



Parenting Program Management: Fostering School-Parent Cooperation to Optimize Children's Character Development in Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the management and implementation of parenting programs in early childhood education settings within Southwest Aceh, Indonesia. The research focuses on three kindergartens (TK), TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie, TK. Al Khaliq Susoh, and TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa—utilizing a qualitative approach to explore how these programs are planned, organized, executed, and monitored. Findings underscore the critical role of school principals in leading these initiatives and the significant impact of active parental involvement on children's character development. The study highlights the successful integration of community resources and stakeholder engagement despite resource constraints and cultural differences. The results suggest that systematic management, continuous feedback, and adaptive strategies are essential for effective collaboration between schools and parents. Key observations include the need for clear annual goals, structured coordination, and regular evaluation mechanisms to refine program effectiveness. The study calls for future research to address its limitations, including a confined geographical scope and short study duration, by conducting longitudinal and comparative studies across diverse regions. Incorporating quantitative methods alongside qualitative insights could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term impacts of parenting programs on child development. Therefore, the research advocates for policies that facilitate active school-parent collaboration, emphasizing the importance of community involvement in educational practices to support the holistic development of children.



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1. Introduction

Education is important for shaping human personality and, consequently, society. Recognizing its importance, governments worldwide have prioritized enhancing educational quality [1, 2]. High-quality education systems are expected to foster a generation capable of driving societal progress in positive directions [3, 4]. Education from a young age, as argued by experts, lays the deepest

foundations in a child's psyche, influencing their cognitive and moral development. By age ten, children typically transition from heteronomous morality to a more autonomous moral stage, indicating the development of their internal moral compass [5].

The early years are critical in setting a child's life trajectory, offering a unique opportunity to influence future leaders who are healthy, morally upright, and

intellectually and spiritually enriched [6, 7]. The belief that formal education should start only at elementary school is a misconception; neuroscience research has shown significant brain development occurs from birth through age four, suggesting that early stimulation is crucial for optimal physical and mental growth [8]. The role of parents in this developmental phase is fundamental. Habituation, combined with exemplary behavior and value instillation, forms the bedrock of character education, which goes beyond teaching right from wrong to fostering good habits that make moral choices instinctive.

However, current parenting programs within educational settings, especially at the kindergarten level, are often limited and not sufficiently aligned with these developmental needs [9]. Parenting education typically coincides with school meetings and lacks comprehensive coverage of essential parenting skills that should be communicated [10, 11]. This highlights a gap in the effective management of parenting programs that necessitate systematic planning, organization, execution, and control to benefit children's character development.

Prior research has explored various aspects of the relationship between schools and parents in education. Lindsari et al. [12] emphasize the importance of continuous, integrated, and constructive engagement between parents and schools to enhance educational outcomes. Other studies have focused specifically on the management of parenting programs. For instance, Romlah [13] and Kusmawanti [14] highlighted the critical role of parental involvement in designing and implementing parenting programs, suggesting that effective communication and participatory decision-making processes are key to successful outcomes.

This research investigates the management of school parenting programs, focusing on fostering effective collaboration between schools and parents to optimize children's character development in early childhood education settings. Specifically, the study will assess the current state of parenting programs in selected kindergarten settings in Southwestern Aceh, Indonesia, identify gaps and challenges in managing these programs, and propose a refined model of parenting program management to enhance school-parent cooperation and support the holistic development of children. Using a case study approach in three kindergartens—TK.Negeri Pembina in Blangpidie, TK-Al Khaliq in Susoh, and TK. Jamal Has in Jeumpa—the study will explore the effectiveness of existing management practices and the dynamic interplay between schools and parents, with the ultimate goal of proposing a model that

enhances school-parent cooperation and effectively supports the holistic development of children.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach, adhering to the principles of naturalistic inquiry to interpret phenomena occurring within the natural settings of selected kindergartens. Qualitative research involves a thorough interpretation of phenomena through the lens of various methodological tools [15]. The research emphasizes understanding the natural conditions of objects, where the researcher serves as the primary instrument. This study adopts descriptive qualitative research to depict and illustrate the natural and human-engineered phenomena by focusing on characteristics and interactivity between various activities without manipulating the studied variables [16].

