent to which work affects parents' contribution to children's development at home. Family life has undergone many changes, one of which is the increasing number of parents who both work, so their time to be involved in children's learning activities at home and at school is limited. This study involved three parents of young children (4-5 years old) in Central Island who work as farmers, traders and field labourers. They were purposively selected because they have busy jobs, making it relevant to uncover the influence of work on their role in children's education. Participants were willing to be interviewed and observed to explore their experiences of assisting children in the midst of their busy lives. This research used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data collection techniques were interviews, observation and documentation, and data analysis was done descriptively and qualitatively. The results show that workload affects parents' participation in their children's education process. For example, farmers have limited time because they have to adjust to the season and weather, traders lose morning time due to trading, and field workers experience physical fatigue after work. This research is expected to provide an understanding of the impact of work activities on parental contributions and offer alternatives so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's education.

Key Word:

Parents, occupational demands, early childhood

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Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is a very important early stage in a child's development. In this period, children experience rapid growth in physical, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects (Adolph, 2024). In this stage, the involvement of parents is very instrumental in shaping the child's personality and character. Parents act as the first and main educators who are expected to provide role models, mentoring, and intensive emotional attention.

However, in the dynamics of modern life, the family structure has shifted. Many parents are both working, so direct involvement in children's learning activities is limited. This condition has consequences for the quality of the relationship between parents and children, including in terms of character education, emotional control, and the habituation of social values that should be instilled early on.

The lack of parental involvement in the early childhood education process often leads to the burden of nurturing and character building shifting entirely to educators in PAUD units. In practice, teachers have limited time, high learner ratios, and administrative responsibilities that take up their focus, limiting their ability to provide individualised developmental stimulation.

This condition has the potential to prevent the optimisation of children's growth. children's development, especially in the social-emotional aspects that really need emotional involvement from the closest people, parents. The absence of parents in accompanying children's development also has implications for the low habituation of the values of discipline, independence, and social adaptability. Thus, active participation of parents in early childhood education cannot be considered as a complementary role but as a central element that supports the success of the education process holistically.

Mead explains that each individual performs interrelated social roles, including the role of parent. When this role is disrupted by work pressures, the parenting function is reduced (Mead, 1934). This is in line with (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) which states that an imbalance between work and family life can lead to role conflict, which has an impact on parental involvement in childcare. In

addition, (Ormrod, 2008) emphasises the importance of consistent emotional support from parents so that children can grow up in a safe and psychologically positive environment.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between parental employment and early childhood development. For example, (Agustina et al., 2022) found that low parental involvement due to workload can affect children's social emotions. Research by (Yuwanita Sari Agustin, 2022) showed that parenting, especially democratic parenting, has a significant effect on early childhood social and emotional development. Children raised in a nurturing environment that is open, warm, and still provides boundaries tend to have better social-emotional abilities than children who are raised in an authoritarian or overly liberating manner.

However, most previous studies have highlighted the impact of parental work in terms of generalisations of quantitative data; not many have explored in depth parents' individual experiences and adaptive strategies in facing these challenges. The researcher seeks to explore qualitatively and contextually how busy work impacts parents' roles in early childhood education by exploring the strategies used to stay involved despite time constraints.

This research is important to conduct because it provides a real picture of parents' struggles in balancing work demands and parenting responsibilities. The results are expected to not only contribute to the development of family education theory but also offer alternative practical solutions that can be applied in real life.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The choice of this approach is based on the research objective, which is to deeply understand the phenomenon of parents' participation in early childhood education influenced by busy work. Through case studies, researchers can describe the social context as a whole and obtain information from the real experiences of research subjects.

The subjects in this study were children aged 4-5 years enrolled in PAUD

institutions in the Central Island area, as well as the parents of these children. This area was chosen because most of the people work in the informal sector, such as agriculture, trade, and field labour, which has a busy and erratic work pattern. The reason for selecting these subjects is because they represent the real conditions of time constraints that impact involvement in children's education.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with several parents to explore their perceptions of the relationship between their busy work schedules and their role as educators at home. In addition, observation was used to directly observe the interaction between parents and children in daily activities, such as accompanying learning or joint routines. Meanwhile, the documentation technique focused on supporting data, such as communication records with schools, parents' work schedules and other documents that show their involvement in their children's education.

