



## **The Impact of Children's Interpersonal Communication with Parents and Parental Involvement in Fostering Independence of 3-4 Year Old Children**

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the impact of interpersonal communication between children aged 3-4 years and parents and parental involvement in fostering children's independence. Independence is an important aspect in early childhood development, and is supported by warm, responsive communication patterns and active involvement of parents. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method on children aged 3-4 years at Tunas Harapan Ilahi Toddler School, Tangerang City. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with parents, and documentation. The results showed that effective communication between children and parents and involvement in daily activities have a positive impact on increasing children's independence. Children who received emotional support, opportunities to express their opinions, and were given small responsibilities showed better independence than children who lacked positive interactions. This conclusion reinforces the importance of interpersonal communication and parental involvement in shaping children's independent character from an early age. Based on these findings, it is recommended that parents and educators play an active role in building constructive communication and providing an environment that supports children's independence. This study contributes to the development of early childhood education programs that focus on independence.

**Keywords:** *Interpersonal Communication, Children's Independence, Parent Involvement*



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### **INTRODUCTION**

Independence is an important part of early childhood development (Hurlock, 2019). Children who are able to carry out daily activities independently, are able to make simple decisions, dare to express ideas, and are responsible for their actions, are children who can build important foundations for their future success (Papalia, Olds, & Feldman, 2021). (Sanrock, 2012) explains that independence in children aged 3-4

years is the result of interactions between biological and environmental factors. Biological factors, such as motor and cognitive development, allow children to carry out certain tasks independently (Erickson, 2022). Environmental factors, such as care and stimulation, provide opportunities for children to learn and practice independence (Ferdian Utama, 2017). Because independent children tend to have better social skills, more self-confidence, so they are better able to face life's challenges (Siswanto, Zaelansyah, Susanti, & Fransiska, 2019). Parents have a very important role in fostering children's independence (Utama, Arif, & Maharsi, 2024). The family environment is the first and main environment for children to learn and develop (Kamaruddin et al., 2023). The way parents communicate with their children, their level of involvement in their children's lives, and the parenting style they apply will greatly influence the development of children's independence (Kartikawati, Roni, & Purwanti, 2022). Positive parenting, such as frequent interpersonal communication, is also a factor that influences the development of children's independence (Putri & Ramadhani, 2024).

Children's interpersonal communication with parents is a bridge for children's independence (Dwiyanti & Martini, 2022). Effective interpersonal communication between children and parents is the key to building strong relationships and supporting children's growth (Lestari & Arumti, 2023). Through quality communication, parents can provide emotional support and motivation to children to try new things (Nur Tanfidiyah & Ferdian Utama, 2019). Then explaining the reasons behind a rule or request, parents help children understand the importance of independence. Parents can also give children the opportunity to make small decisions and be responsible for the consequences (Rachmad et al., 2023). The most important thing is that parents become role models for children in independence (Ferdian Utama, 2017).

Although much research has been conducted on the importance of children's independence and the role of parents, further research is still needed to understand in more depth how children's interpersonal communication with parents and specific parental involvement can influence the development of independence in children aged 3-4 years. It is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to the field of early childhood education, especially in developing effective programs to foster children's independence.

According to (Damayanti, 2018), his research states that having interpersonal intelligence is an important aspect that can influence a child's development. Based on sources, Jennifer explains, interpersonal intelligence has 3 aspects, namely: The ability to understand the moods and feelings of other people, have good relationships with other people, entertain from various perspectives, play a leadership role. One aspect of interpersonal skills that must be mastered by young children is the ability to have good relationships with other people (Jennifer A. O'Brien, 2018). The ability to make friends and maintain friendships is very important for children in interacting and communicating with other people. Not all children have good social interaction skills, such as conveying their ideas and feelings (Dewi, Mayasarokh, & Gustiana, 2020). Because humans are social creatures who will interact and communicate with other humans both interpersonally and in groups, communication skills are very important for a child (Khairulyadi, Ikramatoun, & Nisa, 2022).

However, children's language and interpersonal communication skills are not acquired automatically or just like that (Fauziah, Mahmudah, Dea, Utama, & Setiawan, 2024). One thing that influences children's interpersonal communication skills is the environment. The greater the influence the environment has on a child, the greater its contribution to the child's communication skills. And these skills are obtained from positive social interactions with parents in particular (Jumiati & Patilima, 2023).

