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Attitude difference between fathers and mothers toward fathers involvement in child rearing activities among couples with 0-12 months old babies. Community based study in a primary health care setting

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Abstract

Parents need to be active in child rearing activities from the beginning of the baby's life. So far, child rearing activities are more related to mothers rather than fathers. That is why fathers are not involved in baby rearing activities. Many factors influence father involvement in child rearing activities, one of these factors is the mother's attitude toward father involvement. This research will investigate the differences of attitude between fathers and mothers toward father involvement in child rearing activities among couples with 0-12 month old babies. This is a community based study and data were collected in a primary health care setting. There are 102 data pairs of fathers and mothers. Results indicated that fathers' attitude toward child rearing is significantly influenced by their spouses' attitude. It means if mothers have a positive attitude toward father involvement, fathers will also have a positive attitude. And if mothers have a negative attitude toward father's involvement in child rearing activities, fathers will have a negative attitude. This research also found that mothers had a more positive attitude toward father involvement rather than father. The reason why fathers have lower attitude compared to mothers is because of their lack of confidence and lack of positive feedback in child rearing activities. Higher involvement in child rearing among fathers should be encouraged through their spouses.

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1. Introduction

Parents have responsibility to taking care of their children since the beginning of children's life. However, in some communities, responsibility to rearing children is only associated with mothers, especially on children's first year of life (Deutsch, 2001). Father role in parenting is considered unusual, therefore father only a substitute if the mother is not present (Deutsch, 2001). Furthermore, father recognized as a forgotten contributor in child development (Lamb, Grossman et al, 2002).

Father involvement in child rearing activities indeed has a positive impact on child development. Children become easygoing (Dagun, 2002) and more obedient towards rule than other kids whom the father is not present (Hoffman, 1971; Dagun 2002). Moreover, father involvement also has a positive impact on mothers. A father who helps mothers toward child rearing activities tend to be a good friend for mother and committed to fulfill a mother's need (Belsky et al, 1995; Seifert & Hoffnung, 1997). On the other hand by showing cooperation on parenting, father will have a good quality time with mother (Belsky et al, 1995; Seifert & Hoffnung, 1997).

Positive effects of father involvement promote a new perspective of father role. Consequently, a concept of a good father is a father who involves in child rearing activities (Lupton & Barclay, 1997; Deutsch 2001). A Father who can share a responsibility with mother by providing, protecting and caregiving also considered as a good father (Furstenberg, 1988; Marsiglio, 1995; Pleck & Pleck, 1997; Fox et al., 2000). These new perspectives of father influence a new form of cooperation in the family especially on rearing children (Ehrenberg et al., 2001). Cooperation on child rearing activities in fact have a positive effect on children. Good cooperation between parents by showing positive interaction will influence children to have secure attachments to their parent (Caldera & Lindsey, 2006).

Cooperation on child rearing activities is an ideal image of parenting, nevertheless it is difficult to implement. For instance, cooperation is harder when mother believes that mother are more capable to rearing a child than the father (Boivin et al., 2005; Gilmore & Cuskelly, 2009; Tremblay and Pierce, 2011). Another theory from Lamb (1986; Beitel & Parke, 1998) stated that mother has gatekeeping role, which mother determine to accommodate or to prevent father to involve in child rearing activities. Although there are several theories concerning about father and mother's attitude toward father involvement, the explanation about these relationships have not been comprehensively tested, especially in Indonesia.

This present study focus on the question of whether there is an attitude difference between fathers and mothers toward fathers' involvement in child rearing activities among couples with 0-12 months old babies. Furthermore, this study will explore more about fathers and mothers's attitude toward several child rearing activities during children's first year of life. The primary hypothesis examined in this study was there is a significant difference on fathers and mothers attitude towards fathers' involvement in child rearing activities. This research will enrich literature about father involvement in Indonesia. Moreover, intervention from this study will promote awareness and knowledge about father involvement in Indonesia.

2. Methods

2.1. Participant

The participants in the study were 102 married couples with 0-12 months baby. The Participant was recruited in primary health care (Puskesmas) in South Jakarta. The data collected by incidental sampling method because there are no exact data regarding patient who come to primary health care. There were 46 baby boys and 57 baby girls from 1 to 11 months of age ($M = 4.25$ months). 41 of the babies in the study were firstborns, the remaining had one or more siblings. There were 93 mothers and 89 fathers on young adulthood stage (21-40 years old). Most of the participants' background of education was in secondary education. 87 mothers were housewives and the remaining were working.

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