

The role of parents in supporting the early childhood learning process at ba baleharjo

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the role of parents in supporting the learning process of early childhood in BA Baleharjo. The approach used is descriptive qualitative research with observation, interview, and documentation methods. The results of the study indicate that the active involvement of parents as learning companions at home greatly influences children's motivation and learning development. Parents act as directors, encouragers, and providers of a supportive learning environment. These findings emphasize the importance of collaboration between parents and teachers to create a fun and meaningful learning atmosphere for early childhood. The conclusion of this study indicates that parental involvement is an important factor in supporting the success of children's learning processes in PAUD institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is an important foundation in developing quality human resources. According to UNESCO, early childhood is a golden age that only occurs once in a person's life and cannot be repeated. Therefore, efforts to optimize early childhood development are crucial to be carried out holistically, involving various elements, including the active role of parents in the child's learning process. In Indonesia, the PAUD curriculum prioritizes the principle of family involvement in supporting the child's learning process, as mandated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning National PAUD Standards (Vhalery et al., 2022).

Based on the results of initial observations conducted at Bustanul Athfal (BA) Aisyiyah Baleharjo, Pacitan, it was found that the level of parental participation in accompanying and supporting children's learning varies greatly. There are some parents who are very actively involved, but there are also quite a few who show little concern for their children's educational process. In fact, parental involvement greatly influences children's learning motivation, social emotional development, and cognitive abilities. A study by Epstein (Neuman & Powers, 2022) confirmed that the success of children's education is greatly influenced by parental involvement, both in the school environment and at home.

On the other hand, previous research results have highlighted the importance of school and parent partnerships in early childhood education. For example, research conducted (Lamb, 2010) shows that effective communication between teachers and parents contributes greatly to shaping children's character. However, there have not been many studies that specifically examine the local context and real conditions of the role of parents in Islamic-based educational environments such as BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo. Therefore, this study is relevant and important to conduct in depth to explore the forms of parental support in accompanying children's learning process at the institution.

Various literature states that parental involvement in children's education has a positive impact on academic achievement, moral development, and social adaptation of early childhood (Fan & Chen, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Epstein's model of parental involvement offers six forms of support, namely: parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaboration with community. Although this concept is widely used as a reference in western education, there have not been many adaptations or implementations that are contextual to local culture and values in Indonesia, especially in Islamic-based educational environments such as BA Aisyiyah.

Previous research (Schaffer, 1982) on the role of parents in Islamic kindergartens in Yogyakarta showed that regular parenting programs and home visits improve emotional relationships between teachers, children, and parents. However, there have not been many scientific publications that discuss in depth the role of parents in educational units in rural areas, taking into account the economic, social, and cultural challenges that surround them.

Although there have been many studies examining parental involvement in early childhood education, most of these studies are still general in nature and have not reached local aspects, especially in Islamic-based PAUD institutions in areas such as Pacitan. There is a gap between the theory proposed in the literature and the practices that occur in the field. The limited empirical data from small and community-based educational institutions such as BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo also strengthens the urgency of conducting this research. Therefore, this study will focus on how parents are actually involved in supporting children's learning, as well as the factors that influence the intensity and quality of this involvement.

The main objective of this study is to describe and analyze the role of parents in supporting the early childhood learning process at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo. This study also aims to identify forms of parental involvement, obstacles faced, and strategies used by institutions to improve collaboration between teachers and parents. The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the study of early childhood education and offer practical recommendations for the development of parental involvement programs based on local and Islamic values.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deep understanding of the role of parents in supporting the early childhood learning process at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo. This approach was chosen because it is appropriate for revealing complex and contextual social phenomena, and allows researchers to explore the meaning behind the actions and interactions of informants directly in the field (Neuman & Powers, 2022). The main focus of this study is to describe in detail the forms of parental involvement, factors that influence their participation, and how the school establishes partnerships with parents.

The target of this study were parents of children registered as students at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo, class teachers, and school principals. The selection of informants was carried out purposively with the following criteria: (1) parents who are active or less active in school activities; (2) teachers who have taught for more than one year at the institution; and (3) the principal as the manager and person in charge of learning activities. The characteristics of the informants reflect the diversity of socio-economic backgrounds and education levels, which are expected to provide varied perspectives on the role and involvement of parents (Saleh, 2015; Su & Ng, 2023).

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with open-ended questions, allowing for further exploration of the answers given. Observations were conducted by directly participating in activities in the school environment involving parents, such as parent-teacher meetings, parenting activities, and home visits. Documentation includes archives of communication between teachers and parents, records of parenting activities, and school evaluation reports related to parental involvement.

The main instrument in this study was the researcher herself, who acted as a key instrument in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data. As part of the research instrument, interview guidelines and observation sheets were prepared and validated by two early childhood education experts to ensure content validity. The researcher also conducted a limited trial (pilot interview) with two parents from other PAUD institutions to refine the instrument before being applied in the main data collection. This research was conducted for two months, starting from February to March 2025, with the main location at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo, Pacitan, East Java. During the research process, the researcher was actively involved in various activities in the school environment to build closeness and obtain naturalistic data.