Parents who can carry out interpersonal communication with their children in a warm, open and supportive manner will encourage their children to try new things because the children will feel safe and confident to express their ideas. Education is able to shape and change a person's personality in accordance with social demands and expectations. This personality can lead to the gate of future success because he is not only cognitively intelligent but also affective and psychomotor. Therefore, every child from birth to the age of eight has the opportunity to receive an education both at home and at school (NAEYC, 2020).

Unfortunately, many parents still think that their involvement in building interpersonal communication is not very important. Many parents still think that their children's communication skills will develop by themselves in line with their physical development and increasing age, without having to provide guidance and stimulation. There are still many parents who let their children enjoy playing gadget without time limits or rules. There are still many parents who do not give their children the opportunity to express their opinions (Marpuah et al., 2021). This can be a factor that causes a decrease in independence in children.

Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers at Pinang City Forest Park and the Tunas Harapan Divine Toddler School, the results showed that on average children's ability to receive and convey messages, as well as express thoughts and ideas was not optimal. That is why researchers feel the need to explore the impact of children's interpersonal communication with their parents and the involvement of parents in fostering the independence of children aged 3-4 years at the Tunas Harapan Divine Toddler School. One of the researchers' efforts and as a follow-up to this research is to improve interpersonal communication language skills between parents and children and make parents aware of the importance of parental involvement in building children's independence, namely by holding training (workshops) with the theme: "Parenting with the Language of Love".

Research on the relationship between the impact of children's interpersonal communication with their parents and parents' involvement in the development of early childhood independence has become the focus of attention of experts in the last few decades. Previous studies have shown that a warm, responsive, and supportive communication style from parents, as well as positive parental involvement can facilitate children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, including independence. Recent research increasingly emphasizes the importance of good interpersonal communication in fostering children's independence. Attachment theory, for example, highlights how a strong bond between parents and children can provide a solid foundation for children to explore their surroundings and develop self-confidence. Apart from that, this research also shows that involving parents in children's daily activities, such as playing and learning, can increase children's intrinsic motivation and encourage them to become more independent. Children who feel safe will be more courageous to explore the environment and try new things.

However, most previous studies focused more on school-aged children or adolescents. Research that specifically examines the impact of interpersonal communication and parental involvement on preschool children, especially aged 3-4 years, is still relatively limited. Moreover, with the increasingly complex social environment today, including the influence of technology and changes in lifestyle, more in-depth research is needed to understand how these factors interact with parental communication in shaping early childhood independence. In other words, research exploring the active role of children in communication with parents in the context of developing independence is still relatively limited.

This research raises academic questions about the impact of interpersonal communication on children's independence, the impact of parental involvement, and how both contribute to fostering the independence of children aged 3-4 years. This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, this research is expected to increase the knowledge and psychological understanding for parents about the importance of involvement in interpersonal communication with young children. From a practical side, this research is expected to provide insight for educators, parents and children regarding the importance of interpersonal communication skills and parental involvement in increasing children's independence.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, which was chosen because it allows researchers to understand in depth and comprehensively the role of interpersonal communication and parental involvement in the independence of children aged 3-4 years. This type of research is descriptive in nature, aiming to describe and explain phenomena in depth regarding the impact of interpersonal communication and parental involvement on children's independence at the Tunas Harapan Divine Toddler School. The research setting involved observation, interviews, and documentation in several locations, namely at the Tunas Harapan Divine Toddler School, the home of a mother who has a 3 year old child, and the Pinang City Forest Playground, Tangerang City. The research subjects were children aged 3-4 years and their parents who were also involved in collecting data through interviews. The research lasted for 2 months, namely from 20 May 2024 to 25 July 2024, with observations carried out 2 times a week for 1 hour each time. Observations include the time the child arrives and leaves school as well as when playing in the park to observe the child's interaction and independence skills (Murdiyanto, 2020).

