Parental Engagement in Emotional Regulation: A Case Study of Kindergarten Children in Yogyakarta

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Abstract
This research aimed to investigate the role of parents in managing their kindergarten-aged children’s negative emotions. Utilizing a descriptive, qualitative case study approach, the study was conducted in Yogyakarta, involving six parents, six teachers, and three children. Data collection comprised in-depth interviews and non-participant observation, analyzed using an interactive model by Miles et al. (2014). The results revealed that parents act as supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians in their children’s emotional development. Case studies of children, namely AD, NK, and AT, highlighted strategies like modeling positive behavior, teaching problem-solving and dynamic management, and providing comfort. Parents should enhance their knowledge and expertise and motivate their children to learn practical negative emotion management skills. Negative emotion management enhances kindergarten children’s well-being and aids in their adjustment to their surroundings. The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of a supportive, responsive, and involved parenting approach, particularly in emotional development during early childhood. This aligns with Bandura’s observational learning theory and resonates with findings from Hornby and Epstein on parental education and involvement. However, the study acknowledges limitations, including its small sample size and qualitative focus, suggesting the need for further research with broader, more diverse samples and quantitative methods. Overall, this study underscores the significant impact of parental involvement on children’s emotional resilience and intelligence, highlighting the need for effective parental guidance programs and enhanced teacher-parent collaboration in early childhood education settings.

Keywords:
Roles of Parents, Emotional Regulation, Parental Involvement, Early Childhood Education.

Introduction
Parents’ role in shaping children’s emotional development is an increasingly vital topic in contemporary society, psychology, and education. Early childhood emotional competence significantly predicts long-term social, academic, and psychological outcomes (Cosso et al., 2022; Lahti et al., 2019; Panayiotou et al., 2019; Ren et al., 2020). This competence is greatly influenced by parental interaction and guidance in managing negative emotions, a crucial aspect of child development. Understanding and addressing this dynamic is essential for fostering healthier, more resilient future generations. The effective management of childhood emotions not only benefits the individual child but has broader implications for societal well-being (Obeldobel & Kerns, 2021; Spencer et al., 2019).

Emotions develop due to children’s growth and their exposure to diverse experiences. All children exhibit emotional dynamics, which significantly affect their personality and behavior. Developing emotional understanding in children promotes empathy, prosocial behavior, and leadership skills (Dariyo, 2017). Social interactions are vital in nurturing emotional development. Studies show that certain parenting styles, when applied in educational settings, can influence children’s development in areas like sensitivity, responsiveness, comfort, aggression, warmth, and control (Berzenski & Yates, 2013). Thus, it is crucial to support children in managing their
emotions and developing prosocial skills. Effective emotion management forms the basis for social and academic learning and is pivotal for a child’s school adjustment and future academic success (Denham et al., 2020).

As children grow, they may face emotional challenges. Early studies indicate that some children require help with dynamic management to address such issues. This is evident in behaviors like tantrums when desires are unmet, aggression due to unfulfilled immediate needs, and other harmful actions such as yelling, throwing things, and physical aggression (Eisenberg, 2020). Emotional issues in children may arise from factors like abusive family environments, parental rejection, immature or inadequate parenting skills, early loss of a loved one, parental incapacity to express love, uncontrolled jealousy, unpreparedness for new situations, bullying, peer hostility, and physical disabilities affecting their confidence and self-esteem (Allen & Marotz, 2010).

Studies reveal that various factors, including separation, conflicts with parents or friends, vaccinations, and challenges in completing tasks during physical injuries, can trigger negative emotions in children. Without proper management, these emotions can lead to destructive behaviors. This emphasizes the importance of adult guidance, particularly from parents, in managing children’s emotions (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). Emotional support is vital for children’s self-concept and for modeling positive emotions (Atom & Al-Shoboul, 2018). However, harmful emotional exposure at home, often from parents, impedes children’s adaptability (Caspi & Shiner, 2006). Marital anger and conflicts cause emotional distress in the home (Cummings & Davies, 2002; Frankel et al., 2015), leading children to mimic family members’ behaviors. Bandura’s theory on imitation and modeling explains the significant impact of this behavior replication (Y. Tang et al., 2023).

