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## CHILDCARE BY SURROGATE PARENTS IN CIMAJA

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### Abstract

Along with the increasing needs of life, child care has undergone changes due to the role of mothers who work abroad as female workers. This paper describes childcare carried out by surrogate parents while the mother works abroad. The survey method was carried out on 80 surrogate parents from Cirebon Majalengka (Cimaja), West Java, Indonesia who were selected to participate in this research. Based on attachment theory, the findings of this research explain the lack of attention of substitute parents (caregivers) to fulfilling a healthy and balanced diet, the child's communication with the mother as a migrant worker is less in-depth, there is a change in the child's social attitudes after the mother works abroad. These findings also show that substitute parents have various ways of dealing with one of the obstacles in early childhood care.

**Keywords:** *Childcare, Substitute Parents, Indonesian Workers*

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### INTRODUCTION

A child's development is greatly influenced by the education and experience he receives, especially in the first years of his life (early childhood). This education can be obtained formally (school) or informally anywhere. One of the smallest institutions is the first ward of the child, the family. The family is the

earliest environment that can shape a child's disposition, disposition, and behavior. A child can be good or bad because the appearance of parents in the family is a prime example of a child (Lestari et al., 2018). A mother who became the first center of education for her children, at the same time in the midst of the economic squeeze of her family, not a few mothers are willing to leave their children and families to migrate abroad to become migrant workers in a short time because they are bound by work contracts. This makes some Indonesian women the backbone of the family replacing the role of a father. On the one hand, a mother thinks about improving her family's economy. However, on the other hand, his departure abroad raises opportunities for problems, especially in the growth and development of the children he left behind (Wicaksana, 2016). Based on a World Bank report, Indonesia supplied 18% of the second-largest migrant workforce in ASEAN in 2015. The country with the largest list of workers is Myanmar, with 33% ranking first. While Malaysia ranks third with a percentage of 17% (Kontan.co.id, 2017). At present, even in previous times, many Indonesian female workers prefer to work abroad as domestic helpers. This indicates that most Indonesians choose to go to work abroad in the hope of earning a high income and improving the family economy. It does not rule out the possibility of this happening to women, especially mothers who choose to complain about their fate rather than educating their children at an early age. This happens for one reason or another while considering the good and bad before deciding to go to work as a TKI / TKW. So that makes a father a temporary single parent for the next few years. Acting as a father as well as a mother when taking care of his child. Mothers decide not only because they do not love their children, but economic demands that are very urgent and difficult to meet in daily life and lack of income or the condition of the father as the backbone who does not have a permanent job.

Family (parent) education is the most important education in a child's life. The impact of parenting applied by grandparents to children who have TKI / TKW parents can cause problems in aspects of child development. Especially when children are active at school, aspects of child development are not achieved optimally when learning in class, as well as in everyday life. Different types of parenting have good and bad sides to a child's behavior. According to Baumrind (1991), there are types of childcare including authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and ignorant (Sutisna, 2012). The care given by grandparents tends to spoil their grandchildren, grant all children's requests, and grandparents rarely scold children. As a result, this parenting makes children a spoiled and disobedient person to parents (Rahmaningrum & Fauziah, 2020).

Parenting or *parenting* is a term that refers to something done by parents. While the attitude or actions of parents directed at their children are referred to as parenting. Parenting is a process and all activities ranging from giving birth, nurturing/caring, maintaining, and growing every process of growth and development of children are carried out by parents. In this case, parents must accompany and accompany their children through the process of life from childhood to adulthood (Keluargamuslim.org, 2023). Parenting is the interaction between children and their parents, namely how parents behave in educating and teaching values/norms, giving attention and affection to children, and showing good attitudes so that they can be an example for their children (Theresia, 2009). The family is a place for children to learn things related to religious norms, values, and customs used in society. Parenting can be defined as a pattern of behavior applied by parents to their children through direct or indirect interactions, both through interactions that help or hinder children in all exploratory activities and commitment to achieving self-identity status (Dr. Hj. Ulfiah, 2016). Parenting is closely related to the ability of the family or community to attract attention, time, and support to get the physical, mental, and social development of growing children (Rakhmawati, 2015). Parenting patterns are not right, it will have an impact on children's behavior patterns. Especially if the child imitates the behavior of people outside the home who tend to be negative. As much as possible people around children, should show good behavior and words to avoid negative impacts on children. In this case, the author classifies several concepts of parenting patterns in 3 types of families, namely large families, nuclear families, and TKW families as follows:

### **1) Parenting in Large Families**

A large family includes two or more family units. For example, an extended family may consist of a household in which a grandparent lives with his married child who has a daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Although grandparents are the most common extension, extended families can also include aunts, uncles, or cousins. For members of some ethnic groups, the extended family plays a very important role (Suharto & Nurwati, 2018). The role of grandparents towards their grandchildren varies greatly, regardless of the child's family situation. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren (early childhood) is an important factor in the successful implementation of the role of grandparents in child care in the extended family. Because grandparents are more likely to spoil their grandchildren when parenting (Ika Haryani, 2021).

