Fostering Early Childhood Independence Through Positive Parenting Programs

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Abstract
This study examines the implementation and impact of a Positive Parenting Program. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and employed the case study method. The case study was designed specifically to explore the impact of the positive parenting program on parental competence in fostering early childhood independence within the context of Bandung. Data was collected through interviews with training managers, school heads, teachers, and parents participating in the program. Findings show that the Positive Parenting Program in the Playgroup Atinidi was carefully planned with clear objectives. Content and teaching methods were adapted to meet the developmental stage of children and parents' needs. Topics covered signs of independence, building self-reliance, and the importance of collaboration. The program was effectively successful in enhancing parental competence in fostering early childhood independence. Program impact was measured through observable changes in children's behavior and feedback from parents with a strong emphasis on collaboration and community involvement. This study contributes to the literature by providing insights into the adaptation of Positive Parenting Program in the Indonesian context and proposing directions for future research and practice.

Kata Kunci: Program Parenting, PAUD, Kemandirian Anak, Kompetensi Orangtua


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study method. The case study was specifically designed to explore the impact of a positive parenting program on enhancing parental competence in fostering early childhood independence within the Bandung context. Data were collected through interviews with a training manager, the principal, teachers, and parents involved in the program. Findings indicate that The Positive Parenting Program at Playgroup Atinidi is meticulously designed with clear objectives. The content and teaching methods are tailored to meet the developmental stages of children and the needs of the parents. Topics cover signs of independence, fostering independence, and its importance. The program effectively enhances parental competencies in fostering early childhood independence. The program’s impact is measured through observable changes in children’s behavior and feedback from the parents with strong emphasis on collaboration and community involvement. The study contributes to the literature by providing insights into the cultural adaptability of Positive Parenting Programs in an Indonesian context and proposes directions for future research and practice.

**Keywords:** Parenting Program; Early Childhood Education; Children independence; Parents’ Competence.

**INTRODUCTION**

The early years of a child’s life are crucial in shaping their future development and well-being. During this period, parenting plays a pivotal role in molding a child’s experiences and behaviors that later become character (Latif et al., 2023; D. Mulyati & Nurhayati, 2020; Nurhayati et al., 2021; Nurhayati & Rosita, 2020; Ratningsih et al., 2021; Sholihah & Nurhayati, 2022; Sulaimawan & Nurhayati, 2023). Parenting styles play a crucial role in building children’s independence, with optimal development occurring at the age of 4 (Hermawati et al., 2021; Ramananda & Munir, 2022). The style and quality of parenting have a significant impact on various aspects of a child’s growth (Gondiawati & Nurhayati, 2024; Juhana & Nurhayati, 2023; Karwati & Nurhayati, 2024; Rahayu & Nurhayati, 2023; Sholihah & Nurhayati, 2024). This underscores the importance of parental competency, especially in the early years, as it directly influences a child’s ability to develop independence and other critical life skills (Ahmad et al., 2024; Murniati & Nurhayati, 2024; Rahmat et al., 2024).
Parental competency, defined as a parent’s ability to effectively meet their child’s developmental needs, is a key focus of these programs. Research by Garcia et al. (2018) suggests that enhancing parental competency can lead to better developmental outcomes for children, particularly in fostering independence. They argue that competent parenting involves not only the provision of physical and emotional security but also the encouragement of autonomy and self-reliance in children. Parental involvement is a cornerstone of early childhood development. The interplay between a child’s learning environment and their developmental outcomes has been extensively documented, with a consensus among researchers that active parental engagement is associated with improved social, emotional, and academic competencies in children (Nurhayati et al., 2022; Nurhayati & Rumsari, 2020; Rosita et al., 2020; Rumsari & Nurhayati, 2020). This notion is further supported by Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, which posits that a child’s development is intricately linked to their immediate environment, particularly family interactions (Crawford, 2020).

The concept of positive parenting has gained significant attention in the realm of child development and parenting. Lanjekar (2022) stated that Positive parenting and cooperative parent-child relationships are essential for a child’s cognitive development and reduce the risk of depression. Rooted in the principles of positive psychology, these programs aim to promote parenting strategies that are supportive, nurturing, and communicative (Anugrahani, 2019; Indrawati, 2020; Nurhayati & Rosita, 2020; Rahayu & Nurhayati, 2023). Sanders et al. (2017) explained that the core principles of positive parenting include creating a safe and engaging environment, fostering a positive learning environment, practicing assertive discipline, maintaining realistic expectations, and emphasizing parental self-care. These principles form the foundation of effective positive parenting strategies. Positive parenting programs typically involve training parents in skills related to effective communication, empathetic understanding, and responsive caregiving (Heryanti & Nurhayati, 2023; Nurhayati & Rosita, 2020; Rahayu & Nurhayati, 2023). The role of positive parenting in fostering early childhood development
has been explored in various contexts. A study by Jiang et. al. (2018) in a China setting found that positive parenting practices, such as allowing autonomy and encouraging exploration, were effective in promoting social emotional development in early childhood.

