

Democratic Parenting in Fostering Early Childhood Independence

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Abstract

Parenting style is a set of attitudes and practices applied to children to predict their future behavior. This study aims to describe the role of democratic parenting in shaping the independence of early childhood in PAUD Junior, West Ungaran, using a descriptive qualitative method. This study uses primary and secondary data sources. The research techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. In this study, data validity was tested using triangulation techniques. The study shows that democratic parenting greatly supports the growth of independence in young children. This parenting style creates a loving and open communication environment that supports children's emotional development, increases their self-confidence, and improves their ability to manage their emotions. Democratic parenting provides controlled freedom, allowing children to make simple decisions and explore their environment, which encourages the development of intellectual independence and critical thinking skills. The application of a rational reward and punishment system helps children understand the consequences of their actions and improves their social skills through interaction with their peers.

Keywords: early childhood education, parenting styles, democratic parenting styles, independence

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is an individual who is vulnerable at the age of 0-6 years, in the process of growth and development has unique characteristics. At an early age, children are able to develop their abilities, such as intelligence, independence, creativity and morals, as well as emotional (Nurhikmah et al., 2023). Early childhood experiences a phase of rapid growth known as the golden age (Rijkiyani et al., 2022), stimulation from the environment is very important to optimize its potential. Social interaction also plays a role in shaping personality, especially in the aspect of independence. Positive support helps children learn to be responsible in various activities independently.

Parents certainly have a role for the growth and development of their children because it is a form of parental devotion to God, the community, family, nation and state (Dewi & Widyasari, 2022). However, when they are busy with their work, they forget or neglect to help children's growth and development, one of which is children's independence.

The child's development process is influenced by the parenting style that is applied, parenting has an important role in shaping children's character (Nuraeni & Lubis, 2022). Parenting is a collection of attitudes, practices, given to children in order to predict how children behave in the future and is important in the process of children's growth and development, both physical and psychological (Yasmin et al., 2023).

Children's development starts at home so that what happens at home can shape the child's character for the future. Home is the first environment for children, which has an important role so that children can grow and develop as expected. Therefore, parents have a responsibility in parenting.

Parents have a special parenting style and have the right to choose educational institutions for their children to develop their potential and get information about the development of children's education, because education is a process of shaping behavior to educate the life of a nation (Shofwan et al., 2019). The parenting style applied by parents greatly affects the emotional development of children, which will have an impact on determining children's success in the future. By teaching emotional skills to children, they will be better able to face various challenges.

Hurlock (1999) explained that parental parenting can be divided into three, namely authoritarian

parenting, permissive parenting, and democratic parenting. Baumrind (1999) explained that parenting is grouped into three of them: 1) *authoritarian parenting*, 2) democratic parenting (*Authoritative Parenting*), and 3) *permissive parenting*.

Democratic parenting has an important role in fostering early childhood independence. This pattern emphasizes open communication and shared decision-making, so that children can express their thoughts freely and make decisions wisely. Parents in this parenting style prioritize the interests of the child, but remain disciplined when the child makes mistakes. Democratic parenting also has a positive impact and helps shape children's character, including independence (Pratiwi et al., 2020). Independence in children not only includes the ability to complete simple tasks, such as dressing, eating, going to the toilet or bathroom, but also involves aspects of decision-making, responsibility, and confidence in facing challenges (Kurniawati & Hayati, 2020).

Early childhood education trains children to be independent through activities such as wearing shoes, eating, washing hands, and completing simple tasks. This independence is taught from preschool age and is habituated in school or the environment. In order for children to develop independence, they need to be taught from an early age (Manit et al., 2024). Some factors that affect independence include habituation, emotional intelligence, and support from parents. Children will be independent if they start from their family, and this is what causes a person's level of independence to vary from one to another, because of the factors that affect this independence. Factors that affect independence are parental ancestry, parental parenting. Parents who apply the wrong parenting style will have bad consequences for the development of the child's psyche. Of course, the application of parents is expected to be able to implement a good and wise parenting style.

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METHOD

This study uses a type of qualitative research with a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research is called the naturalistic research method, because the research is carried out naturally (Sugiono, 2020). This qualitative research is often used to explore social aspects, such as history, community life behavior, and social behavior aspects by obtaining data directly.