2.2. Research Location and Duration

The research was conducted in three kindergartens in Blangpidie, Susoh, and Jeumpa districts in Southwest Aceh Regency, Indonesia. The study spanned from January to March 2024, allowing for the observation of educational practices and parental involvement within these educational settings.

2.3. Research Participants

The subjects of this study were nine individuals, comprising three kindergarten principals, three teachers, and three parents. These participants were chosen based on their critical roles in implementing and experiencing the educational programs at the research sites. Qualitative researchers aim to provide a comprehensive picture of the issue by capturing diverse perspectives and identifying related factors [17]. The subjects were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that each participant provided relevant and detailed information regarding the phenomena under study [18].

2.4. Research Instruments

The research instruments were developed to collect data effectively and included structured interviews, observation guidelines, and documentation methods. The interview guide contained specific questions for the principals, teachers, and parents to understand their roles and experiences in the educational programs. Observation guidelines focused on management practices of the parenting programs, aiming to capture the principals' planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Documentation involved the collection of photos, videos, and written records from the

Table 1. Overview of parenting program management stages.

Stages of Management	TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie	TK. Al Khaliq Susoh	TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa
Planning	Strategic approach with clear annual goals.	Emphasis on community-driven objectives.	Inclusive of wider community and local leaders.
Organization	Structured calendar, parental committees.	Community events, parent-school collaboration.	Broad stakeholder involvement, resource mobilization.
Execution	Joint parent-child activities, parent meetings.	Community engagement activities.	Community and parent-driven program execution.
Monitoring	Surveys, feedback forms, informal feedback.	Continuous feedback collection, adaptation of strategies.	Regular evaluation, stakeholder feedback.

kindergartens to supplement the data obtained from interviews and observations.

2.5. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was conducted using three primary techniques [19]. Direct observation of activities and behaviors within the kindergarten setting allowed researchers to immerse themselves in the environment and gather data firsthand. Interviews were conducted to extract deep, contextual data from participants. The interviews were structured and semi-structured to allow flexibility in responses and to explore the breadth and depth of the study themes. Analysis of relevant documents, including program plans and execution records, as well as direct recordings of ongoing activities at the research sites, was performed to supplement the information collected through other methods.

2.6. Credibility and Validity Measures

Several strategies were employed to ensure the data's credibility and validity [20]. Prolonged engagement involves spending sufficient time in the field to obtain various data sources. Triangulation uses multiple data sources and methods to cross-verify the information gathered. Member checks involved participants in data verification to confirm the findings accurately reflect their views. Negative case analysis actively sought and discussed data contradicting initial interpretations to refine the outcomes.

2.7. Data Analysis

Comprehensive data was gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation. This data was then filtered and condensed into a manageable form while retaining essential features relevant to the research questions. The reduced data was organized into comprehensible formats to facilitate analysis. Finally, interpreting the displayed data allowed for deriving meaningful insights and conclusions about the research topic [21].

3. Results and Discussion

The study was conducted at TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie, TK. Al Khaliq Susoh, and TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa in Southwest Aceh, from January to March 2024, yielded insightful observations and interviews regarding the management of parenting programs. These programs aimed to enhance child character development through structured cooperation between schools and parents.

3.1. Management of Parenting Programs

The management of parenting programs across the three kindergartens—TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie, TK. Al Khaliq Susoh, and TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa—provides a comprehensive model of how early childhood education centers can actively involve parents in the character development of children. The approach taken by these institutions involved several key aspects: planning, organization, execution, and monitoring, which the school principals predominantly spearheaded. This systematic approach is detailed in [Table 1](#), which outlines the management stages as executed by each kindergarten.

In the planning stage, each school demonstrated a strategic approach to developing the parenting programs. The principals, acting as the main orchestrators, established clear annual goals discussed with teachers and parents at the start of the academic year. This phase often involved setting specific objectives for the children's character development, such as enhancing empathy and cooperation, which influenced the activities planned for the year.

