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## **The Role of Parents in Shaping Children's Learning Interest in Community-Based Early Childhood Education**

*Peran Orang Tua dalam Pembentukan Minat Belajar Anak di PAUD Berbasis Masyarakat*

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### **Abstract**

Interest in learning among early childhood children is influenced by parental involvement; however, in-depth studies regarding the experiences of parents and teachers in community-based early childhood education institutions in Indonesia remain limited. This study aims to describe the typology of parental roles, analyze their contribution to the development of children's learning interest, and formulate an effective model of parental involvement. The study employed Max van Manen's descriptive phenomenological approach using purposive sampling techniques. Participants consisted of three teachers and three parents from a community-based early childhood education institution in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation, then analyzed based on van Manen's four existential structures. The findings revealed four main themes: active and consistent assistance, the creation of an enjoyable learning environment, emotional reinforcement and verbal motivation, and the instillation of learning values from an early age. These four themes formed an integrative pattern of involvement that mutually reinforced one another. The findings also indicate that the quality of emotional interaction between parents and children plays a more significant role in shaping children's learning interest than parents' economic status or formal educational background. This study contributes to the development of a parental involvement model based on emotional relationships

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and recommends strengthening school–family partnerships through home-based parenting programs.

**Keywords:** parental role; early childhood learning interest; family involvement in early childhood education; children's learning assistance; early childhood education phenomenology

### **Abstrak**

*Minat belajar anak usia dini dipengaruhi oleh keterlibatan orang tua, namun kajian mendalam tentang pengalaman orang tua dan guru pada PAUD berbasis masyarakat di Indonesia masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan tipologi peran orang tua, menganalisis kontribusinya terhadap pembentukan minat belajar anak, dan merumuskan model keterlibatan orang tua yang efektif. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi deskriptif Max van Manen dengan teknik purposive sampling. Partisipan terdiri atas tiga guru dan tiga orang tua murid pada salah satu PAUD berbasis masyarakat di Kabupaten Wajo, Sulawesi Selatan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis berdasarkan empat struktur eksistensial van Manen. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat tema utama, yaitu pendampingan aktif dan konsisten, penciptaan lingkungan belajar yang menyenangkan, penguatan emosional dan motivasi verbal, serta penanaman nilai belajar sejak dini. Keempat tema membentuk pola keterlibatan integratif yang saling menguatkan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kualitas interaksi emosional orang tua dan anak lebih menentukan minat belajar dibandingkan status ekonomi maupun latar belakang pendidikan formal orang tua. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan model keterlibatan orang tua berbasis relasi emosional serta merekomendasikan penguatan kemitraan sekolah dan keluarga melalui program parenting berbasis rumah.*

**Kata-kata Kunci:** Peran orang tua; minat belajar anak usia dini; keterlibatan keluarga dalam PAUD; pendampingan belajar anak; fenomenologi pendidikan anak usia dini

### **Introduction**

Early childhood education (ECE) is the foundation of individual development that determines children's readiness for learning at the next educational level. During the age range of 0 to 6 years, stimulation from the family environment becomes an important factor in shaping children's interest in learning. Parental involvement has been shown to contribute to children's cognitive, socio-emotional, and early learning motivation development (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022; Kong & Yasmin, 2022). Parenting styles that integrate

emotional support and cognitive stimulation lead to more optimal child development (Chen & Mok, 2023). The quality of interaction between parents and children also plays a role in shaping long-term learning interest (Dominke & Steffensky, 2025).

Preliminary observations at a community-based early childhood education center revealed differences in children's learning behavior. Children who received intensive guidance from their parents demonstrated better engagement and concentration in learning compared to those who received less attention. Parental support at home is associated with children's academic readiness and socio-emotional development (Zhang & Anuar, 2026). This phenomenon encouraged the researchers to further explore the factors shaping these differences, particularly from the perspective of the lived experiences of parents and teachers directly involved.

