



Parental Participation in Early Childhood

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Abstract. *This study aims to explore parental participation in early childhood education using a qualitative approach and semi-structured interview method. The informants consisted of five parents who have children aged 3–6 years enrolled in early childhood education (PAUD) institutions. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement in their children's education. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory was used as a framework to understand how the microsystem, such as the family environment, plays a vital role in a child's development. The results show that parental participation is influenced by internal factors, such as educational awareness, and external factors, such as social and economic support. The study recommends that early childhood institutions build stronger communication and partnerships with parents to enhance their engagement in their children's education.*

Keywords: *parental participation, early childhood education, Bronfenbrenner theory.*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is an important foundation in shaping children's character, personality, and basic abilities. Early age is the golden age, which is a period when children's brain development is very fast and responsive to the stimuli given [3]. During this period, children begin to know the world around them, learn to interact, and develop basic skills that will be provisions for the next level of education. Therefore, the success of education at this stage is greatly influenced by various factors, one of which is parental participation.

Parents are the first and foremost educators for their children. Parental involvement in early childhood education is not just about taking children to school or providing learning equipment, but also includes emotional support, providing stimulation, and instilling positive values in the family environment [1]. The family is the first social environment that influences a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development. Children who receive attention, affection, and active involvement from their parents tend to grow up to be more confident, independent, and have better social skills [2]. Parental participation in early childhood education is still often considered the responsibility of PAUD institutions alone. Many parents completely hand over the education process to teachers at school, without realizing that their involvement is very important to support

the success of the child's learning process [4]. Lack of understanding, busy work, and lack of communication between parents and teachers are some of the causes of this low participation [10].

Active parental involvement in the educational process, such as attending school meetings, assisting with learning activities at home, or simply discussing with teachers about child development, can increase children's learning motivation and strengthen the emotional relationship between children and parents[5]. Furthermore, good cooperation between schools and families can create a consistent and harmonious learning environment for children[6].

Therefore, it is important to build awareness and understanding of parents regarding their strategic role in early childhood education. PAUD institutions also need to develop an approach that actively involves parents, such as through parenting programs, two-way communication, and collaborative activities. Thus, synergy will be created between families and schools in supporting optimal child growth and development. Given the importance of this, research or discussion on parental participation in early childhood education is very relevant. A deep understanding of the forms of participation, obstacles faced, and strategies for increasing parental involvement can provide a positive contribution to efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.

THEORETICAL STUDY

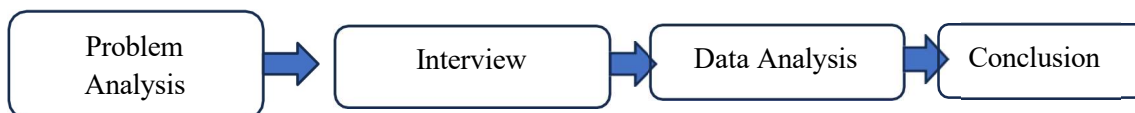
To understand the importance of parental involvement in early childhood education, Epstein's (1995) theory known as Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement can be used. This theory explains six forms of parental involvement in education, namely:

1. Parenting Building a home environment that supports child development.
2. Communicating Establishing effective communication between school and home.
3. Volunteering Voluntary parental involvement in school activities.
4. Learning at home Accompanying the child's learning process at home.
5. Decision making Involvement in decision making at school.
6. Collaborating with the community - Building relationships between schools and communities.

