

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In accordance with the objectives of this research, the researcher aims to understand the existing literature on the concept of parenting, the experiences of single father and their coping mechanism. The researcher had divided the literature into eight sections. The first section is about the concept of parenting. The second section is parenting in Malaysian context. The third section is parenting in Islamic perspective. The fourth section is the role of single father followed by single father-child relationship, coping strategies and support system for single father.

2.2 The Concept of Parenting

Parenting involves the activities caretakers engage in for their children's benefit, which include nurturance (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), discipline (Dufur et al, 2010) and provision of food, shelter, and healthcare (Wight, Chau, & Aratani, 2011). Hamner and Turner (1996) had described that parenting means the role performed by a person that possesses parental status in order to suitably and positively enhances development in every aspect of their child's life.

Meanwhile, according to Darling and Steinberg (1993), parenting is the main method used by parents for socializing and interacting with children. In terms of task and function, parenting is the task of parents in raising their children. It is the main task of parents that provide care for a child or children and it involves responsibility for their wellbeing (Helseth & Ulfsaet, 2005). This task occurs in the everyday parental

behaviors with their children based on parents' cognition, emotion, attributions and attitudes and values (Harden, 2005).

Rutter (1985) emphasizes that parenting is predominantly viewed as a task related to the socialization or education of children which includes dimensions of sensitivity to a child's needs, social communication and emotional expressiveness and disciplinary control. It is one of the complicating, challenging, and potentially rewarding tasks that a family or an individual can perform. It is also a learned task, whereby an individual provides for the safety and physical and emotional well-being of a child.

These parental tasks include sharing customs and traditions, fostering skills for economic survival, promoting interpersonal and communication skills and helping children become self-regulatory, productive and self-actualized (Eldrige, 2002). It is also a parental functioning in a family (McNeill, 2004), focusing on caring the child and socializing (Holmbeck, Paikoff & Brooks-Gun, 1995).

In particular, parenting is the tasks and roles that parents might be expected to perform regarding a child or children (Gage, Everett & Bullock, 2006). Parenting is a complex activity that includes many specific behaviors of parents or people that work individually and together to influence child.

2.3 Parenting in Malaysian Context

Parenting in the Malaysian context, like in any culture, is influenced by a combination of traditional values, modern influences, and cultural diversity. Malaysia is a multicultural country with a diverse population, including Malays, Chinese, Indians and various indigenous groups, each with their unique customs and practices. As a result, parenting styles may vary across different communities and regions in Malaysia.

However, there are some general aspects that are commonly observed in Malaysian

parenting which are family-centric, respect for elders, discipline and obedience, academic achievement, gender roles, religion and spirituality, technology and media, parental involvement and encouragement of creativity and artistic expression.

Family-centric refers to parenting as a collective responsibility, this is because Malaysian culture views family as a central role and each member of the family especially the elders and extended family often play significant roles in raising and caring for children as a support towards the parents. Parenting in Malaysian culture emphasizes on respecting older people and authoritative figures as they are viewed as someone who have more experience, knowledge and wisdom in life. Furthermore, Malaysian parents also value discipline and obedience in their children. They believe that instilling a sense of respect for authority and adherence to rules and traditions is crucial for a child's upbringing.

Moreover, Malaysian culture also perceives education as important. Thus, parents have a strong emphasis on academic achievement. They often encourage their children to excel in school and pursue higher education for better future opportunities. Other than that, traditional gender roles can still be influential in Malaysian families where boys and girls are raised with different expectations and responsibilities.

On the other hand, since Malaysia has a diverse multiracial population, Malaysia is also a country of multi-religion. Hence, religion plays a significant role in Malaysian society, and many families incorporate teachings and practices into their parenting approach. Next is technology and media influence towards parenting. These rapid changes in this area have become increasingly prominent in Malaysian children's lives which have caused advantages and disadvantages for parents especially in balancing the usage of technology and media as a medium of education while managing children's screen time and exposure.

For Malaysian, parental involvement in a child's life is valued, especially in their education and extracurricular activities. Finally, many Malaysian parents also encourage their children to explore creative and artistic pursuits such as arts, traditional music, dance and any modern creative endeavours.