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Each data point from interviews, observations, and documentation was grouped into certain themes, such as time constraints, forms of involvement, and strategies used by parents. The data was then coded and analysed based on these categories so as to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the role of parents in educating children in the midst of busy work.

To ensure the validity of the data, researchers applied source and technique triangulation techniques. Information from interviews was compared with the results of observations and documents obtained so that their accuracy could be confirmed. This is important so that the data presented truly represents the conditions in the field and can be scientifically accounted for.

Results and Discussion

The results show that parents' busy work has a significant effect on their participation in early childhood education. This is in line with social role theory (Mead, 1934), which states that individuals have multiple roles in social life. In this

context, parents as workers as well as the main educators of their children often experience role conflicts when their time and energy are more consumed for work than for their children.

For example, for informants who work as farmers, the season and weather are factors that determine the length of working hours. These conditions lead to a lack of time for quality interactions with children. However, they try to stay involved by involving their children in farming activities. This strategy is in line with (Santrock, 2019) view that learning does not only occur in the classroom but can also take place through meaningful direct experiences in daily life.

The parents who are trading face constraints on the morning time that should be used to assist their children. They only have time after noon, which is often already filled with tired or other homework. This condition indicates an imbalance between the world of work and family roles, as expressed by (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), who emphasised that an imbalance between work and family roles can trigger role conflict and reduce participation in childcare.

Meanwhile, farm labourers who have fixed working hours from their employers face different challenges due to the lack of time flexibility. However, they still try to establish emotional bonds with their children through simple activities at home. This supports the finding (UNICEF, 2017), that the quality of interaction between parents and children is much more important than the quantity of time available.

This is reinforced by research (Agustina, 2021) which shows that parental employment has a direct relationship with children's emotional development. The busier the parents, the lower their opportunity to provide emotional stimulation. Research (Khairunnisa, 2022) also confirms that parents' busyness can result in delays in children's social-emotional development, especially if there is no adequate alternative care.

On the other hand, (Yuwanita Sari Agustin, 2022) showed that parenting patterns, especially those that are democratic, have a significant effect on the social and emotional development of early childhood. Children raised in a nurturing environment that is welcoming and warm and still provides boundaries tend to

have better social-emotional skills than children who are raised in an authoritarian or overly liberating manner.

The strategies employed by the parents in this study, such as creating daily routines, establishing communication before bedtime, and involving children in homework or farm work, show that despite high workloads, parenting roles can still be carried out effectively if done with awareness and consistency.

Thus, the results of this study strengthen and expand the understanding of the importance of parents' role in children's education and support previous theories and research results that highlight the impact of busy work on early childhood development. The research also emphasises the importance of social support systems and policies that enable parents to fulfil their parenting roles despite the demands of work.

Conclusion

The results show that parents' busy work schedules have a significant impact on their involvement in early childhood education. Limited time, physical tiredness and work pressure are the main obstacles that reduce the intensity of parents' interactions with their children. However, parents still try to fulfil their roles by implementing adaptive strategies, such as building emotional communication before bedtime, involving children in daily activities and creating simple routines that can strengthen closeness.

This research confirms that while time with children may be limited, the quality of that time can still contribute greatly to children's emotional and educational development. Therefore, it is important for parents to realise that their involvement does not necessarily depend on the length of time but on the quality of attention, affection and consistency in assisting their children.

In addition, support from the social environment and family-friendly policies are important aspects that need to be strengthened so that the role of parents in education is not displaced by workloads. Despite their busy schedules, parents still try to be involved in their children's lives and education. Some of the strategies applied include maintaining intensive communication, forming special habits such as talking before

bedtime, and involving children in work activities as part of informal education.

Thus, parents who have heavy work responsibilities still need to find ways to give their children the attention, love and guidance they deserve. Although the time available is limited, quality moments of togetherness can have a major positive impact on children's development, both emotionally and educationally.

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