

Parental Communication Patterns and Their Impact on Early Childhood Social Development

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze parental communication patterns and their impact on the social development of early childhood. The research approach used is descriptive qualitative, with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Research informants consisted of parents of early childhood children and teachers as data support. Data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that parental communication patterns have a significant influence on children's social development. Democratic communication patterns have been shown to support children in becoming self-confident, sociable, cooperative, and empathetic. Conversely, authoritarian communication patterns make children tend to be obedient but passive, while permissive patterns result in children who lack discipline and have difficulty sharing. Mixed communication patterns indicate inconsistent social development. In addition, nonverbal forms of communication (such as hugs, facial expressions, eye contact) play an important role in building a child's sense of security. This study emphasizes the importance of quality communication within the family to support the social development of early childhood in the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

The social development of early childhood is greatly influenced by the communication patterns that exist between parents and children, because through this communication process children learn to recognize values, norms and social skills that will shape their personality (Fajarwati et al., 2024). Warm, open, and loving communication patterns encourage children to be more confident, able to express their feelings, and build positive relationships with others.

Conversely, rigid, authoritarian, or minimally interactive communication patterns can hinder children's social development, stifle creativity, and even lead to feelings of inferiority. Therefore, the quality of communication between parents and children is a crucial foundation for developing social intelligence, independence, and the child's ability to adapt to their environment (Afiani, 2024).

Parents act as children's first socializers, as they develop the foundation of crucial social skills through daily interactions, such as sharing, cooperation, empathy,

and the ability to interact with their surroundings. This role is reflected not only in guidance or advice, but also through the role models, attitudes, and behaviors parents demonstrate in their daily lives.

Children tend to imitate the communication patterns and socialization styles displayed by their parents, making the quality of family relationships a key factor in fostering self-confidence, emotional control, and interpersonal skills. Therefore, parents have a significant responsibility to provide a positive, conducive, and loving communication environment so that children can develop into social, adaptive, and well-rounded individuals (Putra et al., 2025).

Warm, open, and affectionate communication patterns will support the development of positive social behaviors, such as the ability to cooperate, respect others, and foster self-confidence in children. Children who are accustomed to caring communication tend to be more able to express their emotions, understand others' feelings, and build harmonious relationships with those around them (Dwistia et al., 2024).

Conversely, authoritarian, closed, or minimally dialogue-based communication patterns can hinder a child's social development, such as withdrawal, low self-confidence, and difficulty interacting with peers. This demonstrates that the quality of communication within the family plays a crucial role as a primary foundation for a child's future social development (Sadriani, 2025).

Current trends indicate that many parents are preoccupied with work or using gadgets, resulting in reduced communication with their children. This situation hinders the interactions that should foster emotional closeness and social skills in children. As a result, children receive fewer opportunities to learn to communicate effectively, understand emotions, and develop empathy.

The impact of this lack of communication can be seen in schools and play environments, where children tend to struggle to connect with peers, lack self-confidence, and are slow to develop important social skills, such as sharing, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Therefore, active parental involvement in daily communication is crucial for children to grow up with healthy and adaptive social skills.

While much previous research has discussed the relationship between family communication and child development, most have focused on parenting styles such as authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive, without specifically examining the communication patterns that occur between parents and children in everyday life. Yet, these communication patterns play a crucial role in shaping children's social interactions, both within the family and outside the home.

Furthermore, most research focuses on cognitive or emotional aspects of children's development, while studies on social development, particularly in early childhood, are relatively limited. This indicates a research gap that needs to be filled by more in-depth examination of how parental communication patterns influence early childhood social development, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of child development.

The research gap in this study lies in the limited number of studies specifically examining parental communication patterns both verbal and nonverbal, as well as the intensity and quality of conversations and their relationship to early childhood social development. Most previous studies have focused on general parenting patterns without delving deeply into the communication dynamics that occur in everyday interactions

between parents and children. Furthermore, there have been few studies conducted in the Indonesian context, particularly on modern families facing the challenges of the digital era, where lifestyle changes and technology use have the potential to impact the quality of communication and children's social development.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus, which specifically examines the dimensions of parent-child communication, including how to speak, listen, respond, and the intensity of interaction, which have not been studied in depth. This research also presents a new perspective by linking these communication patterns to the social development of early childhood, especially in the aspects of cooperation, sharing skills, empathy, and interaction with peers. In addition, this research adds contextual value by examining phenomena in Indonesia, particularly the challenges of modern families faced with the influence of gadget use in everyday life. So the results are expected to provide practical and theoretical contributions in the field of family communication and child development.