Studies on the role of parents in early childhood education in Indonesia are still predominantly dominated by quantitative approaches that measure correlations and influences among variables (Liu et al., 2022). Such approaches have not been able to deeply reveal the subjective meanings and socio-cultural contexts underlying parental involvement practices. In addition, most previous studies were conducted in urban settings with adequate access to resources, while the experiences of parents in rural community-based early childhood education centers with economic and educational limitations remain underexplored (Pattison et al., 2022). This gap serves as the starting point of the present study.

This study offers novelty in two aspects. First, methodologically, this study employs Max van Manen's descriptive phenomenological approach, which enables the exploration of the lived experiences of parents and teachers in an authentic and contextual manner. Second, substantively, this study examines the role of parents in community-based early childhood education centers within the distinctive socio-cultural background of South Sulawesi, a context that has largely been overlooked in similar studies. The theoretical foundation of this research is based on the integration of Bowlby's attachment theory, Vygotsky's scaffolding

concept, and van Manen's phenomenological approach as complementary analytical frameworks.

Based on the background above, this study aims to: (1) describe the typology of parental roles in assisting early childhood learning; (2) analyze the contribution of parental roles to the development of children's learning interest; and (3) formulate an effective model of parental involvement in community-based early childhood education centers.

## **Theoretical Review**

### **1. Early Childhood Learning Interest**

Learning interest is a child's psychological tendency to actively engage in learning activities with feelings of enjoyment and enthusiasm. In early childhood, learning interest is situational and contextual and develops through meaningful social interactions with the closest environment, especially the family (Liu et al., 2022). Lev Vygotsky's scaffolding theory emphasizes that children's cognitive development is influenced by social context, in which parents play a role in supporting the child's learning process (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022).

Learning interest can be observed through focused attention, spontaneous questioning, active participation, perseverance in facing difficulties, and expressions of satisfaction after completing tasks (Pattison et al., 2022). (Shao & Kang, 2022) stated that preschool children's learning motivation is influenced by executive functioning and the quality of social stimulation within the family. (Hanifa & Azarine, 2023) emphasized that children's learning interest is related to teachers' ability to manage engaging and responsive learning activities. (Novitasari, 2023) stated that intrinsic motivation is a major determinant of students' learning achievement. Therefore, parental involvement becomes an important factor in shaping early childhood learning interest, particularly in the context of community-based early childhood education centers.

## **2. The Role of Parents in Early Childhood Education**

Parents are the first and primary educators for children. Parents contribute to three dimensions of involvement, namely physical involvement (presence in assisting children), cognitive involvement (providing intellectual stimulation), and emotional involvement (providing warmth and appreciation). (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022) stated that effective parenting integrates emotional warmth, clear boundaries, and structured freedom for exploration. This parenting style encourages increased motivation and children's interest in learning. (Pattison et al., 2022) emphasized that the effectiveness of parental involvement is not determined by socioeconomic status, but by awareness and commitment in providing emotional support.

Parental involvement has positive impacts on various aspects of child development. (Hanifa & Azarine, 2023) showed that parental involvement is positively correlated with reading motivation and reading comprehension in early childhood. (Saefullah et al., 2023) reinforced these findings by showing that the roles of parents, teachers, and the community synergistically contribute to students' learning motivation. (Fan et al., 2024) found that the quality of parenting and the safety of the home environment are the main predictors of children's curiosity as an important component of learning interest. (Wahyuni & Al Rasyid, 2022) emphasized that parental support plays a role in shaping children's independence as the foundation of lifelong learning.

## **3. Theoretical Foundations: Attachment, Scaffolding, and Phenomenology**

This study is based on three complementary theoretical frameworks. John Bowlby's attachment theory explains that children with secure attachment tend to be more confident in exploring and more open to new experiences, including learning activities. Responsive and consistent parents build a sense of psychological security as the foundation of children's learning interest (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022). The quality of the parent-child relationship also influences learning engagement through intrinsic motivation and academic self-efficacy (Shao & Kang, 2022).

