

The experiences of grandparents raising grandchildren in Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose – *The raising of grandchildren by grandparents is a global phenomenon, and it is common in Indonesia. This is because parents are often unable or unwilling to raise their own children. However, the debate around “grandparenting” is still limited in Indonesia. The purpose of this paper is to gain a better understanding of the experience and views of grandparents on “grandparenting.”*

Design/methodology/approach – *The methodology employed was qualitative and informed by phenomenology. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with 13 grandparents who were raising their grandchildren who were under five years old. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis.*

Findings – *5 main themes and 13 subthemes emerged from the analysis of the data. The themes were responses, strategies for overcoming negative responses, the grandparents’ role, the reason for raising grandchildren, and the cultural aspect of “grandparenting” in Java. All of the grandparents enjoyed their roles as grandparents. They felt that they helped fulfill their grandchildren’s physical and educational needs.*

Social implications – *The experience of raising a grandchild can be both positive and negative, depending on the cultural aspects in the Java and the family as a whole system. Grandparents require healthcare and informal support to maintain their well-being.*

Originality/value – *This paper provides new insights into “grandparenting” closely related to social and cultural aspect within the community. Grandparents enjoy being a part of the Javanese tradition. The supportive role of grandparents in Indonesia is important. However, older adults need to balance the role of “grandparenting” and rest time so that they remain healthy and happy.*

Keywords Family, Experiences, Grandchildren, Grandparent, Javanese, Older adult

Paper type Research paper

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Introduction

“Grandparenting” affects the physical and emotional health of the grandparent. There is a positive effect on mood, social inclusion and cognition in the grandparent. However, attention should be paid to the intensity and time spent on “grandparenting” (Campbell *et al.*, 2016). Studies in the USA, China, and Europe explained that grandparents serve as an important form of support for multigenerational families and as the centers of intergenerational solidarity models (Chen and Liu, 2012; Hayslip, 2014; Muller and Litwin, 2011; Uhlenberg, 2009). The National Centre for Family and Marriage (NCFMR) recognizes that grandparents are important caregivers for their grandchildren. In the research conducted by Peter Uhlenberg (2009) in the USA, it was known that grandparents can provide resources by parenting their grandchildren.

The increasing life expectancy and the older adult population have affected the possibility of grandparents providing full care or care assistance of their grandchildren (Landry Meyer and Newman, 2004). Furthermore, the shifting roles of parents in recent decades, especially the double burden of working mother reduced the intensity of childcare, so mothers’ needs extended family involvement in parenting, especially from the grandparents. Another factor that causes the grandparent to raise grandchildren is crisis in the family (Chen and Liu, 2012; Goodman and Rao, 2007).

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