Data collection procedures include participatory observation, non-participatory observation, field notes, in-depth interviews with parents, and documentation of children's activities. This observation technique allows researchers to observe behavior relevant to children's initiative, problem-solving abilities, and interactions with others. Interviews with parents dig deeper into parenting styles, communication patterns, and their perceptions of their children's independence. In addition, this research utilizes documentation to strengthen observation data. The subjects in this research were parents and kindergarten teachers who were studied in relation to children's communication patterns and independence. This research identifies the independence of children aged 3-4 years as an important phase in children's development, because children at this age begin to show a desire to try new things independently. The role

of interpersonal communication and parental involvement is very important in supporting children's independence. Parents who communicate openly and supportively can help children feel safe, confident, and ready to express new ideas. This research also shows that parental involvement in children's daily activities can provide opportunities for children to learn and develop the skills needed to become independent. Data analysis was carried out qualitatively through thematic and narrative analysis to identify the main themes that emerged from the data. The results of the analysis are used to draw conclusions which are used as the basis for writing research reports which are submitted to the relevant institutions. Checking the validity of the data uses the triangulation method, namely triangulation of sources, data collection techniques and time. This triangulation allows researchers to compare data obtained from various sources and techniques to ensure accurate data and reduce bias (Fadli, 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### *Parent and Child Communication Styles*

Communication that is warm, responsive and child-oriented is significantly positively correlated with the child's level of independence. Children feel loved, appreciated, cared for, and have their opinions heard. As expressed by Mrs. Rina, a parent interviewed:

*"I always try to listen to what my child says, even though sometimes he can't express everything clearly. I made sure he knew that his opinion was important and that I gave him my full support."*

Parents who use simple, clear and concrete language can help children easily understand the communication that parents often make, so that children can easily understand messages, recognize rules and be able to convey their thoughts and ideas comfortably. This was also expressed by Mr Amir, who said:

*"I often talk to my child in words that are easy to understand, so that he can understand better and can express what he wants."*

Children aged 3-4 years have high curiosity. Parents must be able to provide simple explanations behind the rules applied, so that children can easily follow the rules. For example, Mrs. Rina also added:

*"I always explain why he has to look after his things, so he understands and can do it himself."*

Developing independence is the fruit of positive interpersonal communication.

Parents who apply a democratic communication style provide opportunities for children to participate in decision making and express opinions. This has a positive correlation with children's independence, because it will encourage children to express themselves and develop their sense of responsibility and independence. As expressed by Ibu Sari:

*"I always invite my child to discuss, for example when choosing a toy or activity to do, I give him a choice and listen to his opinion."*

This makes children feel valued and more confident in making decisions. On the other hand, parents who apply an authoritarian communication style do not give children space to express opinions and learn to make choices, which will hinder the development of children's independence. Children have no initiative, are often told to

do so, and are always afraid of being wrong. This is in accordance with what was conveyed by Mr Joko, who said:

*"I often tell my child what to do without asking his opinion, and sometimes he seems confused and doesn't dare to make his own decisions."*

Previous research shows that many parents have not been able to implement communication that can develop children's independence. Various backgrounds make parents unable to implement effective interpersonal communication with children. Starting from cultural background, educational background, to the past background of parents who have experienced difficulties in the household, can be one of the reasons parents are unable to implement positive interpersonal communication. As stated by Andrea (2017) in her research entitled "The Impact of Domestic Violence on Interpersonal Communication in Preschoolers", that children aged 3-4 years who experience domestic violence are more likely to have problems with interpersonal communication. Parents experiencing domestic violence can seek help from professionals to learn how to communicate with their children in healthy and safe ways.

Parent and child interaction is not only limited to verbal communication, but also nonverbal communication. Children who often receive loving touches, smiles, hugs and kisses will easily develop positive behavior, because children feel comfortable, loved, appreciated and supported, which will ultimately increase the child's self-confidence and independence. As stated by Mrs. Rini:

*"I always give my child a hug and kiss every morning before he goes to school. It makes him feel loved and ready to face the day."*

On the other hand, a child who is easily emotional, lacks self-confidence, and is difficult to understand the rules, is often a child who rarely gets the touch of parents. As Mr. Hadi said:

*"My child spends more time alone and rarely receives hugs or affection from us because we are too busy."*

His heart was hurt and he felt neglected. One of the factors that causes children to rarely get touched is parents who are neglectful or too busy. Most children who experience this will look for fun by playing with gadgets without knowing the time, until they end up addicted to gadgets, as expressed by Mrs. Yanti:

*"My child prefers to play with gadgets to fill his free time, sometimes I feel he is closer to the gadget than to us."*

In line with research by Catherine Steiner-Adair (2019) entitled "The Use of Technology by Preschoolers and Its Impact on Interpersonal Communication" in Child Development Perspectives which shows that the use of technology by children aged 3-4 years can have positive and negative impacts on interpersonal communication. . It is important for parents to limit screen time and encourage face-to-face interactions to ensure that children develop healthy social communication skills. Social interaction is also an important interpersonal communication skill that children must have. Through playing with their friends, children learn to be empathetic to other people, learn to share, learn to be patient in waiting their turn, help friends who need help, throw rubbish in the right place, and so on. As stated by Jennifer A. O'Brien (2018) in her research entitled "The Role of Social Play in the Development of Interpersonal Communication Skills in Preschoolers" in the Early Childhood Research Quarterly which states that this research shows that social play is important for the development

of skills. interpersonal communication in children aged 3-4 years. Playing with other children helps children learn how to share, take turns, and resolve conflict.

