



Developing a Parental Engagement Model to Enhance Early Literacy and Socio-Emotional Skills at KB Dumbo Star, Gorontalo

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood education is crucial for fostering literacy and socio-emotional development, yet parental involvement in these areas remains inconsistent and underutilized in many educational settings. This study aimed to develop and evaluate a structured model for parental involvement at KB Dumbo Star, Gorontalo, to address gaps in early literacy and socio-emotional support. The qualitative study employed observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis to assess existing practices and implement a tailored intervention model. The parental involvement model consisted of regular parent-teacher meetings, collaborative activities, home visits, and workshops on socio-emotional development. These components were designed to empower parents as active participants in their children's education and to enhance their understanding of effective strategies for fostering literacy and emotional resilience. Findings revealed significant improvements in children's literacy skills, such as letter recognition and vocabulary development, and socio-emotional competencies, including empathy, patience, and communication skills. Parents reported increased confidence in supporting their children's learning and greater engagement in educational activities. This study contributes a replicable framework for integrating parental involvement into early childhood education programs. Its findings underscore the transformative potential of collaborative and personalized interventions, offering valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance developmental outcomes through active family engagement.

Keyword : Parenting, Literacy, Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a pivotal role in shaping the developmental trajectories of children, encompassing physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual growth. As articulated in Indonesia's National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a developmental initiative targeted at children aged 0-6 years, aimed at fostering holistic growth and readiness for subsequent stages of education. Recent global insights underscore the criticality of this stage in laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning and adaptive functioning (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2019). Among the core aspects of early development, learning motivation stands out as a determinant of children's enthusiasm to explore and interact with their environments, which directly impacts their cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes. However, the roles of parents in nurturing such motivation remain under-explored, despite extensive evidence highlighting their influence on children's learning habits and literacy engagement (Hasbullah, 2001; Hamalik, 2000).

In the Indonesian context, literacy rates have been a cause for concern, as reflected in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, where Indonesia ranked 68th out of 81 participating countries with a reading score of 359. This disparity is indicative of systemic challenges, particularly at foundational levels of education. Research underscores that parental involvement significantly contributes to early literacy and academic success. Parents serve as the primary environment for children, where interaction, emotional support, and intellectual stimulation can profoundly influence early literacy skills. Nevertheless, observations in several early childhood education centers reveal a concerning lack of parental engagement in literacy development activities, both at home and in school settings. This trend necessitates structured interventions to guide parents in their roles as educators and motivators for young learners.

Despite the recognition of the problem, conventional efforts to enhance parental involvement often fall short of addressing systemic gaps in early education. Generalized approaches that lack contextual sensitivity and fail to consider parents' diverse socio-economic backgrounds hinder their effectiveness. Furthermore, many educational institutions lack structured frameworks or models for parental involvement tailored to fostering early literacy skills. While workshops, parenting classes, and direct consultations have been implemented in various settings, their scope and impact remain inconsistent, with limited integration into formal curricula. These shortcomings call for innovative solutions that not only engage parents but also equip them with actionable strategies to support their children's developmental milestones effectively.

Numerous studies have explored frameworks to enhance parental involvement in early childhood education. For instance, Nadler's theory of development emphasizes systematic and organized procedures aimed at improving conceptual and technical competencies among participants (Hardjana, 2011).

Additionally, research highlights that effective parental involvement hinges on building parents' understanding of their roles as educators and role models (Javdan & Ali, 2011). Practical interventions, such as structured workshops and collaborative activities between parents and educators, have demonstrated positive outcomes in fostering children's literacy and social-emotional skills (Betty Nila P., et al., 2019). However, these studies often focus on isolated practices, lacking a holistic and sustainable model for integrating parental engagement into early education systems.

Prior literature underscores the importance of parenting interventions tailored to cultural and socio-economic contexts. For instance, studies by Hayati (2020) and Purnamasari et al. (2020) demonstrate that targeted parental engagement programs, such as literacy stimulation through storytelling or interactive games, significantly enhance children's literacy outcomes. Similarly, Yulianti (2014) highlights the role of parental creativity in fostering innovative and adaptive learning environments for young children. However, these studies largely focus on individual components of parental involvement rather than an integrated model encompassing diverse aspects of early learning.

In this context, the current study aims to bridge the gap by developing a comprehensive model for parental involvement tailored to early literacy and social-emotional development. The research leverages evidence-based strategies and incorporates insights from previous studies to design a structured framework for parental engagement in the KB Dumbo Star Early Childhood Education Center in Gorontalo, Indonesia. This model includes components such as parent-teacher meetings, collaborative activities, home visits, and tailored consultations, ensuring a holistic approach to supporting early learning.