The purpose of this study is to describe parental communication patterns in interactions with early childhood and analyze their impact on children's social development. This study also aims to provide an empirical overview of the importance of quality family communication in developing children's social skills, such as cooperation, empathy, and the ability to interact with the environment. Furthermore, the research findings are expected to serve as a reference for parents, educators, and practitioners in optimizing effective communication patterns to support optimal social development in early childhood.

METHODOLOGY

This research approach uses a descriptive qualitative method with the aim of describing in depth the communication patterns of parents and their influence on the social development of early childhood (Alfira & Siregar, 2024). The research was conducted in early childhood education (PAUD/TK) and certain family environments with the main subjects being parents of early childhood children (3–6 years old), with children and teachers/educators as supporting informants. Informants were selected through purposive sampling techniques considering active involvement in parenting. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with parents, participant observation of parent-child interactions at home and school, and documentation in the form of child development notes, conversation recordings, or activity photos. In this study, the researcher acted as the main instrument with the assistance of interview and observation guidelines.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, presentation of data in narrative or thematic tables, and drawing conclusions/verification regarding the relationship between parental communication patterns and children's social development. To maintain data validity, source triangulation (parents, children, teachers), technical triangulation (interviews, observation, documentation), and member checking were used with informants. From a research ethics perspective, the researchers maintained the confidentiality of informants' identities, sought informed consent from parents before interviews and observations, and prioritized the principles of honesty and openness in the data collection and reporting process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that the majority of parents apply a democratic communication pattern characterized by openness and giving children the opportunity to express their opinions, while a small number still use an authoritarian pattern with instructions without explanation, and some are permissive by leaving children without clear direction. The forms of communication that are seen include verbal aspects, such as light discussions, giving directions, motivation, and sharing daily stories, as well as nonverbal aspects such as touch, facial expressions, eye contact, and hugs that strengthen emotional bonds. As a result, children who are accustomed to open communication show the ability to share, cooperate, and easily adapt to peers, while children with an authoritarian communication pattern tend to be passive, lack confidence, and are afraid of interacting, while children with a permissive pattern appear to lack discipline and have difficulty controlling their emotions. Factors inhibiting communication in the family include parents' busy work schedules, distractions from gadgets such as cell phones and TV, and parents' lack of understanding regarding the importance of intense communication with their children.

The Role of Communication Patterns in Children's Social Development

Parental communication is the primary foundation for developing social character in early childhood, as it is through daily interactions that children learn values, norms, and behavioral patterns that will influence their future social relationships. Communication patterns that are full of care, affection, and openness encourage children to develop self-confidence, empathy, and the skills to collaborate with others (Taylor et al., 2004). Conversely, minimal, closed, or stressful communication can hinder a child's social development, making them more likely to be passive, difficult to adapt to, and even putting them at risk of experiencing difficulties in establishing relationships. Therefore, the quality of communication between parents and children from an early age is crucial for the development of a child's social character, which will later become an important asset in their lives within the family, school, and community (Taek & Intansakti Pius X, 2023).

Communication patterns implemented from an early age play an important role in shaping how children interact, express themselves, and build relationships with others (Putri et al., 2024). Through consistent and high-quality communication, children learn how to express their opinions, manage their emotions, and understand the feelings of others. This not only influences children's social skills in interacting with peers but also forms the basis for developing self-confidence and independence. Conversely, if communication patterns are poorly directed or involve minimal interaction, children are at risk of social difficulties, difficulty adapting, and less able to form healthy relationships. Therefore, the quality of communication implemented by parents from an early age is a key foundation for children's social and emotional development.

Effectiveness of Democratic Communication Patterns

Warm, open, and loving communication patterns show the most positive results for children's social development, because through these interactions children feel valued, heard, and loved (Aisyah, 2023). This condition encourages children to be more confident in expressing themselves, to work easily with others, and to develop strong empathy. Furthermore, positive communication patterns help children develop conflict resolution skills, understand social norms, and establish harmonious relationships with peers and adults. Therefore, quality communication within the family is key to

supporting the development of healthy and adaptive social behavior in children from an early age (Khoerunisa et al., 2025).

Children who grow up with warm and open communication patterns from their parents will be more confident, cooperative, sociable, and able to express their opinions well (Firdausi & Ulfa, 2022). Parents' listening, providing opportunities to talk, and responding positively make children feel valued, thus fostering their courage to interact with their surroundings. This not only develops healthy social skills but also fosters children's ability to collaborate, understand others' feelings, and adapt to various social situations (Nurishlah et al., 2024).