According to Bela, et al. (2023), parents who actively involve their children in daily activities such as preparing meals, cooking, cleaning the table, tidying up toys, making the bed, or shopping show a positive correlation with the child's level of independence, because these activities teach children to increase their sense of responsibility, self-confidence, and independence. Parents who give children the opportunity to choose and convey ideas, such as choosing the color of clothes to wear, choosing the food they want, and so on, will help children develop self-confidence in making decisions and develop their independence. Parents who give children the opportunity to learn life skills such as wearing their own clothes, eating themselves, putting on and taking off their own socks and shoes, will also help children develop their independence.

Parents who always have open and two-way communication with their children will really help their children develop independence. Children who are often asked for their opinions will feel valued and give a positive response to the development of their self-confidence and independence. Parents who actively listen to their children's stories, respond and provide simple explanations to their children's questions, will help their children develop critical thinking skills and make independent decisions.

Parents who are good at creating a safe and comfortable home environment, providing educational toys, books, teaching aids that can stimulate children's cognitive and motor development, can give children space to explore and learn independently. Following a consistent routine can also create a safe and comfortable home for children, such as waking up in the morning, praying, exercising, bathing, having breakfast, brushing their teeth, and so on. This routine will help children develop self-regulation skills. Parents who are used to appreciating their children's work achievements will also create a safe and comfortable environment for their children because it makes them feel happy, appreciated and loved. It is important to give praise and appreciation for the efforts made by children, even if the results are not perfect. This will make it easier for children to develop their independence.

Children aged 3-4 years are children who like to try new things. Parents who forbid their children from trying will make their children less independent and accustomed to being served. In contrast to parents who give children the opportunity to try new things, children will learn to solve small problems when they face difficulties. This will increase the child's resilience and independence. Providing responsibilities appropriate to the child's age and abilities can increase the child's sense of self-confidence and independence. Letting children be responsible by giving small tasks according to the child's age, such as tidying up toys, picking vegetables, or sweeping the yard, can help children feel responsible and independent.

Parents are the most important role models for children. Children easily imitate whatever their parents do. By showing positive behavior, an independent and responsible attitude, parents will inspire their children to imitate their behavior. Examples include throwing away rubbish in its place, tidying up equipment that has been used, washing hands after eating, folding clothes, taking off footwear after entering the house, and so on. Because for children, they also need to learn to develop responsibility and independence. Parents who are able to be independent figures in life will be an example for children on how to be independent. Effective interpersonal

communication and positive parental involvement are a combination of characteristics that cannot be separated. The two work together and have a strong effect in increasing children's independence (Tukan & Lemba, 2019). Effective interpersonal communication will bridge better parental involvement in accompanying children's activities. Likewise, positive parental involvement can improve the quality of interpersonal communication with children.

## **Discussion**

### ***Growing the Independence of Children Aged 3-4 Years through Parent-Child Communication Styles***

Several key findings related to the impact of interpersonal communication between children and parents in increasing the independence of children aged 3-4 years. In the playground and at the Tunas Harapan Divine Toddler School, researchers met parents who implemented good interpersonal communication with their children. Parents who provide encouragement, confidence and support for what their children will do. Children are given the opportunity to express their desires, feelings and thoughts, then parents listen patiently and with love. Parents give appreciation for children's achievements in implementing independence, such as children being able to choose what toys to play with, children being able to wear their own socks, children putting shoes on the shoe rack, children putting money in the donation box, children carrying and putting bags in lockers. independently, children are able to eat themselves without being fed again.

