

# The Role of Parents in Shaping Children's Character in Interacting with the Opposite Gender

(A Case Study in Metro City)

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## ABSTRACT

The determining factor for a child's development both physically and mentally is none other than the role of parents. Parents themselves are the most important figures in directing and forming children's character, through various kinds of parenting patterns. Character education in children is very important in shaping character, personality, ethics and positive values which are instilled in a child through the image of their parents. And as a human being we definitely need interaction and our own interaction lasts throughout our life, so this can be said to be social interaction, especially in interacting and mingling with our environment. Parents also need to remember and pay attention, that the way to explain boundaries and rules in interacting with the opposite sex does not involve strict prohibitions. The aim of this research is to find out how the role of parents in a metro city shapes the character of their children and how they maintain boundaries, norms and etiquette when interacting with other people or the opposite sex. This research uses a qualitative approach to analyze this study. Apart from that, interviews, observation, and documentation are other data collection techniques used in this research. The conclusion from this research is the important role of parents in the process of forming children's character. Likewise, in terms of interactions with other people or the opposite sex, parents must be able to provide insight and guidance regarding boundaries, rules and etiquette in interactions.

**Keywords:** The Role of Parent, Character, Interactioan, Opposite Sex.

## ABSTRAK

Faktor penentu bagi perkembangan anak dengan baik dari segi fisik maupun mental tidak lain adalah terdapat nya peran orang tua. Orang tua sendiri merupakan figur paling utama dalam mengarahkan dan membentuk karakter pada anak, melalui berbagai macam pola asuh. Pendidikan karakter pada anak sangatlah penting dalam membentuk watak, kepribadian, etika serta nilai-nilai positif yang ditanamkan kepada seorang anak melalui gambaran dari orang tua nya. Dan sebagai manusia pasti membutuhkan interaksi dan interaksi sendiri berlaku seumur hidupnya, sehingga hal itu bisa dikatakan dengan interaksi sosial. Terutama dalam berinteraksi dan berbaur dengan lingkungan nya. Perlu diingat serta diperhatikan juga oleh orang tua, bahwa cara menjelaskan batasan dan aturan dalam berinteraksi dengan lawan jenis tidak langsung dengan larangan yang keras. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui bagaimana peran orang tua di kota metro membentuk karakter anak-anak mereka dan bagaimana mereka menjaga batasan, norma, adab saat berinteraksi dengan orang lain atau lawan jenis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif untuk menganalisis kajian ini. Selain itu, wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi adalah teknik

pengumpulan data lainnya yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah pentingnya peran orang tua dalam proses pembentukan karakter anak. Begitu pula dalam hal interaksi dengan orang lain atau lawan jenis, orang tua harus dapat memberikan wawasan serta bimbingan terkait batasan, aturan, dan adab dalam berinteraksi.

**Kata Kunci:** Peran Orang Tua, Karakter, Interaksi, Lawan Jenis.

## INTRODUCTION

Fulfilling the needs of children, educating them, instilling values and ethics are the tasks of parents. Parents serve as the barometer for a child, and children easily emulate what their parents do. Parents bear the responsibility of shaping their children's character. In raising children, parents teach independence and instill confidence, discipline, and performance, emphasizing daily manners for nurturing and caring for their children (Putri & Amaliyah, 2022). With strong guidance and support from parents, children can become what they aspire to be. Each achievement reflects a child's good character, a result of parents' dedicated efforts in educating, shaping, and guiding their activities. Parents must understand a child's social interactions within their environment during the character formation process.

For children, imparting morals, maintaining boundaries, and interacting well with others are crucial. Social interaction is a natural aspect of a child's behavior, as long as it is within proper limits and good etiquette. Respecting the conversation partner and lowering one's gaze in interactions related to the opposite gender are emphasized. Parents play a pivotal role in explaining the etiquette of interacting with the opposite gender, such as lowering one's gaze, maintaining politeness, and avoiding being alone. In Islam, interaction with the opposite gender is generally discouraged unless there is a legitimate reason. Proper etiquette and boundaries must be observed during interactions.

Currently, there is a noticeable decline in moral values and a lack of courtesy and respect among children and students. Instances of violence among peers and a rise in disrespectful behavior towards elders are common. In conclusion, it seems that parents do not play a significant role in building a child's personality.

Throughout a child's growth phase, the role of parents is crucial. Parents are the primary role models for children, and children often imitate their parents' behavior. Parents, as the primary caregivers, must focus on promoting positive behaviors. This involves observing them, learning from their daily experiences, and assisting them in making positive decisions that benefit their physical and mental well-being. Parents are the barometer for a child, as what a child sees is easily imitated and performed. Therefore, the character of a child reflects the character of both parents. Hence, the process of building a child's personality must be done carefully. Parents are real examples for shaping a child's character, making them pivotal in determining a child's daily behavior.