Organizational efforts were evident in how the schools managed coordination among different stakeholders. Each school crafted a structured calendar that included school and parental participation events. The organization also creates committees with parent members to help distribute the workload and ensure diverse input in executing the programs.

Table 2. Successes and Challenges in Implementation.

Kindergarten	Successes	Challenges
TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie	High parental engagement, enhanced educational strategies.	Parental availability varies, differing views on child-rearing.
TK. Al Khaliq Susoh	Strong community involvement, sense of shared responsibility.	Need for more resources, cultural barriers.
TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa	Broad community support, relevant program development.	Resource limitations, differing educational expectations.

The execution phase saw active engagement from both parents and children. Schools organized various activities, including joint parent-child sessions like arts and crafts or sports days and parent-only meetings focused on strategies and challenges in child development. This hands-on approach reinforced the lessons from school, extending the learning experience from school to home.

Feedback mechanisms were integral to monitoring and evaluating these programs. Schools often use surveys and feedback forms during parent-teacher meetings to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives. Informal feedback from regular interactions also provided qualitative data that allowed principals and teachers to refine the programs as needed. The evaluation was crucial for understanding the impact on child behavior and identifying areas for improvement.

The principals' systematic and thoughtful management of these programs underscores the importance of leadership in educational settings. The principals' roles went beyond administrative duties to actively shaping the educational ethos of the kindergartens. Their commitment to integrating parents into the educational process was evident in the detailed planning and active follow-up on the programs' outcomes.

This detailed management approach ensured that the parenting programs were not just an adjunct to the kindergartens' curriculum but a core component of their educational strategy. It aimed to foster an environment where child development is seen as a collaborative effort between the school and the family.

3.2. Successful Implementation of Cooperation

The successful implementation of cooperation between schools and parents in the context of parenting programs at TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie, TK. Al Khaliq Susoh, and TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa illustrates the dynamic interplay between educational strategies and community involvement. Each kindergarten implemented strategies that engaged parents and encouraged an active partnership in fostering the children's development. The successes and challenges each kindergarten faces in

implementing these strategies are summarized in [Table 2](#).

At TK. Negeri Pembina Blangpidie, regular and structured meetings between parents and school staff were a cornerstone of the parenting program. These meetings were not merely informational but served as forums for parents to voice concerns, provide feedback, and participate in decision-making regarding curriculum and extracurricular activities. This open line of communication ensured that parents felt valued and invested in the school's efforts, which enhanced the implementation of educational strategies tailored to the community's needs.

TK. Al Khaliq Susoh utilized community events to enhance cooperation between the school and the parents. Activities such as community clean-ups, arts performances, and sports days were designed to involve parents in a non-academic capacity, fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility. These events provided opportunities for parents to observe and engage with the school's educational environment, thus reinforcing the character traits being developed in students.

At TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa, the planning process for parenting programs involved the parents and the wider community, including local leaders and other stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensured that the programs reflected the community's values and expectations, increasing their relevance and effectiveness. The involvement of a broader base of stakeholders also helped in mobilizing additional resources and support for the school's initiatives.

A critical component of the successful implementation at all three kindergartens was the continuous collection of feedback and subsequent adaptation of strategies. This iterative process allowed the schools to refine their approaches based on real-time parent input. For example, if feedback indicated that parents felt disconnected from the educational process, schools might introduce more interactive workshops or digital communication platforms to bridge this gap.

Recognizing and celebrating successes played a significant role in sustaining parental engagement and cooperation. Schools made it a point to showcase the outcomes of the parenting programs during school events and through regular communications, such as newsletters or social media posts. Celebrating these successes validated the efforts of parents and school staff and motivated continued involvement and support.

Despite the successes, the schools faced challenges such as varying levels of parental availability and differing views on child-rearing practices. Schools offered flexible participation options to address these issues and provided education sessions on modern pedagogical strategies emphasizing developing social-emotional skills alongside academic learning.

3.3. Discussion on Key Findings

The key findings from the implementation of parenting programs at TK Negeri Pembina Blangpidie, TK. Al Khaliq Susoh, and TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa brings to light several pivotal factors that contribute to the success of educational initiatives. This discussion delves into how each factor played a significant role in shaping the programs and their implications for future educational practices.