However, there are also parents who seem to ignore communication with their children. When dropping off school, there are parents who are still engrossed in their devices. There is no greeting, no support, no attention, so the child looks gloomy, less enthusiastic and not independent. Children sit next to their parents waiting for the parents to finish with their devices, and don't want to move to their own class. In the playground, researchers also found children who did not receive support from their parents when they wanted to try one of the games on the playground. Parents forbid children from running, forbid children from climbing the footbridge, scold when children make mistakes which results in children not being confident enough to try other games, and not independently deciding what games they want. Children can only obey what their parents tell them to do.

At the Turnas Harapan Divine Toddler School, researchers found that many children were able to choose what work they wanted, how they would complete their work, had the courage to ask questions using good language to express difficulties and children were responsible for following the rules and behaving well when they finished working on their projects. This is because parents and teachers are used to giving children the opportunity to be involved in making decisions, as well as providing clear information about the rules and consequences.

But in the playground, researchers also found children who were moody, lacked self-confidence, had difficulty making decisions when asked to choose what game they wanted, just followed until their parents decided the game. This happens because parents are too dominant, and care is not child-centered, so interpersonal communication between parents and children is ineffective. Children are not used to being discussed. Children are not used to being given reasons for a rule.



At the Turnas Harapan Divine Toddler School, most parents send their children off to school with hugs, kisses and support. Children enter the classroom happy, confident, full of enthusiasm, and independent in participating in school activities. However, at the start of the new school year, there was also a 4 year old child who often had tantrums, didn't want to follow the rules, couldn't socialize with his friends, and cried constantly asking for a device. After observations, interviews and information from the school principal, it turned out that the child lived far from his parents. The father and mother work in different cities from the child. Children live and are cared for by household assistants who do not have special education regarding parenting styles. Children are used to being entrusted with gadgets by their caregivers. Children grow up without parental love and attention. Children rarely receive greetings, touches and hugs from their parents. So the school called the parents to immediately intervene to save the child.

The first thing parents and caregivers must do is divert children from devices. Children who are addicted to devices have a significant impact on their emotional and social development. So children must undergo appropriate therapy to help overcome addiction and develop healthier skills. Apart from that, parents and other family members must also develop a better understanding of children. Parents must improve interpersonal communication to meet children's needs for attention and affection, and create a supportive environment. There was a significant improvement after intervention and parental understanding of children. At school, children become calmer, want to play with their friends, want to take part in activities according to the rules. And his emotions are more controlled.

The findings of this study indicate that interpersonal communication between children and parents and parental involvement play an important role in increasing the independence of children aged 3-4 years. This is in line with the theory put forward by Amanda (2020) in her research entitled "The Impact of Parent-Child Interactions on Language and Communication Skills in Preschoolers" in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 58, 101842, which states that parent-child interactions positive and supportive attitudes are associated with better language and communication development in children aged 3-4 years. Parents can support their child's development by talking to them regularly, reading books together, and engaging in affectionate play.

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that interpersonal communication between children and parents has a big impact on growing the independence of children aged 3-4 years. Parental involvement also plays a role in fostering children's independence at that age. Apart from that, there is a significant positive impact from children's interpersonal communication with their parents as well as parents' involvement in fostering children's independence. Based on the research results, there are several recommendations that can be proposed. First, it is important to increase parents' knowledge and skills in communicating interpersonally with children aged 3-4 years, through training or workshops that discuss effective communication techniques and how to build good relationships with children. Second, encourage parents to be more involved in children's activities and development, such as playing, learning and parenting. Third, create an environment that is conducive to the development of children's independence, provide opportunities for children to carry out activities

independently, and provide appreciation for the achievements that children have achieved. Fourth, increase cooperation between parents and schools in fostering children's independence, by working together in choosing activities that provide education about the importance of independence.

It is hoped that this research can make an important contribution in understanding the impact of interpersonal communication and parental involvement in fostering independence in children aged 3-4 years, and can be used as a basis for developing programs aimed at increasing children's independence. The findings of this study also have important implications for parents, educators, and policy makers. For parents, they can foster children's independence by communicating openly and supportively, using constructive communication when disciplining children, and involving children in decision making. Apart from that, parents can also be involved in their children's play activities, train their children to do daily work, and attend their children's school activities. For educators, they can share with parents the importance of interpersonal communication and parental involvement in fostering children's independence, as well as facilitating activities that encourage parental involvement at school. Meanwhile, for policy makers, they can develop programs and services that encourage parental involvement in fostering children's independence and increase awareness of the importance of interpersonal communication and parental involvement in early childhood development through seminars or other supportive activities.

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