Lev Vygotsky's scaffolding concept explains the role of parents in providing structured support without taking over the child's thinking process. This support encourages the gradual development of independence. The quality of early family interactions contributes to children's language and cognitive development and forms a strong cognitive and emotional foundation (Ramos et al., 2022; Seror, 2022). Max van Manen's phenomenological approach is used to understand the meaning of everyday lived experiences in depth through four existential structures, namely lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived relation. The integration of these three frameworks provides a holistic understanding of how parent-child relationships shape early childhood learning interest, particularly in the context of community-based early childhood education centers.

### Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive phenomenological method based on Max van Manen's guidelines. This approach was chosen because it is capable of exploring lived experiences in a deep and authentic manner. The researcher applied bracketing to minimize initial biases, allowing the meaning of experiences to emerge directly from the participants' perspectives. The study was conducted at a community-based early childhood education center in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, in April 2026.

The research participants consisted of six individuals selected through purposive sampling techniques. The participants included three active teachers with at least one year of teaching experience and three parents of students aged 4–6 years who were actively involved in school activities. The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1 to provide a clearer overview of the research context. **Table 1. Research Participant Data**

No.	Code	Group	Teaching Experience / Status	Description
1	Teacher 1	Teacher	14 Years	Head of ECE Center

2	Teacher 2	Teacher	5 Years	Homeroom Group A	Teacher of
3	Teacher 3	Teacher	More than 10 Years	Homeroom Group B	Teacher of
4	Parent 1	Parent	Farmer / Trader	Student's Parent	
5	Parent 2	Parent	Farmer / Trader	Student's Parent	
6	Parent 3	Parent	Housewife	Student's Parent	

*Source: Primary Research Data (2026)*

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: (1) semi-structured in-depth interviews (20–30 minutes per session) using open-ended questions to authentically explore experiences in assisting children’s learning; (2) participant observation during teaching and learning activities, focusing on children’s behavior, teacher-child interactions, and indicators of learning interest; and (3) documentation in the form of field notes, activity photographs, and conversation recordings with the written consent of the respondents.

Data analysis was conducted thematically using van Manen’s phenomenological approach, which included reflecting on participants’ lived experiences, identifying essential themes, and descriptive writing to reveal the meaning of experiences in depth based on four existential structures, namely lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived relation. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. Overview of Findings**

The phenomenological analysis generated four main interrelated themes in shaping patterns of parental involvement in fostering early childhood learning interest, namely: (1) active and consistent assistance, (2) the creation of an enjoyable learning environment, (3) emotional reinforcement and verbal motivation, and (4) the instillation of learning values from an early age. These four

themes indicate that parental involvement is integrative in nature and directly contributes to the development of children's learning interest.

## **2. Theme 1: Active and Consistent Assistance**

The physical and emotional presence of parents in consistently assisting children's learning has been proven to shape children's readiness and enthusiasm for learning. Teacher 1 stated:

*"Children who are accustomed to receiving learning assistance at home come to school enthusiastically and are immediately ready to participate in activities. They understand instructions more quickly and are more active in asking questions during the learning process."*

Teacher 3 confirmed that parental involvement at home is directly correlated with children's discipline and participation in the classroom. From the parents' perspective, Parent 1 assisted the child after the evening prayer using a play-based learning strategy:

*"I usually accompany my child to study after the evening prayer. If the child does not want to study, I invite them to learn through play so that it does not feel burdensome."*

Parent 2 (a private employee) also set aside time in the afternoon despite having a busy work schedule. (Pattison et al., 2022) emphasized that parental cognitive scaffolding significantly increases children's intrinsic motivation. (Han & Yan, 2025) added that consistent parenting styles contribute substantially to the socio-emotional development of preschool children. (Christianto et al., 2023) confirmed that parental learning support significantly influences students' interest in learning. The aspect of lived time in van Manen's framework is clearly reflected in these findings: structured routines of parental assistance create a learning rhythm that becomes internalized by children. (Zhang & Anuar, 2026) further strengthened this finding by showing that the consistency of parental involvement contributes to children's psychological well-being, which directly impacts their enthusiasm for learning.