Neppl et. al. (2020) study evaluates the longitudinal associations between positive parenting and child effortful control. Effortful control is crucial for self-regulation and has been linked to academic performance and externalizing behaviors. Sanders et. al (2019) found that Parenting support programs that promote positive parent-child relationships can enhance self-regulation capacities in both parents and children, leading to more positive life outcomes and fewer mental health, social, and relationship problems. Furthermore, Study by Frick (2018) Positive parenting practices, such as positive reinforcement and parental warmth, can reduce conduct problems in young children with callous-unemotional traits and increased emotional well-being in children. However, there is a noticeable scarcity of research focusing specifically on the impact of these programs in fostering child independence within different cultural settings, such as Bandung. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring the Positive Parenting Program at Play Group (Kelompok Bermain/KOBER) Atinidi in Bandung and its effectiveness in enhancing parental competence in fostering early childhood independence.

The research is guided by three central questions: 1) How is the Positive Parenting Program at Playgroup Atinidi implemented and what are its objectives in enhancing early childhood independence? 2) What role does parent involvement and collaboration play in the success of the program, and how are challenges in this area addressed? 3) What observable outcomes and feedback mechanisms indicate the effectiveness of the program, and what plans are there for its continuity and sustainability? The novelty of this research lies in its focus on a relatively under-explored area—assessing the influence of positive parenting programs on specific developmental outcomes in a non-Western cultural setting. The study promises to provide valuable insights into how such programs can be tailored to meet the unique needs of diverse populations.
and contribute to the development of culturally sensitive and responsive parenting programs.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research approach and employed the case study method. The case study was specifically designed to explore the impact of a positive parenting program on enhancing parental competence in fostering early childhood independence within the Bandung context. Utilizing a qualitative approach was essential for capturing the intricate experiences, attitudes, and motivations of the participants, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the research problem.

Participant selection for the study was executed through purposive sampling, aiming for a comprehensive representation of viewpoints concerning the positive parenting program. The participant cohort included 22 individuals: one training manager, one principal of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) institution at TK Plus Atinidi, five teachers from the same institution, and 15 parents whose children were enrolled in the program. The selection criteria focused on individuals with a minimum of three months’ direct experience in the program and a willingness to contribute their insights.

Data were collected using a combination of methods, each rigorously validated to ensure their reliability and relevance. Semi-structured interviews, constituting the primary data source, were guided by an interview schedule validated for content accuracy through expert judgment. This guide was reviewed by a panel of ECCE and positive parenting specialists to ascertain its relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. A pilot test with a demographically similar group was also conducted to refine the interview questions based on the feedback received. Observational data were gathered using a checklist, developed and validated through expert review and pilot observations, to thoroughly capture the nuances of program implementation and participant interactions. Document analysis was employed as a triangulatary method,
assessing the authenticity and relevance of program-related materials to supplement the insights gained from interviews and observations.

The positive parenting program was conducted over a period of three months, comprising weekly sessions lasting two hours each. Data collection commenced after the program’s third session, with interviews conducted in locations convenient for the participants, each lasting approximately 45 minutes to an hour. Observations were methodically recorded during the program sessions. Data analysis involved a detailed process of transcription, extensive reading, and coding to identify and refine themes pertinent to the research questions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Program Implementation:

The Positive Parenting Program at Playgroup Atinidi is meticulously designed with clear objectives. According to the parenting program manager and the principal, the program aims to "provide parents with an understanding related to the independence of early childhood" and "build a positive thinking concept for parents." The program's design is structured in stages, guiding parents from understanding to practical implementation, as evidenced by the parenting manager response: "Identify the developmental tasks of early childhood to foster its independence," and "Pouring out notes on the stages of the child’s independence from the reflection results to be implemented at home in the form of habituation with the media available around each home."

The content and teaching methods are tailored to meet the developmental stages of children and the needs of the parents. Topics cover signs of independence, fostering independence, and its importance. The program employs interactive teaching methods like Q&A, direct interviews, and literature reviews, ensuring the material is "delivered clearly, systematically and the intent and purpose are understood," as one respondent noted. Participant interaction and program duration are structured to encourage active collaboration among parents. The program is "usually conducted twice a year," with additional sessions for urgent
matters, and encourages interaction through "working together, discussions, sharing, making and building a commitment together to foster the independence of the child."