This research is located at PAUD Junior, Jalan Rindang Asih No.32 A, Sembungan Kec.Ungaran Barat, Semarang Regency. With a focus on democratic parenting. The subjects in this study were seven people, consisting of: five parents and two educators. This study uses two types of sources, namely secondary sources and primary sources. (a) Primary data sources are the main data sources obtained directly by researchers through interview and observation techniques. This primary data source is obtained directly from the original source. The parties involved in it are educators and parents. (b) These secondary data sources can be obtained indirectly that are relevant to the research topic, such as journal articles, teachers' diary/monthly diaries about child development.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. To test the validity of the data, it was carried out using a triangulation technique. The validity test of the data using triangulation was carried out because in this qualitative research the data obtained could not be tested using statistical test tools. According to (Sugiyono, 2020).

Miles & Huberman (in Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024) said that data analysis consists of four activities, namely data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verifying data. Data collection is the process of collecting the data obtained. Data reduction is the process of choosing the main data that focuses on important things according to the topic. The following data analysis techniques are explained in Figure 1.

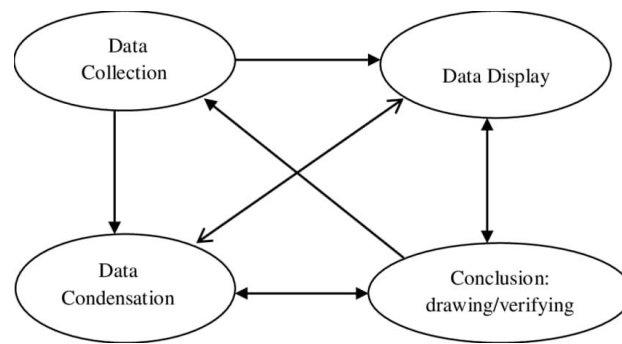


Figure 1. Data Analysis Technique

The initial stage of data analysis is the collection of data that has been obtained and collected through various methods, such as interviews, observations, and documentation. The data obtained was in the form of activity record text, voice recode/audio, and activity images which were then analyzed.

The next step is data reduction. Data reduction means grouping, summarizing and then compiling data codes related to research data and converting the data obtained into writing. It is used to obtain clear information and make it easier for researchers to obtain data by eliminating less relevant data and retrieving relevant data.

Phase Next is the presentation of data, which provides a systematic overview of the data obtained so that it is easy to understand. The data is presented in the form of narrative text, tables or other forms. The presentation of good and easy-to-understand data helps researchers in drawing conclusions.

The last stage in data analysis is the drawing of conclusions or data verification, the drawing of conclusions consists of a collection of information that has been obtained so that it gets a match. Drawing conclusions requires strong evidence of the source of the data and ensuring its accuracy.

With this data analysis stage, researchers can manage data properly, be consistent and can produce valid and accountable data conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Democratic Parenting in Fostering Independence through Warmth and Emotional Independence

The role of parents plays an important role in children's lives. Good parents will try to provide good parenting for their children. In this case, this democratic parenting style is characterized by consistent affection, open communication between parents and children, children's sense of confidence and the ability to manage emotions. Genuine affection and sincere attention will provide a sense of security for children, and make children feel loved. Sunarti et al. (2024) stated that parenting has an important role in children's emotional development, including in the development of self-confidence, emotional management skills, social interaction, and resilience. Supportive and caring parents help children feel appreciated, thereby increasing confidence in children.

This study found that parents of children in PAUD Junior, West Ungaran have sincere affection. The affection given is not only in the form of praise or physical touch but also parents are involved in children's daily activities, for example when children are playing, studying and children facing problems. With this attention, children feel more appreciated, supported and loved, it makes children grow more confident and dare to try new things without fear. Rijkiyani et al. (2022) explained that the role of parents in building confidence in children is very fundamental. Parents can be good listeners, show an attitude that respects children or appreciate every good deed done by children, invite children to solve problems experienced and provide motivation to children. In these ways, parents not only build their children's confidence, but also help them develop social and emotional skills that are important for their future lives.

Good communication is the key in democratic parenting. Parents give children the opportunity to be willing to speak up to express their thoughts and feelings without being judged. When children feel disappointed, parents do not immediately tell them to shut up, but listen and help children understand what they feel, as well as provide constructive feedback. It helps children communicate their thoughts and emotions in a healthy way, helps children understand existing boundaries and rules, so they can learn to take responsibility for their actions. The influence of communication between parents and children is enormous, especially in the formation of attitudes, behaviors, mindsets, and mentality for children (Novitasari & Shofwan, 2023).