In conclusion, it is important to understand that with globalization and exposure to diverse cultures, there is an ongoing shift in parenting approaches in Malaysia. Younger generations of parents may adopt more modern and individualistic parenting styles, emphasizing open communication, emotional support and a more focus on the child's individuality and personal development. Overall, parenting in Malaysia is a blend of traditional values, cultural diversity, and modern influences that continue to evolve with the changing times.

2.4 Islamic Perspective on Parenting

Parenting in Islamic perspective is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH (Farooq, 2023). Islam places a significant emphasis on the responsibilities of parents and the importance of nurturing and raising children in a righteous and compassionate manner. Here are some key aspects of parenting in Islam:

First, Islam views children as a blessing. In Islam, children are seen as a gift and blessing from Allah (God). Parents are encouraged to be grateful for their children and to treat them with love and kindness (Md Rafi, 2021).

Second, Islam sees parenting as a form of responsibility and accountability for the parent. Parents are considered the primary caretakers and educators of their children. They have a significant responsibility to provide for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. On the Day of Judgment, parents will be held accountable for their

parenting and how they raised their children. Allah SWT had mentioned in the Noble Quran, Surah At-Tahrim verse 6.

“O you, who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones...” [Qur’an, 66:6]

Third, in Islam, parent is seen as the medium of education and act as the example for their children. For example, Rasulullah PBUH had commanded the parents to educate their kids to perform prayers. Rasulullah PBUH taught them to teach and instruct their kids to pray when they reach seven years old and to hit them with non-injuring hits (just as a lesson) when they reach 10 years old. This is as stated in the hadith narrated by Abu Daud, where the Prophet PBUH said:

“Command your children to pray when they become seven years old, and beat them for it (prayer) when they become ten years old; and arrange their beds (to sleep) separately.” Sunan Abi Dawud (490)

Hadith above shows that parent has the obligation and responsibility to educate children and shape their character based on religious teaching. The best way to teach is through practical example. This includes demonstrating honesty, kindness, patience, and other virtuous traits for children to emulate.

Fourth, parent has the responsibility to instil faith. Parents are responsible for teaching their children about Islam, its beliefs, values, and practices. This involves regular prayers, reading the Quran, and explaining the teachings of Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad PBUH once said in a hadith:

“Every single child is born upon the fitrah, and then his parents may make him into a Jew or Christian or Magian. Similarly, animals are born unbranded. Have you ever found an animal born branded until you brand it yourselves?” (Sahih Bukhari).

The hadith above illustrate the important role in instilling beliefs and faith of the children.

Fifth, Islamic teaching also emphasis on discipline with love and mercy. While discipline is necessary, it should be done with love and mercy. Islam prohibits physical abuse or harsh punishment. Instead, gentle admonition and positive reinforcement are encouraged to guide children towards good behaviour (Salleh, 2009).

Sixth, parent’s responsibility is to provide for the family (Manap & Baba, 2016). Islam places the responsibility of providing for the family primarily on the father. Seventh, is respect and kindness. Islam emphasizes treating children with respect and kindness. Avoiding harsh words or undue criticism helps build a strong emotional bond between parents and their children. The Prophet s.a.w said,

“Indeed, among the believers with the most complete faith is the one who is the best in conduct and the most kind to his family.” (Sunan At-Tirmizi)

Seventh is du’a (supplication). Manap and Baba (2016) stated that parents are encouraged to pray for their children's well-being, success, and righteousness. Making sincere supplications for their children's guidance and protection is highly regarded in Islam.

Eight is gender equality. Islam emphasizes the equal treatment of boys and girls. Both are entitled to love, care, and education. The Prophet Muhammad set an example by treating his daughters with love and respect (Md Rafi, 2021).

Ninth, maintaining balance. Islam advocates for a balanced approach to parenting. While fulfilling children's needs is essential, parents are encouraged not to indulge them excessively, as this can lead to negative consequences (Tahir, 2022).

Tenth, it is parent role to encourage independence. As children grow older, parents should gradually encourage their independence, decision-making, and sense of responsibility. This helps them become self-reliant and confident individuals (Bensaid, 2021).