The roles of both fathers and mothers are equally important in nurturing and shaping a child's character. The determining factor for a child's well-rounded development, both physically and mentally, is the involvement of parents. The mother's role is especially crucial, as she is the primary educator for her children from birth to adulthood. Equally important, fathers have a role in shaping a child's character, and the majority of character development should be done by fathers. Parents are the most significant figures in directing and shaping a child's character through various parenting

styles. Character education in children is essential for shaping their personality, ethics, and positive values instilled by their parents. Therefore, during the character-building phase, both parents can explain the concepts of good and bad, ensuring that explanations are in language and understanding suitable for the child. Avoiding harsh parenting is crucial, as strict education can make a child rigid.

Character education itself comes from the words 'education' and 'character,' and some experts believe that the term 'education' has different definitions depending on the discipline, paradigm, methodology, and perspective used. According to Kardinata and Devianti (Purwasih, 2021), character is a linguistic term that implies 'to shape.' According to Ubabuddin Din Hafid (2018), character can also be called behavior or habit. However, according to Pitaloka & Purwanta (2021, p. 1698), the function of education in the home environment is one of the most important and assists in the development of a child's character.

Family plays a significant role in a child's growth, development, and education since a child first experiences interactions in the family environment. Since parents have the most crucial role in teaching basic values to their children before they start living in society, it is essential for parents to educate their children wisely.

Teaching children how to find solutions to problems, make decisions in conflicts, and providing them with the tools and initial capital to grow into critical individuals who are not impulsive in decision-making is important. This should be conveyed to children from the early stages of their development, making them disciplined individuals responsible for themselves in the future.

In overseeing and supervising a child's activities, parental duties are essential, especially in interacting and mingling with their environment. Human interaction is a lifelong necessity, and social interaction is a part of it. Women also engage with the opposite gender in their daily lives, such as in shopping centers, offices, schools, and so on. However, Islam does not allow interactions between men and women freely or without boundaries. Therefore, there are limits to interactions between genders that must be strictly observed.

There are several etiquettes that Muslim women should observe and implement when interacting with the opposite gender. These include not softening their voice, maintaining modesty, covering their aura, keeping a distance when interacting, and engaging in meaningful conversations. Interacting with the opposite gender is not forbidden in Islam, but it must be done following Islamic rules and regulations. This is also emphasized in the Quran in Surah An-Nur (24:30-31):

فُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَخْفَطُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ذَالِكَ أَرْكَى لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَيْرُ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ {30} وَقُل لِّلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَعْضُضُنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَ وَيَخْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَ وَلَا يُبَدِّلْنَ زِينَتَهُنَ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلَيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَ عَلَى جِيُوبِهِنَ وَلَا يُبَدِّلْنَ زِينَتَهُنَ إِلَّا لِبَعْوَلَتِهِنَ أَوْ ءابَاءِ بَعْوَلَتِهِنَ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بَعْوَلَتِهِنَ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَ أَوْ بَنِي أَخْوَاهِهِنَ أَوْ نِسَاءِهِنَ أَوْ مَالِكَتْ أَمَانَهُنَ أَوِ التَّابِعَيْنَ غَيْرُ أُولَيِ الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ الطَّفَلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهِرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يَخْفِيْنَ وَتَبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ حَيْيَا أَيْهَا الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them. Surely Allah is well aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty, and not to display their adornment except for what normally appears thereof, and to draw their veils over their chests. And let them not stamp their

feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn to Allah altogether, O you believers, so that you may succeed.

The content of this verse explains that Allah commands His servants to preserve their dignity by lowering their gaze and guarding their modesty. As parents, their role is crucial for their children. It is essential for parents to educate and explain in detail the rules and boundaries of interacting with the opposite gender so that their children do not easily fall into undesirable situations as unwanted by the parents. It is important for parents to remember and be mindful that explaining the limits and rules of interacting with the opposite gender does not involve strict prohibitions. These limits and rules apply not only when talking face-to-face but also when interacting through social media. Due to the negligence of parents in monitoring their children's interactions with the opposite gender through social media, especially when away from parental supervision, children can easily take advantage of such opportunities.

One of the 15 regencies/cities in the Lampung Province is Metro City. Geographically, Metro City is located in the central part of Lampung Province, to the east of the Central Sumatra route. According to the Central Statistics Agency, the population of Metro City in 2023 is 172,505 people, with an age range of 15-19 years numbering 13,471 according to 2022 data.

There are various levels of education in Metro City, with 590 schools and 10 universities (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2023). The total number of educational institutions in Metro City is 164, both public and private, ranging from elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, vocational schools, and universities. These institutions provide the necessary facilities in residential areas to meet the educational needs of the community, including the construction of educational facilities.