### **2) Childcare in the Nuclear Family**

Childcare in the nuclear family is the most ideal childcare. Where children are nurtured and educated by complete parents, namely father, and mother without interference from others. According to Hoang and Yeoh: 2011 in (Wulan et al., 2018) argues that the husband or father has an instrumental role (*instrument role*) which functions as a liaison between the family and the outside community and provides protection and primary family needs. Mothers have an expressive role (*expressive role*) which is to help strengthen relationships, provide emotional support, and ensure smooth household affairs.

### **3) Child Care in TKW (Surrogate Parents) Families**

Unlike childcare in the nuclear family, childcare in TKW families often makes the father figure a person who has a double duty, namely the duty as a father as well as a mother. Fathers are required to be able to replace all the roles of mothers while the mother is still working abroad, such as preparing food, preparing school needs, dropping off school, and accompanying children to sleep to take treatment to the doctor if the child is sick. Not a few mothers entrust child care to their parents, namely the child's grandparents or siblings (uncle-aunt). The function of a father is to meet the primary needs of children, guide and direct children to know the outside world and society, earn a living for the family, teach children about God and educate them in religious teachings, take a leadership role in the family, and be responsible for the discipline of family members (Harmaini, Vivik Shofiah, 2000). To support the optimal process of child growth and development, parents should be expected to pay attention to the basic needs of children from an early age. The basic needs of the child are first and foremost. The basic needs of children that must be met as stated by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemenkes RI) and the Directorate General of Public Health (Dirjen Kesmas), consist of 3 types, namely nurturing, loving, and honing (Rahayu & Munastiwi, 2019).

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study used a quantitative approach with survey research methods. According to Sofian Effendi and Tukiran in their book entitled "Survey Research Methods" (2012), survey research methods are research methods that take samples from one population using questionnaires as the main data collection tool (Effendi, Sofian, 2017). Morissan suggests that survey research is the most frequently used method in the world of research in various disciplines, especially in the social/social field (Morissan, 2012). The reason the authors used this method was to collect informational data from a large population using a relatively small sample. This research is located in 2 districts, namely Cirebon and Majalengka. The reasons for choosing the place include: 1) The number of women working as migrant workers is 60% of the total population; 2) The area is

famous on social media as a TKW village. This can be seen from the <https://www.detik.com/jabar/berita/d-6450876/mengenal-kampung-tkw-yang-ada-di-majalengka> link (Erick Disy Darmawan, 2022); 3) 80% of migrant workers in the area are mothers who have early childhood. Data collection techniques are techniques of collecting data from one or more predetermined data sources. Data collection that has been carried out in this study is interviews, observations, and documentation. The interviews used in this study were semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is an interview that is conducted more freely than a structured interview. This method aims to find problems more openly where respondents invited to interviews are asked to express their opinions and ideas (Sugiyono, 2016). According to Masayu Rosidah, observation is a data collection technique directly into the field of the object under study (Rosidah, 2021). In this case, researchers observed one-day early childhood care activities carried out by surrogate parents in migrant worker families. In addition, researchers used documentation of interview recordings and photographs to strengthen the research process. According to Suharsimi Arikunto, the documentation method is a way to find information about problems in the form of notes, books, reports, newspapers, writings, magazines, meeting minutes, agendas, and photos of activities. complete data from interviews and observations (Arikunto, 2010).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1) Breakfast Habits in Children**

Breakfast habits in children are the most important thing to do. There are many benefits that can be obtained through breakfast as one of them can increase children's concentration during the learning process so as to make children more active and excited while attending school. And there are many more benefits that can be obtained through breakfast. The results of the study explained that 31 out of 40 participants answered that the children they cared for had the habit of having breakfast every morning or about 77% of the total participants.