Epstein's model shows that parental participation is not only limited to the home, but includes a broader role, including interaction with the school and the community. With this understanding, PAUD institutions can develop strategies that encourage various forms of parental participation according to their respective capacities and conditions. In the Indonesian context, many PAUD institutions are beginning to realize the importance of parental participation. Parenting programs, parenting training, and communication forums between teachers and guardians are beginning to be developed. However, their implementation is still uneven. There are still many schools that have not actively collaborated with parents, and conversely, parents do not feel that they have a big responsibility in early childhood education [9]. To overcome this, there needs to be a collaborative approach and build a shared awareness that educational success is not only the school's job. Educational institutions can create flexible programs that can be followed by parents with busy schedules. On the other hand, parents also need to be given an understanding that their involvement, no matter how small, has a big impact on children's development.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a semi-structured interview method to explore parental participation in early childhood education. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews with five parents who have children aged 3–6 years and are registered in one of the PAUD institutions. The selection of informants was carried out purposively by considering their involvement in children's educational activities. Interviews were conducted directly and recorded to facilitate the data analysis process. The data obtained were then analyzed using data reduction techniques, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.



Picture 1. Interview Method

1. Problem Analysis

Problem analysis is the initial stage in the qualitative research process that aims to understand the background and complexity of the issue to be studied, in this case parental participation in early childhood education. Researchers identified a gap between the importance of parental involvement and the reality in the field that shows that involvement is still low. This analysis process is not only conceptual, but also based on literature studies and initial observations at PAUD institutions. This is important so that the formulation of research objectives and interview questions can lead to relevant and in-depth data collection.

2. Interview

The interview stage was conducted using a semi-structured method, where the researcher had prepared a question guide, but still provided space for informants to explore the answers freely and in depth. This interview was conducted directly (face-to-face) with five parents who had children aged 3–6 years who were registered at PAUD institutions. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which was intentionally selected based on their active or passive involvement in their children's education. During the interview process, the researcher recorded the conversation to ensure data accuracy and avoid losing important information. This technique is important in a qualitative approach because it focuses on the depth of information rather than the number of respondents.

3. Data Analysis

The interview data was then analyzed using three main stages: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

- a. Data reduction is done by sorting and summarizing important information from interview transcripts.
- b. Data presentation is done in the form of narratives and categorization tables to describe patterns of parental involvement based on Epstein's theory.
- c. Drawing conclusions is done by interpreting the findings in the context of theory

and research objectives. This analysis allows researchers to identify variations in engagement patterns, barriers faced by parents, and opportunities for strengthening collaboration between parents and PAUD institutions.

4. Conclusion

In the final stage, the researcher draws conclusions based on the findings that have been thoroughly analyzed. This conclusion not only answers the research questions, but also provides a reflection on the condition of parental involvement in early childhood education. The results show that there is a spectrum of involvement influenced by internal (knowledge, motivation) and external (time, work) factors. This conclusion is also used as a basis for providing practical recommendations for PAUD institutions in designing strategies to increase parental participation, for example through flexible parenting programs or more active two-way communication.

Results and Discussion

Parental participation in early childhood education is one of the important aspects that determine the success of the learning process. Early childhood education does not only focus on academic aspects, but also includes the emotional, social, and character development of children. In this case, parents have a very strategic role, because the family is the first and main environment where children learn and grow.

Parental participation includes various forms, ranging from providing support at home such as accompanying children to study, reading story books, to being involved in activities at school such as attending parent meetings, discussing with teachers, or participating in parenting programs[7]. With this involvement, children feel cared for and receive consistent stimulus between the family and school environments, which ultimately has a positive impact on their development and learning achievements.

Parental involvement can increase children's self-confidence, strengthen emotional relationships, and motivate children to be more active in the learning process[8]. Not only that, teachers also feel helped in understanding children's characters and needs if there is open communication with parents. This creates harmonious cooperation between families and schools, so that learning becomes more effective.

However, in practice, parental participation is often still low. Several factors that influence this low involvement include work, lack of understanding of the importance of their role by parents, and limited communication between teachers and parents. Parents who work full time sometimes feel they do not have free time to be involved in their children's educational activities. On the other hand, there are also parents who do not feel confident in discussing with teachers because of their low educational background[9].