Children exposed to marital conflict show more distress, behavioral problems, and sensitivity compared to their peers (Cook et al., 2018; Frigerio & Nazzari, 2021; van Dijk et al., 2020). Research also indicates that parental belittling and criticism can cause embarrassment in children, and strict, harsh parenting often results in poor behavior and emotional and cognitive management (Halloran, 2020; Shute et al., 2019). Epidemiological studies indicate that internalizing problems like anxiety and depression affect up to 20 percent of children (Bitsko et al., 2018).

Children acquire social-emotional competence through parental modeling, providing feedback about emotions, and discussing them (Eisenberg et al., 2019). They are influenced by adult emotions and expressions, including those of caregivers, parents, and teachers. Positive emotional expression by parents leads to children mirroring this positivity at home and in social interactions (Denham et al., 2020; Walkowiak et al., 2023). Al.’s (2024) research supports that children learn emotional management from their parents.

CHOC (Children’s Health of Orange County) has identified various techniques for managing childhood emotions, such as abdominal breathing, guided imagery, journaling, physical activity, positive self-talk, gratitude expression, muscle relaxation, paying it forward, acupressure, and aromatherapy (Blair et al., 2018). These strategies include actively addressing issues, seeking comfort, problem-solving, positive thinking, and seeking support and guidance. However, some children may use unproductive coping mechanisms, feeling lost and unsure how to proceed. Additional stress management techniques include drawing or coloring, deep breathing exercises, religious practices, staying hydrated, stepping out of one's comfort zone, reading, exercising, embracing loved ones, recalling happy memories or peaceful places, seeking support through conversation or asking for help, and playing with pets.

Despite some children continuing to struggle with controlling negative emotions, they often expressed through crying, yelling, swearing, retaliating, or damaging belongings, proficient negative emotion regulation has been observed in children aged 5 to 6 years, namely AD, NK, and AT. Initial observations indicate that children can regulate their emotions using strategies like ignoring bullies, avoiding uncomfortable friends, engaging in different activities, standing up to bullies, hydrating when anxious, and expressing their feelings to teachers and
parents. The support of parents is crucial in helping children manage negative emotions, underscoring the need for ongoing research in this area.

Research on marital conflict underscores the relationship between family dynamics and children’s emotional well-being. Denham & Bassett, (2018) and Frankel et al., (2015) found that marital anger and conflict contribute to emotional distress in children. Salkind, (2006) discusses Bandura’s theory of imitation and modeling, suggesting that children often mimic the emotional expressions of their family members, which significantly influences their emotional development and management.

However, there are still gaps and controversies in understanding all the factors affecting children’s emotional management. Current research often misses the subtle interplay between parenting styles, external factors, and children’s emotional responses. The role of positive emotional support in children’s emotional regulation remains underexplored. This study aims to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive view of the factors affecting children’s emotional management, focusing on the role of parents.

This research delves into the complex role parents play in managing their children’s negative emotions, examining how parenting styles, family dynamics, and external influences collectively shape the emotional development of kindergarten children. It seeks to contribute to the field by shedding light on effective parenting strategies for emotional management, thus enhancing children’s social and academic success. The study’s findings could significantly impact educational policies, parental education programs, and psychological interventions, ultimately benefiting children’s overall emotional well-being and development.

Methods
This study adopted a descriptive, qualitative research methodology, utilizing a case study approach to investigate the role of parents in managing their kindergarten-aged children’s negative emotions. Conducted in Yogyakarta in August 2023, the research encompassed a deliberately chosen group comprising six parents, six teachers, and three children between 5 and 6 years old. The qualitative case study methodology was pivotal for its in-depth, detailed exploration of complex interactions within this context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Data were primarily collected through two methods: in-depth interviews and non-participant observation. The interviews, conducted on an individual basis, were unstructured to facilitate a naturalistic and comprehensive dialogue. This approach deeply explored the participants’ experiences and perceptions regarding parental roles in emotion management. The non-participant observation served as a complementary technique, offering an unobtrusive avenue to observe behaviors and interactions in a natural setting, thus enriching the data collected through interviews.

The data analysis used an interactive model Miles & Huberman, A. Michael, Saldana (2018) that included data collection and condensation. The data collected was summarized, coded, categorized, and thematized before drawing and verifying conclusions. Results from interpreting the scattered data were validated using field notes or pre-existing documents. In order to obtain a consensus amongst the informants, data findings were reviewed against arguments presented by promoters and colleagues, while data verification was achieved by elaborating on the results.