#### **a) Children's Favorite Food**

Children's favorite food menu is a favorite menu for children that is consumed every day by children. Or the food menu that the child repeatedly eats because he likes it very much. From the results of the interview, many mentioned several daily children's food menus such as rice with eggs, rice with side dishes (tempeh, tofu, fried chicken, fish, and meat) with vegetables, porridge, duck rice, fried rice, noodles, and others. Based on the results of research in the field, it was explained that 15 children chose egg rice as their favorite food, 12 children chose rice with side dishes and vegetables as their favorite food, while 13 other children

chose other menus or potluck food that had been cooked or bought on that day by their caregivers.

b) Children's Favorite Snacks

Jajanan is food and drinks served in certain packaging sold by street vendors on the roadside or in stalls and sold in large quantities and attractive packaging and varied flavors to attract buyers. The results explained that the order of snacks most liked by children was chiki as much as 37%, milk as much as 23%, candy as much as 17%, and chocolate and ice cream respectively as much as 13% and 10%. According to Rusilanti et al (2015) (in (Rahayu & Munastiwi, 2019), healthy food is food that has a balanced nutritional content. In other words, foods that contain a daily composition of nutrients whose amount is in accordance with the body's needs such as carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, proteins, water, and minerals to prevent malnutrition problems. Based on the results of the study, 15 caregivers in Cirebon and Majalengka provided daily food menus to children with egg rice menus because the menu was the child's favorite food. The caregivers who provide children's food menus with rice, side dishes, and vegetables are only 12 caregivers. The remaining 13 caregivers provided potluck meals and menus bought or cooked that day at home on the grounds that their children were not fussy about eating whatever their children still wanted. This indicates the lack of knowledge of surrogate parents regarding a healthy menu of balanced nutrition according to the basic needs of children, namely physical and biological needs (foster care). Just because children are not picky when it comes to food, it is appropriate for surrogate parents or caregivers to pay attention to the nutritional needs of children and provide menus that contain balanced nutrition that can stimulate optimal physical and brain growth and development.

Moreover, early childhood is in a period of rapid growth and development. Many benefits will be obtained if the balanced nutritional needs of children are met, such as one of them can increase children's concentration in learning (Rahayu & Munastiwi, 2019). In addition to the child's unbalanced diet, children are given children's favorite snacks every day in the hope that children are not fussy, children become obedient after being given their favorite snacks. Such as chili / snacks (snacks), chocolate, candy, ice cream, and others. From interviews with 40 participants of surrogate parents in Cirebon-Majalengka, the largest percentage of children's favorite snack is chiki, which is 50%. These snacks have always been a favorite for children. This is very unfortunate because chiki or snacks contain a lot of MSG. *Snacks* such as cassava chips, potato chips, chiki *balls*, and others can be bad for children's health. This is reinforced by the statement of Dr. Bryan Sisk, MD. (one of the pediatricians at the

hospital. St. Louis Children), in an article entitled "*Beware, Bad Effects of Chiki Food and MSG-Rich Snacks on Children*" reported by Orami.co.id states that "*children who are obese (overweight caused by excessive weight in children) and eat too much salt are at high risk of hypertension (high blood pressure) and heart disease in the future*" (Orami. id, 2022).

Although this situation can occur in children with complete parents. However, it is appropriate for surrogate parents to pay attention to the consumption of snacks that children like, not to be consumed in excessive quantities. Although it tastes good, chiki has addictive properties such as savory flavors that cause you to want to eat it constantly (addictive). What's more, if the child has many other favorite snacks such as chocolate, candy, ice cream, and milk that contains sugar. Although not felt by the child at this time, the adverse effects will gradually accumulate in the body until the future. And causes chronic diseases that greatly interfere with health. Based on the synthesis of children's digital parenting books that contain stories of cohesiveness of parents when inviting children to introduce regional specialties that are healthier than their favorite foods that are processed instantly. Knowledge of healthy food in children from an early age is an important thing for parents to do (Gandana, 2020). That way the child is able to identify the type of food that is good for his body. Considering that early childhood is the right golden period to gain knowledge from an early age. The age at which the child is able to absorb a lot of information from the outside.