In summary, parenting in Islam involves nurturing and guiding children with love, compassion, and a strong foundation of faith. Islam emphasizes the importance of family bonds, fostering a positive environment, and raising children to be righteous, responsible, and compassionate individuals.

2.5 Parenting Stress on Single Father

During the stage of parenting, parents often felt stressful. Parental stress is a special kind of stress that develops when a parent feels that the duties of parenting exceed his or her capacity to handle them. In its simplest definition, parenting stress is the experience of distress or discomfort that results from demands associated with the role of parenting (Deater-Deckard, 1998).

The predominant theory for explaining parental stress separates it into two primary categories: a kid domain that results directly from a child's traits for example, child with problematic behaviour and a parent domain that is more influenced by parental functioning. (Abidin, 1995). More so than other types of stress, parental stress

is associated with parenting practices (Abidin, 1995). Extreme parenting stress may make it harder for parents to put support programmes in place for their kids (Kazdin, 1995). High levels of parental stress can affect kids' adjustment in a number of ways, one of which is by making it harder for parents to employ the best parenting techniques (Whiteside-Mansell, Ayoub, McKelvey, Faldowski, Hart & Shears (2007).

Parenthood can become very stressful to adults as the parent needs to take care and be responsible for another individual (Ponnet, Mortelmans, Wouters, Leeuwen, Bastaitis & Pasteels, 2013). However, single parents need to fulfil these responsibilities alone without a partner to rely on. Most of the research, focus their studies on the experiences of single mother and how they cope with it, single father is also included in the research (Ceglowski, Shears & Furman, 2010).

Research findings detail the struggles single parents experience when they are raising their children alone, indicating that single parents are responsible for meeting all of the child's needs alone, causing increased stress (Wight et al., 2011). The single parent is responsible for increasing role demands, including childcare (Ceglowski et al., 2010), household chores (Wade, Veldhuizen & Cairney, 2011), and financial provision (Bronte-Tinkew et al., 2010).

While single fathers are similar to single mothers in that they experience struggles that can affect their ability to care for their children, their experiences may be different because of a change in role demands and expectations. These role demands may cause role strain, which occurs when fathers have to complete all caring and household tasks with no help from the mother.

Fathers also express concerns about child development (Wilson & Prior, 2010), dealing with their children's emotions (Haire & McGeorge, 2012), and housework (Wade et al., 2011), which is a change in their role demand. While role strain can be

negative, research also details positive feedback from single fathers when assessing this stress. Troilo and Coleman (2012) note that fathers believe they should physically be involved in their children's lives to foster a positive father-child relationship.

2.6 The Role of Single Father

Men, like women, who become first time parents have to adapt to the changes of having to care for another human being. Some fathers accept the role of fatherhood as an unconditional part of their life (Lemay et al., 2010), becoming involved in caring for their children. Single fathers are important to the rearing of their children (Fagan & Kaufman, 2014), but they do face many challenges when raising their children independently. Single fathers can face additional stressors when they have to work to disprove society's stereotypes that they will run away from their responsibilities solely on the basis that they are males (Threlfall, Seay & Kohl, 2013).

With the extensive amount of research highlighting the role of single mothers, it is understandable why society questions the ability and role of single fathers in their children's upbringings. Fathers taking on the part of the sole provider are beginning to change society's perceptions that they are incapable of caring for their children (Flood, 2012). They are also proving that their presence in their children's lives is important and meaningful (Jackson, Preston & Thomas, 2013).

Currently, research highlights how fathers can help reduce risky behavior in adolescents (Ulveseter et al, 2010), improve behavioral concerns in children of all ages (Choi & Pyun, 2014), and contribute to healthy psychological development within children (Wilson & Prior, 2010). Bjarnason, Bendtsen, Amarson, Borup, Iannotti, Lofstedt and Niclasen (2012) add that children's economic status is highly dependent on their father's financial involvement, which is often part of child support. Research

supports the notion that the father-child relationship is important because it encompasses emotional support (Jackson et al., 2013), financial support (Bronter-Tinkew et al., 2010), and physical support to the child (Haire & McGeorge, 2012). Flood (2012) adds that fathers contribute to their children's social well-being.