In line with family communication theory, which emphasizes dialogue, openness, and empathy, children raised in a positive communication environment will more easily develop their social skills. Through dialogue, children learn to express their opinions while respecting the views of others (Ratmawati et al., 2024). Parents' openness to their children's ideas and feelings fosters self-confidence and the courage to interact. Meanwhile, empathy demonstrated by parents through attention and warm responses helps children understand their own emotions and those of others. Thus, family communication patterns based on dialogue, openness, and empathy are an important foundation for developing children who are self-confident, cooperative, and capable of establishing harmonious social relationships.

Negative Impacts of Authoritarian Communication Patterns

While authoritarian communication patterns can foster obedience in children, they also limit creativity and reduce their ability to interact freely with their environment. Children tend to follow orders without understanding the rationale behind them, thus lacking the skills to make decisions, express opinions, or express new ideas. This can lead to children being passive, fearful of making mistakes, and lacking confidence in social relationships, thus hindering the optimal development of their social skills (Asni & Asqia, 2024).

Children who grow up in an authoritarian communication pattern tend to be more passive, afraid of making mistakes, and less able to socialize with peers (Kurniawan, 2023). This is because the interactions they experience are often based on strict instructions and control, with little room for dialogue or expression of opinions. As a result, children are less trained to develop courage, self-confidence, and the skills to build healthy social relationships, putting them at risk of experiencing difficulties adapting to the school environment and everyday life.

Consequences of Permissive Communication Patterns

Children who grow up with a permissive communication pattern tend to be less disciplined, selfish, and have difficulty controlling their emotions because they are used to having freedom without clear boundaries (Saadah et al., 2022). Lack of parental guidance prevents children from understanding rules and consequences, hindering the development of basic social skills such as sharing, cooperation, and respect for others. This can make it difficult for children to adjust to the school environment and everyday social interactions, where healthy and cooperative interactions are essential.

Mixed Patterns and Impact Inconsistencies

Mixed communication patterns (democratic-authoritarian) result in inconsistent social development in children, because on the one hand children get space to express their opinions and themselves, but on the other hand they are often limited by rigid rules

and one-sided instructions (Akaroğlu, 2024). This situation leaves children confused about whether to fully comply or to express their opinions. As a result, children's social development fluctuates: sometimes they are confident, cooperative, and actively interacting, but at other times they may be passive, hesitant, or afraid of making mistakes. This misalignment in communication patterns can lead to ambivalence in children, which ultimately impacts their emotional stability and social skills in relating to others (Wadge et al., 2019).

Children who grow up with mixed communication patterns tend to show unstable social development, where they can be independent in some situations, but hesitant and lack confidence in others (Afiani, 2024). This happens because children are accustomed to receiving inconsistent messages from their parents: sometimes they are given the freedom to make decisions, but other times they are restricted by rigid rules with no room for dialogue. As a result, children lack clear guidelines for how to behave, leading to uneven development of courage, independence, and social skills (Muliati et al., 2024).

Research Implications

Parents need to be aware that the quality of communication has a huge influence on children's social skills, because through daily interactions children learn to recognize values, understand emotions, and build skills in relating to others (Muali & Fatmawati, 2022). Loving, open, and consistent communication not only strengthens the emotional bond between parents and children but also serves as an important foundation for developing positive social behaviors such as cooperation, empathy, and the ability to share. In this context, early childhood educators and practitioners can utilize research findings as a basis for providing education and support to parents regarding the importance of appropriate communication patterns. Through counseling programs, workshops, and parenting activities, parents can be guided to understand effective communication strategies according to their children's developmental needs, so that the roles of family, school, and community can work together to support optimal child social growth and development (Utomo et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study indicates that parental communication patterns play a crucial role in shaping the social development of early childhood. Open, dialogical, and affectionate democratic communication patterns have been shown to support children's self-confidence, sociability, cooperation, and empathy. Conversely, firm, one-way, authoritarian communication patterns tend to make children obedient but less confident and passive in social interactions. Permissive communication patterns with minimal direction lead to children lacking discipline, difficulty sharing, and difficulty controlling their emotions.

Mixed communication patterns (democratic-authoritarian) result in inconsistent social development, where children can be independent but often feel hesitant in interacting. In addition to verbal communication, nonverbal forms of communication such as touch, hugs, facial expressions, and eye contact are also very important in building a child's sense of security and social skills. Factors that hinder effective communication include parental busyness, excessive use of gadgets, and a lack of understanding of the importance of intense interaction with children. Thus, this study confirms that the quality of communication within the family is crucial for the social

development of early childhood, so parents need to improve their daily communication skills to support optimal child growth and development.

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