The ability of children to manage their emotions is greatly influenced by the parenting style applied by parents. In this case, the child is able to control himself. Children learn to understand their feelings and

how to respond appropriately. Parents here guide and set an example when facing situations that make children angry or sad. For example, when the toy is damaged, it will not immediately replace the toy or when it wants something and whines, but will accompany the child to calm down and talk about what he feels. In addition, children have confidence because they are trusted by their parents. This trust arises because parents often give simple responsibilities, such as choosing their own clothes or choosing other activities that they like. Although it is not perfect, parents guide well.

In this study, it is shown that democratic parenting strongly supports the growth of independence in early childhood. Through consistent attention, healthy communication, and the opportunity to learn independently, children grow into confident individuals, able to manage emotions, and ready to face various situations according to their age stages. Adpriyadi & Sudarto (2020) explained that democratic parenting has proven to be very effective in fostering independence in early childhood. Democratic parenting provides a balance between freedom and limitations, parents set clear rules but still involve children in the decision-making process. This approach encourages children to think critically, make choices, and take responsibility for their actions, thus gradually building confidence and the ability to be independent.

Democratic Parenting in Fostering Independence through Discipline

Democratic parenting has an important role in helping early childhood develop independence. Democratic parenting provides space for children to develop slowly according to their age. One of these parenting styles is the establishment of clear rules and limits. When parents set consistent rules, children can understand the expectations and feel safer in their environment. (Kartika et al., 2024) states that democratic parenting is effective in supporting early social development. This approach provides space for children to express themselves and develop independence, while still setting clear boundaries and rules. In other words, democratic parenting allows children to grow and develop optimally according to their stages of development, since they are guided by positive affection and control, which ultimately forms a forgiving, generous, happy and well-defined future character.

The results of observations in the field show that parents not only give a ban to children, but also explain the reason behind the rule. For example, when the child is asked to clean up the toy, the parent explains that later the toy will be lost and damaged, the child is asked to return the towel to its place after the bath. With strict boundaries and such a way of conveying, feeling not pressured, children also learn to appreciate discipline, and understand the importance of following rules in daily life. From here, the beginning of children's independence is formed, because they learn to get used to it, not because they are afraid of being scolded.

In addition to clear rules, children are trained to be responsible for the little things in daily life, which is also part of democratic parenting. For example, parents teach children to clean up toys and tidy up used books or bring their own school supplies. This activity looks trivial but for early childhood it is trained and provides an opportunity to learn about responsibility and get used to being independent and understanding that every small action has consequences.

In this process, parents play the role of supporters who provide guidance and encouragement. Parents do not immediately correct or take over if the child makes a mistake in carrying out his responsibilities. Parents can provide clear directions on how to tidy up, so that children understand the steps that need to be taken (Deviana, 2024). They praise the child's efforts and slowly point out a better way. This attitude makes the child feel appreciated and not afraid to try. From these small mistakes, children learn to improve themselves and become more independent. This approach is different from authoritarian or permissive parenting, which tends to pressure or leave children without direction.

Children who are raised with a democratic approach tend to have a higher sense of confidence in completing tasks independently, because from childhood they have been accustomed to being given trust and support. In general, the findings of this study show that democratic parenting, implemented through clear rules and habituation of responsibility from an early age, has been shown to be effective in establishing independence in early childhood. Children learn to manage themselves, get used to a directed routine, and develop an understanding of the importance of responsibility. Parents who are consistent, patient, and open in accompanying their children play a big role in creating an environment that supports the growth of independence.

Research conducted by Annisa & Kholidah Nur (2025), that democratic parenting, which emphasizes clear rules and habituation of responsibility from an early age, has proven to be very effective in forming early childhood independence. This approach allows children to develop gradually according to their age, with space for expression but still within directed boundaries. As a result, children grow up to be independent, confident, and able to interact socially well. With this approach, children not only develop into independent individuals, but also grow up with a strong sense of confidence.

Democratic Parenting in Fostering Independence, Controlled Freedom and Intellectual Independence

This research reveals how the democratic parenting style applied by parents contributes to shaping early childhood independence. Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that children raised in democratic parenting tended to be given freedom in accordance with their developmental stages. One form of freedom is being given the opportunity to make simple decisions in daily life. For example, children are given the option to choose the clothes they want to wear, or choose the toys they want to play with. Although the decision is trivial, it gives the child room to feel in control of himself, as he learns to think, choose, and take responsibility for his own choices.