The validity of the data is maintained through triangulation techniques of sources and techniques, namely by comparing data from various informants and methods (interviews, observations, documentation). In addition, researchers also conducted member checks with key informants to ensure the conformity of the interpretation results with the true intentions of the informants. Field notes and daily reflections of researchers were also used to support the credibility of the findings and the data interpretation process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. Forms of Parental Involvement in the Learning Process

The results of the study showed that parents at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo were involved in various aspects of children's learning, both directly and indirectly. The forms of involvement include: accompanying children to study at home, attending parent-teacher meetings, participating in parenting activities, and being involved in school work programs such as bazaars, Kartini Day competitions, and religious activities. The majority of parents showed high enthusiasm in school activities that were social and spiritual in nature. This finding supports Epstein's (2001) theory of six types of parental involvement, especially in the areas of parenting and communication. High participation in non-academic activities indicates that parental involvement is not limited to cognitive aspects alone, but also touches on socio-emotional aspects and local cultural values.

2. Factors Driving and Inhibiting Parental Involvement

Factors driving parental involvement include: (1) awareness of the importance of early childhood education; (2) a personal approach from teachers to parents; and (3) flexibility of school activity times. On the other hand, limited work time, feelings of lack of confidence in assisting children in learning, and parents' lack of understanding of child development are significant inhibiting factors.

As Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (Sosu & Pimenta, 2023) emphasized, parents' motivation to be involved in their children's education is strongly influenced by their role perceptions, self-efficacy, and supportive social context. In the context of BA Baleharjo, the teacher's communicative approach and schedule flexibility are key to accommodating the diversity of parents' backgrounds.

3. Teacher Strategies in Establishing Partnerships with Parents

Teachers at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo actively build communication with parents through WhatsApp groups, home visits, and personal consultations. In addition, teachers provide flexible homework sheets, allowing parents to accompany their children according to the time available. This approach fosters mutual trust between teachers and parents. This strategy is in line with the "school-family partnership" approach developed by Swap (1993), which emphasizes the importance of two-way communication and collaboration between schools and families. In this case, the role of teachers is not only as educators but also as facilitators of the relationship between home and school.

4. Changes in Children's Behavior as an Impact of Parental Involvement

Active parental involvement has a positive impact on children's learning behavior and attitudes. Children become more confident, more regular in participating in class activities, and show improvements in social skills. Parents also report changes in children's attitudes at home, such as preferring to read books and play productively. This finding strengthens the research results of (Gennetian et al., 2010; Boorin, 1999) which shows that parental involvement, especially in the early childhood phase, has a significant impact on children's learning motivation and social development.

5. Implications of Findings for Early Childhood Education Practices

The results of the study show that the success of early childhood education cannot be separated from the active role of parents. Therefore, schools need to create a more inclusive and adaptive participation space for parents' needs. One innovation that can be developed is a mini-training program for parents on child care and education, which is adjusted to their work schedules.

This finding supports efforts to reconstruct the theory of parental involvement in early childhood education, especially in local contexts such as BA Baleharjo, which combines religious values, local culture, and a participatory approach in managing education.

Table 1. Level of Parental Involvement in Children's Learning

Participation Level	Number of Respondents
Tall	17
Currently	42
Low	11
Total	70

These data show that there is still room for strengthening parental participation, especially in helping with learning activities at home and assisting with simple tasks. This needs to be followed up by the school through mini training activities or socialization regarding strategies for assisting children at home.

Discussion

This study reveals that parental involvement in the early childhood learning process at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo is active and multidimensional. This finding strengthens the results of research conducted by Ramadhani (2022), which states that parental involvement has a strong correlation with the cognitive and social development of early childhood, especially in a religious-based educational environment. This can be seen from the participation of parents in school activities that are not only academic, but also include social and religious activities that reflect local values (Beatriks Novianti Kiling, Indra Yohanes, 2016).

In contrast to the research findings by Lestari and (Subekti, 2021; Rima, Selviana et al., 2016) which showed that parental involvement tends to be minimal in schools in urban areas due to work factors, this study found that with a communicative approach and flexible schedules, parents can still participate actively despite time constraints. Differences in geographic context and school approach are the main factors influencing the form and level of involvement.

The teacher's strategy in establishing partnerships with parents through communication media such as WhatsApp and home visits is one of the factors for the success of the partnership approach. This strategy is also supported by Santoso's research (Brown et al., 2007; Damayanti et al., 2018), which shows that regular two-way communication between teachers and parents can increase trust and more active involvement from parents. In the context of BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo, the role of teachers is not only as educators, but also as mediators who bridge the relationship between home and school (Van Der Voort et al., 2014; Bradford & Hawkins, 2006). The data on parental involvement successfully collected in this study shows that most parents are at a moderate level of participation, with a fairly significant percentage. This is shown in Table 1 below:

CONCLUSION

This study shows that parental involvement in the early childhood learning process at BA Aisyiyah Baleharjo plays an important role in shaping children's attitudes and independence. This involvement is reflected through moral support, participation in school activities, and active communication with teachers. This finding emphasizes the importance of partnerships between schools and families as the main foundation for the success of early childhood education, as well as encouraging the strengthening of contextual and sustainable collaborative strategies

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