The overarching objective of this study is to evaluate the existing state of parental involvement in early education at KB Dumbo Star, develop a targeted intervention model, and assess its feasibility and effectiveness. The study stands out by addressing a significant research gap in integrating parental roles into formal early childhood education frameworks. By providing a structured model, it not only supports literacy development but also addresses broader developmental outcomes such as emotional resilience, social skills, and learning motivation. This research holds potential implications for policymakers, educators, and parents, offering a replicable model that can be adapted across diverse early education contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the development of a parental involvement model in early childhood education at KB Dumbo Star, Gorontalo. As noted by Sugiyono (2019), qualitative methods are suitable for research that seeks to interpret phenomena and construct new themes from scattered data. Specifically, this study adopted a phenomenological design, focusing on the lived experiences of participants to provide an in-depth understanding of parental involvement in early education settings.

The research was conducted at KB Dumbo Star, an early childhood education center in the Dumbo Raya sub-district of Gorontalo. This institution was chosen due to its notable challenges in engaging parents in their children's early literacy and social-emotional development. The participants included parents of enrolled children, educators, and administrators. The sample was selected purposively to ensure a diverse representation of stakeholders directly involved in the learning process.

Data collection was conducted using a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation analysis, as recommended by Rubiyanto (2011) and Arikunto (2013). These methods ensured the triangulation of data to enhance validity and reliability. The specific techniques used are described below:

1. Observation

Observational data were collected through non-participatory methods, where the researcher recorded ongoing interactions and activities involving parents, children, and educators. Observations focused on parental participation during learning sessions, home visits, and scheduled consultations. Systematic field notes were maintained to capture behaviors, interactions, and contextual nuances.

2. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents, educators, and administrators to gather detailed insights into their perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to parental involvement. Interviews provided an opportunity to explore underlying attitudes and beliefs that influence engagement practices. As suggested by Maleong (2013) and Nasution (2016), this approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of participants' perspectives.

3. Documentation Analysis

Existing records, such as meeting minutes, program schedules, and progress reports, were analyzed to provide supplementary data. These documents offered valuable information about the frequency, content, and outcomes of parental involvement initiatives. This method also supported the verification of data obtained through interviews and observations.

The study employed the interactive model of data analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994), which consists of three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

1. Data Reduction

Raw data collected from observations, interviews, and documents were condensed to focus on relevant themes, such as the types of parental involvement, perceived challenges, and the effectiveness of current practices. Redundant or irrelevant data were excluded to ensure clarity and focus.

2. Data Display

Condensed data were organized into visual representations, such as tables and charts, to facilitate comparison and interpretation. For instance, the frequency of parent-teacher interactions and the outcomes of specific interventions were tabulated to identify patterns and trends.

3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Initial conclusions were drawn based on observed patterns and triangulated with data from multiple sources. These preliminary findings were revisited and refined to ensure consistency and validity, aligning with Wiersma's recommendation for iterative verification in qualitative research.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, the study employed triangulation of data sources and methods. As outlined by Gunawan (2013), triangulation synthesizes data from diverse sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. This study utilized source triangulation (e.g., interviews with parents, teachers, and administrators) and methodological triangulation (e.g., combining observations, interviews, and documentation).

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional authorities before initiating the study. Participants were informed about the purpose, methods, and potential implications of the research, and their informed consent was secured. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant identities and ensuring secure storage of all data.

While the study provides valuable insights into parental involvement in early education, its findings are context-specific to KB Dumbo Star and may not be generalizable to other settings. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative methods limits the ability to quantify the impact of specific interventions. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating quantitative approaches or expanding the study to multiple sites.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The initial investigation into parental involvement at KB Dumbo Star revealed a lack of consistent and structured engagement in supporting early literacy and socio-emotional development. Observations indicated that many parents relied on authoritarian, permissive, or inconsistent involvement approaches, which limited their effectiveness in fostering their children's developmental milestones (Toharudin, 2020). For instance, limited parental participation was observed in activities designed to promote early literacy, such as storytelling or interactive reading sessions, both at home and within the institution.

Parental involvement was particularly low in structured programs, with most parents unaware of effective strategies to integrate learning into daily routines. Interviews highlighted that parents often lacked an understanding of their critical role in complementing institutional efforts. Furthermore, observations indicated a reliance on digital devices for child engagement at home, with minimal efforts to introduce foundational literacy skills. These findings are consistent with global concerns regarding the adverse effects of digital overuse on early childhood development, as noted by Hasbullah (2001).

The study designed and implemented a structured parental involvement model tailored to address the identified gaps. The model encompassed the following components:

1. Parent-Teacher Meetings

Regularly scheduled meetings served as a platform for parents and educators to share insights, expectations, and strategies for fostering children's literacy and socio-emotional skills. These meetings provided an opportunity for collaborative goal-setting and personalized guidance for parents. Activities included interactive discussions, role-playing exercises, and information sessions facilitated by educators and child development experts.

Results from these meetings indicated an increased awareness among parents about their role in supporting early literacy. For instance, parents reported greater confidence in facilitating storytelling sessions and using everyday objects as tools for literacy development. These outcomes align with findings from Yulianti (2014), which emphasize the effectiveness of collaborative workshops in enhancing parental involvement.