### 3. Theme 2: Creating an Enjoyable Learning Environment

A home environment rich in stimulation contributes significantly to children's learning interest and creativity. Teacher 2 (with 5 years of teaching experience) observed:

*"Children from families who have picture books and coloring tools at home tend to be more creative and have richer vocabularies. They often talk about learning activities with their parents at home."*

From the parents' perspective, Parent 3 (a housewife) optimized simple objects around the house as learning media:

*"I provide storybooks and often invite my child to study together at night. Sometimes I use objects around the house to teach colors and shapes so that the child does not get bored."*

These findings indicate that parents' creativity in utilizing limited resources plays an important role in creating a meaningful learning environment. From a phenomenological perspective, this reflects the dimension of lived space, namely the transformation of the physical home environment into a learning space that supports children's development. (Li et al., 2023) confirmed that the quality of the home learning environment influences children's socio-emotional competence through the mediation of parent-child interactions. (Wang, 2025) added that a high-quality home learning environment during kindergarten significantly affects children's readiness for formal learning. (Bigozzi et al., 2023) further strengthened this by showing the impact of the home literacy environment on preschool children's reading and writing skills. (Skwarchuk et al., 2022) confirmed that learning habits developed at home influence children's literacy and mathematical skills up to the age of eight years. (Easterbrook et al., 2023) added that the quality of parental supervision and home environmental conditions determine children's learning success even in situations of limitation. (Fan et al., 2024) complemented these findings by showing that parental involvement in creating a stimulating environment also contributes to the development of children's creativity.

#### 4. Theme 3: Emotional Reinforcement and Verbal Motivation

Consistent verbal appreciation and emotional support from parents build children's self-confidence and continuously strengthen their interest in learning. All teacher respondents observed that children who are accustomed to receiving praise tend to be more willing to try new things. Teacher 2 stated:

*"Children who are accompanied by their parents are usually more confident and active in class. I can see the difference from the way they answer questions and dare to try new things."*

From the parents' perspective, Parent 3 consistently practiced giving appreciation for every effort made by the child, no matter how small:

*"Every time my child finishes drawing or reading, I always give praise. If the child receives a small reward, the enthusiasm for learning increases even more. I also invite the child to learn in a relaxed atmosphere so that they do not get bored."*

Parent 2 established daily communication by asking about the child's school activities, making the child feel heard and appreciated. The dimension of lived relation in van Manen's framework is clearly reflected in the quality of this emotional relationship. (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022) confirmed that positive reinforcement increases children's self-efficacy. Children who are appreciated for their efforts, not merely their results, tend to be more persistent in facing difficulties. (Shao & Kang, 2022) showed that academic self-efficacy mediates the relationship between the quality of parent-child relationships and children's learning engagement. (Kong & Yasmin, 2022) added that parental self-efficacy plays an important role in improving the quality of emotional support for children. (Lin et al., 2023) showed that warm parenting styles are positively correlated with the development of children's empathy. (Ali et al., 2024) emphasized that parental support significantly influences students' learning motivation and learning outcomes. (Chen & Mok, 2023) further strengthened this through their study, showing that multi-component interventions involving parental mental support positively affect overall early childhood development.

## 5. Theme 4: Instilling Learning Values from an Early Age

Parents' beliefs about the value of learning and the habituation of literacy activities from an early age shape a sustainable positive learning orientation. Teacher 1 observed a striking difference in children from families who regularly integrate learning into daily life:

*"Children whose parents actively support them at home show much stronger learning interest. They do not need to be told twice to participate in learning activities in class."*

Teacher 3 added that these differences are already visible when children first enter early childhood education, indicating that the foundation for learning has been formed before children enter formal education. From the parents' perspective, Parent 3 revealed the consistent habit of reading storybooks to the child from an early age. This simple practice fostered a love of learning before the child entered the school environment. From a phenomenological perspective, these findings reflect the dimension of lived body, namely repeated physical experiences in shared literacy activities that later become internalized as learning habits.