2.7 Father- Child Relationship

Craig (2006) revealed that mothers do more interactive care than fathers, but it is a lower proportion of their total time in childcare. Therefore, fathers enjoy relatively more play and talking time with their children than mothers do. As a result of different parenting behaviours among both single-mothers and single fathers some studies found distinct differences in the effect of mothering and fathering on developmental outcome (Tamis- LeMonda, Shannon, Cabrera, & Lamb, 2004) and some studies found few differences (Davidov & Grusec, 2006).

The father-child relationship is a package that includes behavioral (Jackson et al., 2013), emotional (Flood, 2012), financial (Lawson 2012), and physical components (Ceglowski et al., 2010) that the father provides to the child. Wade et al. (2011) add that single fathers also complete housework (Bronter-Tinkew et al., 2010), provide childcare (Parker & Wang, 2013), and engage in positive activities and behaviors with their children (Fagan & Kaufman, 2014).

Recent study by Flouri and Buchanan (2003) revealed that adolescents living with their fathers had greater emotional intelligence, mental well-being, self-esteem, and academic achievement. On the other hand, adolescents in mothers-headed home generally have better peer relationship. Fathers are said to contribute to their adolescents' emotional development by providing autonomy. Dudak (2012) explained that "fathers

are aware of their role in the child's life and of the necessity to improve their knowledge not only to regain custody but also to develop their parental competence".

Another interesting aspect of the father-child relationship is some of the contributing factors on why fathers engage in their children's lives. Employment and education were two common factors associated with a father's involvement with their children (Rienks, Wadsworth, Markman, Einhorn, & Etter, 2014). Parker and Wang (2013) found that 46% of the fathers in their study felt they did not spend enough time with their children because of their work schedules. Research also notes that employed fathers and those who have a higher education tend to be more involved with their children (Lawson, 2012). Other factors influencing the father-child relationship include: age (Lemay et al., 2010), ethnicity (Rochlen, McKelley & Whittaker, 2010), and social support (Wade et al., 2011).

2.8 Coping Strategies for Parenting Stress

The use of religion and acceptance and positive reframing were identified to be the most common coping skills used by single parents. This is supported by the fact that almost half of the single parents (46.9% of single fathers and 47.5% of single mothers) in this study indicated they have been praying and remembering God when they were under stress situation. The percentages of single fathers who revealed that they have been looking for something good in what is happening or what is called as positive reframing was 41.9% whereas for single mothers, the percentages was 30.7%. This is followed by the use of active coping (Siti Rafiah & Sakinah, 2013).

Rafiah and Sakinah (2013) reported through their study that coping strategies can be seen in two forms i.e., the utilization of internal and external support systems accessible to them. The internal support can come mainly from members and friends in

their neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the external support came from the existing social support system such as government agencies, welfare institutions and community networks, individuals, experts as well as counselling services through online and conventional counselling process.

2.9 Support system

The relationship fathers have with other individuals can also affect how they interact and deal with their children (Umberson, Pudrovska & Reczek, 2010). For instance, research has identified social (Wade et al., 2011) and family (Umberson et al., 2010) support as a key help for fathers, because these supports may provide emotional support to the father.

This emotional support can be important in helping minimize the levels of stress single father's experience, which McCubbin and Figley (2014) note this is a concern for fathers with minimal support. Jackson et al. (2010) note that this social or emotional support can help minimize stress levels. However, fathers who want to raise their children on their own do not necessarily feel the need to rely on family members for support. Some fathers experience a decrease in social activities and lose some their social support because they make the decision to change their past behavior (Lemay et al., 2010).

As part of the adjustment to being a single father, some men minimize their contact with friends, limit social activities, and spend more time with their children (Lemay et al., 2010). While it is important for fathers to spend time with their children, social support can also help single parents care for their children and decreasing the amount of time some fathers spend with their friends can cause additional stress to the family. Support is effective in helping single parents deal with stress (Wade et al., 2011).

2.10 Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher already explains literature reviews of the study that consist of a collection of literature reviews that cover the aspect of parenting, parental stress, the role of single father, single father-child relationship, coping strategies and support system for the single father.