Contemporary research in early childhood education stresses the importance of a well-defined structure and clear objectives in parenting programs. According to Gagne et al. (2023) in the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program, clear stages and objectives help in demystifying the parenting process, providing parents with a sense of competence and direction. The structured approach at Playgroup Atinidi, which guides parents through stages of understanding, reflection, discussion, and practical application, is a manifestation of this principle. This structured progression is supported by developmental psychology theories, such as those of Vygotsky, which emphasize scaffolding and building upon existing knowledge to promote learning (Gagné, Piché, et al., 2023).

Parent Involvement and Collaboration:

Parent involvement is a cornerstone of the program. Parents are encouraged to be active participants through various methods, including free enrollment and aligning schedules with working parents. One of the challenges faced is "working parents find it difficult to take leave," necessitating adjustments to their leave schedules. Collaboration is key to the program’s success. It collaborates with Grahita Psikotest and other community figures to "ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all social strata." The program aims to "accommodate diversity/diversity of citizens in the related environment."

The emphasis on parental involvement aligns with the ecological systems theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner, which highlights the importance of the family’s role in child development (Crawford, 2020). The program’s approach of actively involving parents and addressing scheduling challenges aligns with research indicating that accommodating parents’ schedules leads to higher program attendance and engagement (Musa & Nurhayati, 2020; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Suharyat et al., 2023). Furthermore, research by Fantuzzo et al. (2004) has shown that parental involvement is a key predictor of children’s academic success and socio-
emotional development (Antony-Newman, 2019). The collaborative aspect of the program, which includes partnerships with various community stakeholders, echoes the community systems theory, which underscores the importance of a supportive network in enhancing program effectiveness (Hajjar et al., 2020; Murniati & Nurhayati, 2024; Musa et al., 2022).

Program Outcome:

The program’s impact is measured through observable changes in children’s behavior and feedback from the parents. Changes such as "some children have started to be independent in preparing their needs" serve as indicators of success. Feedback mechanisms are in place to "give every participant the opportunity to express their message and impression of the activity."

Continuity and sustainability are emphasized, with plans to "expand the material and activities in the program by creating a community of parents sharing knowledge and experience." The program seeks ongoing support and plans to develop further collaborations for long-term sustainability, with the community and participants responding and supporting the program in the long term by "building the same view on the importance of parents having an understanding and benefits of fostering early childhood independence through parenting in the family." These findings illustrate a comprehensive approach to fostering early childhood independence through positive parenting, with a strong emphasis on parent education, active involvement, and continuous improvement based on feedback and observed outcomes.

The program’s focus on observable behavioral changes and continuous feedback is in line with the evidence-based practice model, which advocates for the utilization of empirical evidence to inform program design and evaluation (Arif & Nurhayati, 2024; Evans, 2022; Hidayat et al., 2024; Masri & Nurhayati, 2024). This approach is also consistent with the principles of formative evaluation, which involve ongoing assessments to improve program effectiveness (Baharuddin et al., 2024; Tsipianitis & Roumelioti, 2021). The commitment to continuity and sustainability is supported by literature that emphasizes the importance of long-term
support and follow-up to ensure the lasting impact of parenting interventions (Gagné, Clément, et al., 2023; Gagné, Piché, et al., 2023; D. S. Mulyati & Nurhayati, 2020; Sholihah & Nurhayati, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The Positive Parenting Program at Playgroup Atinidi provides a compelling case study in the effective implementation of early childhood parenting interventions. Grounded in well-established psychological and educational theories, the program’s structured approach, which guides parents through a clear sequence of understanding, reflection, discussion, and practical application, aligns with contemporary research advocating for structured, stage-wise frameworks in parenting programs. Active parent involvement and collaboration, hallmarks of the program, resonate with the ecological systems theory, emphasizing the family’s pivotal role in child development and the importance of community support networks. The program’s focus on observable behavioral changes and continuous feedback as measures of success reflects an evidence-based practice model, ensuring that interventions are informed by empirical evidence. The commitment to continuity and sustainability aligns with the maintenance stage of the Transtheoretical Model, highlighting the need for ongoing support to consolidate gains. This research contributes to the field by demonstrating the practical application of established theories in a real-world setting, providing a blueprint for similar interventions. It sparks new theories about the integration of community resources in parenting programs and opens avenues for future research, particularly in exploring long-term outcomes and scalability of such programs. Future research could investigate the program’s impact over extended periods and its adaptability to diverse cultural contexts, contributing to the global discourse on early childhood development and positive parenting practices.

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