(Pattison et al., 2022) emphasized that parents' beliefs about the value of learning are strong predictors of children's learning interest. (Bigozzi et al., 2023) showed the long-term impact of preschool literacy environments on reading and writing skills in primary school. (Alotaibi, 2024) demonstrated the effectiveness of parent-facilitated play-based learning on long-term learning interest. (Syamsiah et al., 2023a) added that consistent parenting patterns play an important role in shaping early childhood character, including the character of enjoying learning. (Wulan Sari & Jamrizal, 2023) found that parenting styles also influence the development of children's intrapersonal intelligence, which is closely related to children's ability to manage their own internal learning motivation. (Skwarchuk et al., 2022) confirmed that literacy habits developed from an early age affect children's academic competence at subsequent levels of education.

## 6. The Integration Pattern of Parental Roles

The four themes form an integrative and mutually reinforcing pattern of parental involvement. This pattern is not partial in nature. The most effective parents are those who simultaneously provide active assistance, create a stimulating environment, offer emotional reinforcement, and consistently instill learning values. (Fadlillah & Pangastuti, 2022) referred to this pattern as comprehensive parental involvement that simultaneously addresses physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. (Del Rosario et al., 2023) emphasized that the quality of parent-child interaction is a protective factor for children's optimal development, including in the aspect of learning interest.

The findings showed that educational background and economic conditions are not the main factors determining the effectiveness of parental involvement. Parent 1 (a farmer) and Parent 3 (a housewife) actually demonstrated the most active and creative involvement despite limited resources. This confirms the argument of (Pattison et al., 2022) that parental awareness and emotional commitment are more influential than academic or economic family status. (Kong & Yasmin, 2022) showed that the integration of positive parenting styles with high parental self-efficacy produces optimal impacts on children's learning. (Rahma et al., 2025) emphasized that creative and adaptive parental roles also encourage children's creativity in learning. (Chen & Mok, 2023) complemented these findings by showing that parental involvement is positively related to children's academic adjustment abilities.

(Sutafti & Rasyid, 2022) warned that overprotective parental behavior may hinder children's adjustment abilities; therefore, balance between support and providing opportunities for exploration becomes the key to effective parental involvement. (Akindipe, 2025) confirmed that structured parental involvement interventions produce positive changes in children's learning behavior. (Dominke & Steffensky, 2025) further strengthened this by showing that the quality of parent-child interaction in learning contexts is the most consistent variable in predicting early childhood learning interest. (Syamsiah et al., 2023b) added that

the formation of learning character in early childhood is strongly determined by the consistency of parenting patterns applied by parents from the beginning.

### **Conclusion**

This phenomenological study revealed that parental roles contribute very significantly to fostering early childhood learning interest in community-based early childhood education centers. The four main identified themes, namely active and consistent assistance, the creation of an enjoyable learning environment, emotional reinforcement and verbal motivation, and the instillation of learning values from an early age, form an integrative and mutually reinforcing model of involvement. The findings showed that the quality of emotional interaction between parents and children is more influential in shaping learning interest than parents' economic status or formal educational background. This study strengthens the phenomenological perspective in education that warm and consistent emotional relationships are the primary foundation in developing early childhood learning interest within the context of community-based early childhood education centers.

Based on the research findings, four recommendations were formulated. First, parents are encouraged to improve the quality of learning assistance through warm, consistent, and appreciative emotional interactions rather than merely being physically present. Second, early childhood education institutions need to strengthen partnerships with parents through structured parenting programs that provide home-based learning assistance strategies. Third, teachers are expected to establish regular communication with parents regarding children's learning development in order to ensure alignment of stimulation between school and home. Fourth, future researchers are encouraged to broaden the scope of participants and research areas, as well as to explore moderating variables such as the role of local culture, family dynamics, and technology in supporting early childhood learning interest.

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