Education that parents instill in their children beyond school learning is crucial, especially regarding interactions with the opposite gender. This requires guidance and direction regarding limits, ethics, and manners when interacting with others or the opposite gender. In this regard, emphasizing the role of parents in building a child's character is crucial, especially when it comes to interactions with the opposite gender. Therefore, supervision and guidance in a child's interactions with the opposite gender are equally important. The researcher found this to be the case in Metro City and was interested in exploring this further in the research.

## METHODS

The purpose of this study is to analyze and explain how parents shape the character of their children in their social interactions. To analyze this research, the author uses a qualitative approach. This research is used to investigate clearly defined issues, has a broad population, and aims to test hypotheses. According to Zed in (Rahayu, 2020), qualitative descriptive research is a series of actions that analyze events, phenomena, or social conditions. This study uses a qualitative method or approach. Qualitative research, according to Ibnu in (Arifudin, 2018), is a type of research where the data is conveyed orally and analyzed without using statistics.

Data collection is carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. According to (Bahri, 2021), data collection techniques are the most strategic step in research because the goal of research is to obtain data. During the interviews, the researcher follows a predetermined guide to collect research data. Subsequently, the researcher reduces the data to determine the research focus. The researcher then presents the data in the form of a narrative or story. Finally, the

researcher draws conclusions or verifies the data to demonstrate the research findings. The interviews involve interviewers who have prepared a list of questions in advance, but also allow flexibility to ask additional questions that are relevant to the issue being studied. This case study will investigate how parents play a role in shaping the characters of children in Metro City. Since the roles of fathers and mothers are directly related to the formation of a child's character, the parents of these children will be used as the main informants in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Parents with multiple roles are the main subjects of this research. Among their various roles, they serve as teachers and homemakers. Parents act as role models for their children. Fathers function as public figures or the primary figure in the family, while mothers serve as teachers or the first educators for their children. Both parents also teach their children outside of their school activities. "The role of parents is crucial in shaping a good personality for their children," said one of the interviewees. The family is the first and foremost educational forum in the child's life, serving as a crucial foundation for the formation of positive character and habits (Muhsin, 2017). Therefore, families or parents play a significant role in building a child's character, especially in their growth, mental development, and behavioral progress.

Parents should not forget their role as caretakers and the responsibility they hold for the children under their supervision. Thus, parents are required to be more creative and help guide their children to learn positive characters, advising them when they behave inappropriately (Habsari et al., 2020). Therefore, the responsibility of parents is to provide attention and supervision to their children. This is a command from Allah that they must fulfill and execute. In the Quran, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوْمًا أَنفَسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَقُوْدُ هَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُوْنَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمْرَهُمْ وَلَا يَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُرِيدُونَ

"O you who have believed! Protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones; over it are [appointed] angels, harsh and severe—they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them, but do what they are commanded.

They have the primary responsibility in educating, guiding, caring for, and providing every need that their children require appropriately. When shaping a child's character, parents face challenges such as environmental factors influencing children's interactions, parents who may not understand the importance of instilling character in their children early on, or busy parents who lack time for communication and proper guidance (Hanafiah, 2022). Parental involvement in a child's development also requires extra attention, especially in the process of forming the child's personality. Parenting styles are crucial in shaping a child's character because how they are raised influences their development into individuals aligned with their desires. This parenting phase includes approaches to values, norms, and behavior towards the child. Parents themselves must instill positive values such as discipline in their children's actions and activities, both inside and outside the home. They should also instill honesty in everything the child does, teaching ethical behavior, respect, and mutual appreciation.

In educating children, the most important aspect to consider is the child's condition, as each child is different. By paying attention to the unique conditions of each child, parents can optimize the education they provide. Character and personality are formed through what is known as habituation or conditioning. Therefore, start building

good habits every day. Simple habits such as using words like "please" and "sorry" or anything that makes others happy to hear contribute to good habits, instilled by parents.

Encourage children to do good things and have noble manners. In this regard, every parent needs to set a good example for their children. For example, when parents ask their children to pray, parents should also pray. It is better to perform prayers in congregation, so children become accustomed to it. Character education is not enough if it is only obtained at school, requiring significant parental contributions to educate children at home, considering that children spend more time with parents than teachers (Khaironi, 2017). Consequently, education in character formation for children is crucial. As revealed in interviews, parents are a child's first school, and children unconsciously imitate everything their parents do.

Parents or families should help children feel comfortable talking and asking about things that may still pose many questions for them. Open communication between children and their parents is part of character formation. Research indicates that children who have empathy towards others are those raised by parents who understand their children's feelings, where parents always encourage children to be more sensitive to their own feelings and the feelings of others (Lickona, 2019). Open communication between children and parents must also be observed.