## 2) Children's Educational Needs (School)

The need for children to get an education is included in the basic needs of sharpening children, namely the need to get stimulation. In this case, the child goes to school. Children get new knowledge that they do not get from their family and peers in the environment where they live. From the results of the study, the number of early childhood children who have attended school is 24 children. Another 16 children are not yet in school. By going to school, able to train children to be more independent, and disciplined, and take care of all their own needs, such as bathing, eating, and changing their own clothes without the help of others. But it must remain under parental supervision in its implementation. Because children still need guidance to do an activity based on adult guidance. The people around him are responsible for the example set in early childhood. Stimulation through education at school is indirectly able to mature children's emotions and the way children think and behave. And strengthened by findings about the fact of the child's brain that suggest the provision of stimulation in ECCE institutions can spur the field of child

development, such as cognitive, social-emotional, creativity, language, and so on (Suyadi, 2013).

### 3) Assistance for children's learning and play at home

Mentoring children's learning and play at home is the involvement of parents around them to accompany children while studying at home. If at school the child learns and plays with the teacher. Then it is the parents who become teachers at home. Parents are not completely able to replace the figure of teachers in educating children, but parents have a very large involvement in balancing school programs in the scope of education and have good cooperation so that educational goals can be achieved optimally (Sholehah et al., 2022). Based on the results of the study, data was obtained from as many as 30 children who received learning assistance from surrogate parents. The answers also vary, some are accompanied by a father, grandmother, brother, uncle, or aunt. Because the child lives with the big family around him. The other 10 children did not or have not received learning assistance just because they had not attended school. Actually learning for children is playing, substitute parents should facilitate children's play activities. Learning is not all about school. Stimulating child stimulation at home also needs to be done, with simple fun things that will make the child more disciplined and responsible for himself. Such as doing activities that hone daily life skills such as making the bed, cleaning up toys to the original place, teaching how to live healthy through cleaning activities at home, and others.

### 4) Communication of children with parents

The child's communication with parents referred to here is the child's communication with his biological parents, namely his mother and father. Communication between children and their parents is one of the basic needs of children for affection, attention, and emotions (compassion). The child confided with his mother who was working abroad. From this communication, it is hoped that the inner relationship between the child and the mother will be maintained even though they are very far apart. Based on the results of the study, it can be seen that 95% of mothers often contact their children through *video call applications*, so that children and mothers can meet face-to-face *online*. Mothers contact their children with various intensities such as every day, twice a week, 3 times a week, and others. The other 5% of mothers rarely communicate with their children because mothers are very busy with their work there, but have time to call if they can. And there is a child who does not want to take his mother's phone calls so the child rarely talks to his mother. Not a few children of TKW mothers want their mothers to return home and hope to meet in the near future (*miss*). Regardless of asking how she was doing and what she was doing, the children asked their mother to buy her the toys she wanted. And hope his mother grants



his request. Children's communication that occurs in the TKW family is only limited to asking for news, health, and what things are doing. Communication between parents and children is very important for children's language development. The workload and limited time in educating the mother's child are the causes, why care and education are carried out by surrogate parents. Basically, communication in the family is a factor that greatly determines the good and bad behavior of children. Therefore, if good communication is established, then children will feel that they are loved and they will also foster good behavior in children (Baharuddin, 2019). In addition, the involvement of fathers during parenting also greatly affects the child's language and social-emotional development. From the results of the study, there were 16 out of 40 fathers who took care of and lived with their fathers. When there is no mother figure to accompany the child every day, at least there is a father as his biological parent who is around the child and can accompany him at all times. But fathers cannot do maximum caregiving, because fathers also work together, so parenting cannot be done entirely by fathers.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Lack of attention from caregivers to the fulfillment of a healthy and balanced diet in early childhood care carried out by surrogate parents in TKW families in Cirebon-Majalengka. This can be seen from the child's diet that dominates rice, eggs, and feeding that tends to be sober which is incomplete nutrition with vegetables and other proteins. Coupled with children's favorite snacks that are less healthy and contain artificial dyes, sweeteners, and flavorings such as ciki. Communication between children and mothers that occurs in the TKW family is less deep, only limited to asking for news, health, and what things are doing. Communication between parents and children is very important for children's language development. Workload and limited time in educating the mother's child are the cause. There is a change in the child's social attitude after the mother works abroad. There are positive and negative changes, due to the lack of an inner bond relationship between mother and child separated since childhood for many years. Surrogate parents have various ways when facing one of the obstacles in parenting, namely by comforting children who are sad or fussy. Some take children around for a walk, some buy their favorite food and drinks, and some buy toys that children want. However, there are still surrogate parents who use cell phones to entertain so that children are quiet and not fussy or cry anymore. Ideally, the use of cell phones in early childhood is not recommended because it will have a negative impact on growth and development both physically and mentally.

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