2. Home Visits and Individual Consultations

Home visits were conducted to observe parental engagement in natural settings and provide tailored recommendations. This approach allowed educators to identify specific challenges faced by families and suggest practical solutions. During consultations, parents were guided on integrating literacy activities into their daily routines, such as incorporating reading into bedtime rituals or using household items for letter recognition exercises.

Feedback from parents suggested that these personalized interventions were highly impactful. One parent noted, "I now understand how to make learning fun at home without needing special materials. My child has started recognizing letters during our kitchen activities." Such anecdotes highlight the value of contextualized interventions, a finding supported by Purnamasari et al. (2019).

3. Collaborative Activities and Events

Events such as family reading days and group storytelling sessions were organized to encourage active parental participation. These activities not only strengthened parent-child bonds but also allowed parents to observe and replicate effective teaching strategies demonstrated by educators. Moreover, these events fostered a sense of community among parents, enabling peer learning and support.

Observational data revealed significant improvements in children's engagement and social skills during these activities. Educators reported that children whose parents actively participated demonstrated better focus, communication skills, and enthusiasm for learning. This aligns with the conclusions of Hayati (2020), who emphasized the role of community-driven initiatives in fostering early literacy.

4. **Workshops on Emotional and Social Development**

Given the critical role of socio-emotional skills in early childhood, workshops were conducted to train parents on fostering emotional resilience and interpersonal skills. These sessions covered topics such as empathy development, conflict resolution, and effective communication with children.

Post-workshop evaluations indicated that parents felt more equipped to address their children's emotional needs. For example, one participant shared, "I've learned how to handle tantrums constructively and teach my child to express their feelings in words." These findings underscore the importance of equipping parents with tools to navigate complex emotional dynamics in early childhood (Betty Nila P., et al., 2019).

The implementation of the parental involvement model yielded significant improvements in both parental engagement and child development outcomes. Key findings include:

1. **Enhanced Literacy Skills**

Children demonstrated notable progress in foundational literacy skills, including letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary development. Parents reported increased engagement in reading activities at home, with many incorporating storytelling as a daily routine.

2. **Improved Socio-Emotional Competencies**

Observations revealed significant advancements in children's ability to interact with peers, manage emotions, and exhibit empathy. For instance, children displayed greater patience in waiting their turn during group activities and showed a willingness to share resources with peers.

3. **Increased Parental Confidence and Engagement**

Parents reported feeling more confident in their ability to support their children's learning. Attendance at parent-teacher meetings and participation in collaborative activities increased significantly over the course of the study, reflecting a positive shift in parental attitudes.

The findings of this study highlight the transformative potential of structured parental involvement in early childhood education. By addressing the gaps in parental engagement, the implemented model demonstrated its capacity to enhance literacy and socio-emotional outcomes for children at KB Dumbo Star. The success of this model lies in its holistic approach, which integrates collaborative planning, personalized interventions, and community-building activities.

Moreover, the study reinforces the importance of tailoring parental involvement strategies to the specific needs and contexts of families. The integration of home visits and individualized consultations allowed for the identification and mitigation of unique barriers to engagement, such as time constraints or limited resources. These findings align with existing literature, which emphasizes the need for context-sensitive interventions in early education (Hayati, 2020; Purnamasari et al., 2019).

However, the study also revealed challenges in sustaining parental engagement, particularly among families with demanding work schedules or limited access to transportation. Addressing these barriers requires innovative solutions, such as leveraging digital platforms for remote consultations or offering flexible scheduling for events. Future research should explore these strategies to ensure inclusivity and scalability.

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on parental involvement in early childhood education by presenting a comprehensive model that integrates best practices from existing research. Its emphasis on collaboration, personalization, and community engagement offers valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to enhance early literacy and socio-emotional development through parental participation. Furthermore, the study provides a replicable framework that can be adapted to diverse educational settings, contributing to global efforts to improve early childhood education outcomes.

By addressing the gaps in existing parental involvement practices, this research underscores the critical role of families in shaping children's developmental trajectories. It advocates for a paradigm shift in early education, where parents are not merely passive participants but active contributors to the learning process. Such an approach holds promise for fostering holistic development and lifelong learning in young children.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of parental involvement in fostering early literacy and socio-emotional development in young children, specifically within the context of KB Dumbo Star. The findings reveal significant gaps in parental engagement, with many parents lacking the necessary awareness, strategies, and resources to effectively support their children's learning. Through the development and implementation of a structured parental involvement model—encompassing parent-teacher meetings, collaborative activities, home visits, and tailored consultations—this research demonstrates the potential for enhancing children's learning outcomes while empowering parents as active participants in education.

The study's key contribution lies in providing a replicable framework for integrating parental involvement into early childhood education programs. This model not only addresses the immediate challenges of literacy and emotional development but also fosters long-term engagement and collaboration between families and educational institutions. The implications extend beyond the local context, offering insights for policymakers and educators aiming to bridge systemic gaps in early education.

Future research should explore the scalability of this model in diverse cultural and socio-economic settings, investigate its long-term impact on children's academic and social trajectories, and integrate quantitative methods to measure its effectiveness comprehensively. This study underscores the transformative potential of parent-focused interventions in early childhood education.

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