In addition to providing space for freedom, this democratic parenting style also supports children to explore. Parents give them the opportunity to try new things, such as putting on and tying their own shoes, role-playing, building blocks, drawing, singing. Here parents are a companion and keep an eye on the child if the child really needs it, it will help. This makes children dare to try.

Wibiarani & Wati (2023) said that democratic parenting is a way of educating children that has been proven to be effective in forming independence from an early age. Parents who implement this pattern not only set clear rules and accustom the child to responsibility, but also give them plenty of room to explore. Children are encouraged to try new things, such as learning to wear and tie their own shoes, role-playing, building blocks, drawing, or singing. This approach allows children to grow and develop step by step according to their age, with freedom of expression but still under directed guidance. As a result, children grow up to be confident, independent, and sociable.

Children's critical thinking skills are seen when parents or teachers invite them to discuss simple things, such as "why can't these animals be kept?" or "how to arrange this toy correctly?" and the habit of asking "What do you think?" instead of directly providing solutions, encourages children to think. When the child finally succeeds, a sense of pride and confidence will grow. The interaction between children, parents and teachers will support creating a healthy environment that will support problem-solving skills (Wari & Setiawan, 2022).

This research shows that democratic parenting is effective in fostering early childhood independence. Children are given space to make decisions, supported to explore the surrounding environment, and trained naturally to think critically and solve problems. Parents who are open, not too pressured, and able to be patient companions provide a solid foundation for children to grow into independent and confident individuals. The key to its success lies in a balance between giving freedom and still providing guidance when needed.

Democratic Parenting in Fostering Independence Through Rational Rewards and Punishments and Social Independence

This study found that in democratic parenting, parents not only provide affection and freedom, but also implement a system of rewards and punishments that are educational, not just punishing or pampering. Rewards are given not to bribe, but to appreciate the child's efforts, while punishment is not intended to scare people, but rather to teach responsibility. In this case, the gift is not only in the form of objects, but also praise or recognition for the child's efforts and good behavior. For example, when the child completes a task well, parents can give compliments such as, "Very good, you have completed the task well" providing motivation or this reward has a good impact on the child behaving well. On the other hand, if the child breaks the rules, the parents do not immediately get angry, but explain the consequences with easy-to-understand language. This approach makes children feel that their behavior has an impact. The results of the interview show that parents who give punishments and gifts are the key so that parents do not plan and children can understand the limits given.

In addition, this democratic parenting style encourages children to be able to interact with the surrounding environment. When children are given the opportunity to play outside the home or participate in group activities, they learn to adapt to a variety of social situations. Parents who support this exploration will help children feel more confident in interacting with peers. For example, when children play in the park, they learn to share toys and take turns.

Nurfitri (2021) stated that democratic parenting effectively fosters children's independence by integrating rational rewards and punishments as well as the development of social independence. Through this approach, the child is encouraged to think and take responsibility for his actions, where mistakes are addressed with discussion and advice, not punishment. At the same time, this parenting facilitates social independence by creating an open two-way communication environment, allowing children to express their opinions, discuss, and interact positively, so that they grow into independent, confident, and socially adaptive individuals.

The ability to resolve conflicts is also beginning to be seen in children who are democratically cared

for. In some cases, when there is a small argument with a friend, the child is able to express his feelings and find a solution without directly involving the adult. Although their methods are still simple, such as offering other toys while scrambling or taking turns with their friends, this suggests that the child has learned to solve problems with a peaceful approach. Parents support this ability by making discussions at home habitable and providing examples of how to resolve differences of opinion calmly.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that democratic parenting supports the growth of independence in early childhood. Through consistent attention, healthy communication, and the opportunity to learn independently, children grow into confident individuals, able to manage emotions, and ready to face various situations according to their age stages. Children who are raised with a democratic approach tend to have a higher sense of confidence in completing tasks independently, because from childhood they have been accustomed to being given trust and support.

Parenting creates an environment of compassion and open communication, which supports the child's emotional development, increases self-confidence, and the ability to manage emotions. Democratic parenting provides controlled freedom, allowing the child to make simple decisions and explore the environment, which encourages the development of intellectual independence and critical thinking skills. The implementation of a rational reward and punishment system helps children understand the consequences of their actions, as well as improve their social skills through interaction with peers.

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