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In the Indonesian context, many PAUD institutions are beginning to realize the importance of parental participation. Parenting programs, parenting training, and communication forums between teachers and guardians are beginning to be developed. However, their implementation is still uneven. There are still many schools that have not actively collaborated with parents, and conversely, parents do not feel that they have a big responsibility in early childhood education [9]. To overcome this, there needs to be a collaborative approach and build a shared awareness that educational success is not only the school's job. Educational institutions can create flexible programs that can be followed by parents with busy schedules. On the other hand, parents also need to be given an understanding that their involvement, no matter how small, has a big impact on children's development.

Here are 5 interview results with parents regarding their participation in their children's education.

1. Mrs. Ratna, 34 years old, housewife

"I always accompany my child studying at home. Every night we read story books together. I also actively participate in parenting activities at PAUD school."

interpretation:

Mrs. Ratna shows high involvement both at home and at school. This shows the form of involvement of "Learning at Home" and "Parenting" in Epstein's framework. This involvement supports the development of language and emotional attachment of children.

2. Mr. Arie, 38 years old, private worker

"Because I work until night, I rarely have time to join school activities. But I always ask my wife about our child's progress at school."

Interpretation:

Mr. Arie's involvement tends to be indirect, but still shows concern for children's education. This includes the form of "Communicating" and "Parenting" even though he is not physically active. Time constraints are the main inhibiting factor for direct involvement.

3. Ibu Rina, 27 tahun, wirausaha

"Saya hanya datang kalau ada acara besar seperti perayaan Hari Kartini. Untuk kegiatan harian, saya serahkan semua ke guru. Di rumah pun saya jarang dampingi anak belajar karena sibuk usaha."

Interpretasi:

Keterlibatan Ibu Rina tergolong rendah. Ia hanya berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan besar dan kurang memberi dukungan belajar di rumah. Ini menunjukkan bahwa kesibukan ekonomi bisa mengurangi partisipasi orang tua dalam mendampingi pendidikan anak secara aktif.

4. Mrs. Rahmi, 36 years old, elementary school teacher

"I know the importance of parental involvement because I am also a teacher. So I also apply it to my child, participating in school activities, helping the child learn, and communicating regularly with the PAUD teacher."

Interpretation:

As an educator, Mrs. Rahmi is very aware of the importance of parental involvement. She implements almost all forms of involvement in Epstein's theory. Her insight as a teacher is a factor that encourages active involvement.

5. Mr Sandie, 41 years old, driver

"I don't really know what my child is learning in preschool. But I always pick him up and ask his teacher a few questions."

Interpretation:

Mr. Sandi showed limited involvement, but had the initiative to build communication with teachers. His role in pick-up and drop-off and short Q&A could be developed into more meaningful involvement if accompanied by understanding and motivation.

Interpretation of the five interview results shows that each parent has a different level and form of involvement in early childhood education, which can be directly linked to Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement (1995). This theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding parental involvement through six dimensions of involvement.

From the interview, it is seen that Mrs. Ratna and Mrs. Rahmi represent optimal involvement, covering aspects of parenting, learning at home, volunteering, to communicating. While Mr. Arie and Mr. Sandie are more dominant in communication and parenting involvement, although in low intensity and indirectly. While Mrs. Rina only touches on ceremonial involvement, which leads to minimal participation in the volunteering aspect.

The relationship between Epstein's theory and this interview shows that parental involvement is influenced by both internal (such as awareness and knowledge) and external (time and work) factors. With this theory, we can identify gaps and strengths in each parent's involvement pattern, as well as being the basis for designing strategies to increase parental participation in PAUD institutions in a more targeted manner.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, parental participation in early childhood education varies widely, influenced by awareness, educational background, and employment conditions. Through Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement theory, this involvement can be analyzed systematically, from parenting to collaboration with the community. Interview results show that optimal involvement has a positive impact on child development, while minimal involvement needs to be improved through collaborative strategies between schools and parents. Therefore, PAUD institutions need to create flexible programs and build effective communication to encourage the active role of all parents.

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