One standout observation from the study is the critical role of school principals as leaders in the conceptualization and execution of parenting programs. Their leadership was not just administrative but also transformative. Principals who demonstrated a clear vision and proactive leadership style fostered a culture of collaboration and commitment among staff and parents. This leadership approach helped align the school's educational goals with the parenting program's objectives, ensuring a cohesive and integrated approach to child development.

The degree of parental involvement significantly influenced the effectiveness of the programs. Schools that succeeded in deeply engaging parents saw more pronounced improvements in children's social and emotional competencies. This involvement went beyond mere attendance at school events; it included active participation in the planning and evaluating of educational content and methods. When parents are actively involved, they gain insights into the educational processes become advocates, and reinforce the learning at home, creating a continuous loop of feedback and improvement.

The integration of the wider community, particularly in the case of TK. Jamal Has Jeumpa provided a broader support network and additional resources that enriched

the program. Involving local leaders and community members brought diversity in perspectives and resources, enhancing the program's relevance and acceptance within the community. This broader community involvement also ensured that the educational initiatives had a wider impact, promoting a communal approach to raising and educating children.

The research also highlighted several challenges, such as resource limitations, cultural barriers, and differing educational expectations, which posed significant hurdles. However, these challenges also presented opportunities for innovation. For instance, resource constraints encouraged schools to seek partnerships with local businesses and organizations, expanding their support networks and resource bases.

The findings suggest that parenting programs must be supported by policies that facilitate active collaboration between educators and parents. Policies should encourage schools to allocate time and resources for regular parent engagement activities and training for educators on effective parental involvement techniques. Furthermore, educational practice should move towards a more community-centered approach, recognizing the value of diverse inputs in developing curricula and educational strategies.

3.4. Limitations and Future Studies

This research provides valuable insights into the management and success of parenting programs in three kindergartens in Southwest Aceh, but it also faces several limitations that must be acknowledged. Understanding these limitations can guide future research efforts and enhance the applicability and scalability of findings. The study was conducted in a relatively confined geographical area within the Southwest Aceh, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions with different cultural, economic, or educational contexts. Different regions may have diverse parental involvement norms and varied school resources.

The research focused on only three kindergartens, which restricts the breadth of data and may not fully represent the diversity of early childhood education settings in Indonesia or other countries. Future studies should consider including a larger and more varied sample of schools to enhance the diversity of data and findings. Additionally, the study predominantly utilized qualitative methods, such as observations and interviews. While this approach provides deep insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions, adding quantitative data could help measure the impact of parenting programs more objectively and comprehensively.

The study was conducted over three months, which may not be sufficient to observe long-term outcomes and impacts of parenting programs on child development. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess these educational interventions' sustainability and long-term effects.

Future research could benefit from comparative studies across different regions and cultural settings to address geographical limitations and understand how cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of such programs. Implementing longitudinal studies that follow children and parents over several years can provide insights into the long-term effects of parental involvement in education, particularly how it impacts children's academic achievements and social skills over time. Future studies could also employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs to better establish causality between the implementation of parenting programs and outcomes for children. This could involve the use of control groups where no or different types of interventions are applied.

Researching the impact of specific policies designed to enhance parental involvement in schools could also provide valuable data. Such studies could help craft more effective policies supporting schools and families in collaborative educational endeavors. Additionally, incorporating quantitative methods to complement the qualitative findings could include assessments of children's cognitive, social, and emotional skills before and after the implementation of parenting programs. Additionally, surveys could quantitatively measure parent and teacher satisfaction and perceived benefits of such programs.

4. Conclusions

This study on the management of parenting programs in early childhood education settings in Southwest Aceh highlights the essential role of school principals in fostering collaboration among stakeholders, the significant impact of active parental involvement, and the benefits of integrating the wider community to support educational initiatives. Despite resource limitations and cultural barriers, innovative approaches such as partnerships with local organizations were employed to enhance program effectiveness. Future research should include comparative and longitudinal studies, integrating quantitative methods to understand further and measure the impacts of these programs, ultimately aiding in the holistic development of children.

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