During the process of shaping a child's character, parents are expected to communicate effectively, educate with kindness, and avoid using violence. Parents should not raise their voices when talking to children and should gently explain things. The firmness in character demonstrated by parents to children during the character-building process will likely be imitated by the children in the future.

Parents also play a significant role in building a child's character when interacting with the opposite sex or others. Interaction with the opposite sex is a crucial part of a child's social development, and parents have a role in this aspect. One of the parents' roles in ensuring disciplinary character is, as much as possible, to remind and accompany children in performing good activities, as an effort to ensure that these activities are consistently carried out by children (Salmiati & Zaman, 2021). This includes helping children understand the boundaries in interacting with the opposite sex, maintaining good language, and displaying politeness in interactions.

The relationship between individuals and groups in their social environment is known as interaction. Social interaction can occur when there are social relationships and communication, whether direct or indirect. Therefore, social interaction becomes a reference for all forms of social life (Viandari and Susilawati, 2019). Parents have a significant role in building a child's character in this context. They also teach values, norms, and good and polite behavior to maintain etiquette and rules when interacting with the opposite sex.

Parents must ensure that the communication or interaction that occurs between their child and the opposite sex is within normal limits. As the child's age increases, their social development becomes more complex, indicating that children increasingly need others (Maghfiroh, Usman, & Nisa, 2020). Therefore, parents not only need to explain briefly, but they must also be more protective and careful about religious education related to interacting with the opposite sex. The importance of explaining etiquette and ethics in interacting with the opposite sex in accordance with Islam is crucial. For example, not allowing children to speak or interact with the opposite sex alone, as stated in the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him): "Do not let one of you be alone with a woman, for indeed, Satan is the third between them."

Parents must remember that with the improvement of nutrition and the abundance of stimuli from various social media, especially those closely associated with children nowadays, children reach puberty earlier. This means that everything parents do now should be taken seriously, not as a joke. Children must be educated about what is allowed, prohibited, and role-play scenarios for interacting with the opposite sex. This information should be conveyed from an early age, as many parents understand that learning or explaining certain things related to interacting with the opposite sex or the like to children is appropriate when the child is old enough to understand each conversation with parents.

The role of parents in managing interactions with the opposite sex that occur in children is also a significant responsibility. Every day, everyone uses chat applications to exchange short messages and uses email for more formal and important messages or those containing heavy data (Pratama, 2017). Therefore, monitoring every interaction that takes place between a child and the opposite sex, such as chatting or video calls, is essential. Because the consequences of events that occur outside parental supervision will harm the parents themselves and, of course, the child. This is allowed if it is urgent, but parents must ensure that the interaction remains within the limits and rules of Islam. This is strengthened by the statement of Ida, a homemaker, 'every activity related to the outside world and the virtual world, parents must be vigilant supervisors, always ready to guard interactions with the opposite sex, whether individually or in groups.' As Allah says:

{ يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُمْ كَأَخْدِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنَّ الْقَيْمَنَ فَيَطْمَعُ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرْضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا }

"O wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women if you are mindful [of Allah]. So, do not..."

Directing children to always be cautious during activities outside the home related to groups is crucial. They should avoid mingling with the opposite sex and engaging in activities that invite excessive interactions, making it challenging for parents to monitor and condition their children. Parents should actively participate and accompany their children in group activities where interactions between genders are likely. Parental concern is essential, as care and attention toward children will mold them into responsible and disciplined individuals.

Parents should use an approach that imparts an understanding of every interaction with the opposite sex that occurs in children as early as possible. This will instill in children the habit of maintaining proper manners and boundaries. In line with the statement of Sita, a teacher, "Education regarding etiquette in interacting with the opposite sex should be provided when children are still young, to make them accustomed to it and not violate their boundaries."

Teaching children not to be overly casual in interacting with the opposite sex should be emphasized and reminded by parents at all times. This ensures that children take responsibility for everything that happens around them. This is particularly important given the prevalence of naughty behavior among children today, often stemming from a lack of parental supervision both inside and outside the home.

## CONCLUSION

The source and data analysts state that parents play a significant role in shaping the personality or character of their children when interacting with others or the opposite gender. Forming a child's character, especially in interactions with the opposite gender, is a lengthy process that requires consistency and attention. Parents,

particularly mothers who often act as the first teachers and schools for their children, serve as benchmarks for their children. Therefore, each lesson and guidance provided by parents marks the beginning of the formation of the child's character.

Children do not originate solely from schools or formal education; they come from their parents. Parents have the duty to guide their children. The family should be understood as the environment where an individual grows and develops into a person with a distinct personality and traits. The development and character formation process of a child are directly influenced by family life and how parents raise them. In all aspects, the role of parents is crucial, especially in interactions with the opposite gender, to navigate social relationships in today's era. By monitoring a child's activities, parents function as monitors. However, this supervision does not mean restricting or constraining the child but goes beyond that.

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