Result
3.1. Parents of AD
1. Parents have a role as supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians. Parents should be role models, listen, direct, train to cope, and give praise to children’s good behavior. The following is a description of children’s ability to manage emotions and the role of parents in helping children manage their emotions.

AD is a boy aged five years and 7 months. The observation results show that AD can manage negative emotions by choosing not to retaliate when provoked by friends, using
assertiveness with peers, and redirecting his attention when uncomfortable. The teacher's statement, viz, supports this:

"AD demonstrates a non-retaliatory approach towards friends who bully him. Typically, when confronted with bullying behavior, AD defends himself by stating 'that hurts ...' or 'stop ...' while showing disapproval. This approach makes his friends reconsider their actions. AD often selects a new toy or different friend to interact with after such incidents. Occasionally, AD informs me if he observes or experiences bullying behavior among his peers." (CW 01.01.1)

In addition, AD's mother stated that

"I teach AD to respond to bullying by speaking up rather than retaliating. I also teach AD and his brother to borrow things politely, wait for their turn, avoid fighting, and apologize after arguments. I always ask AD why he is in tears and encourage him to communicate when upset. As parents, my husband and I strive to set a positive example by avoiding conflict in front of the children and maintaining composure in challenging situations. We aim to protect our children from negative behaviors like damaging property or expressing anger. (CW 2.01.1).

AD's mother also said that AD would sometimes cry and get upset when he was disappointed. AD's parents would then try to calm him down and help him deal with his negative emotions. This was reported by AD's mother as follows:

"AD struggled with assembling Legos due to tiredness, leading to frustration and tears. I suggested he take a break, play something simpler, and drink water. When AD got upset because his brother broke his toy, I taught AD to express his unhappiness. I also asked his brother to apologize and take responsibility. I encouraged them to fix the toy together. As parents, we rarely scold or yell at our children, preferring to teach them about listening and understanding feelings when angry or upset." (CW 1.01.2).

"His dad and I praise AD a lot. For example, we praise him when he does well in his studies, saying things like 'Great!' Or when he shows a good attitude, like not getting angry quickly, being willing to talk instead of throwing tantrums, or being willing to give in and get along when playing." (CW 1.01.3).

Another way in which AD's parents play a supportive role is by attending PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) meetings held by the kindergarten. AD's mother often asks AD's teacher about his development. Here is a statement from AD's teacher:

"AD's mother is often present when we have meetings. When she picks him up, she asks me about AD's development. I also often observe her saying positive things to AD before he enters the classroom." (CW 01.01.2).

Furthermore, AD's mother also revealed that:

"I realize parenting is important, so I often read blogs or articles on Google about parenting. I try to implement them because I want my children to grow up well. I always look forward to PTA meetings to discuss parenting. I want my children to be smart and have good morals. I do not want to make any mistakes in raising them." (CW 1.01.4).

"When AD cries about something, my approach is to calm him down and listen; then I try to help him solve the issue. I dynamich his dad that we should not unnecessarily scold or threaten the children so they don't feel pressured." (CW 1.01.5).

AD's father further stated that he and his mother tried to be role models, not show anger, and encourage children to be patient and not get angry quickly. AD's father conveyed these rights, namely:

"My wife and I cannot get angry in front of our children. Instead of getting angry, I will just stay there, when I'm ready, then talk and advise the children." (CW 1.03.1).

Based on the interviews and observations, it can be concluded that AD’s parents have the roles of supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians. As supporters, teachers, and counselors, AD's parents provide good examples of how to deal with negative emotions. They also help their children solve problems. A secure parent-child relationship is necessary for
children to have appropriate negative emotion management skills. AD’s parents also
demonstrated warmth in parenting and positive expression. The father’s and mother’s role as
protectors is to calm the children down when they have problems instead of scolding them.
They also become good role models when they do not threaten their children.

3.2. Parents of NK
Parents have a role as supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians in managing
their negative emotions. Parents of NK’s parents support their daughter by encouraging positive
behaviors, teaching problem-solving and negative emotion management, advise NK to behave
kindly among friends; The following is a description of children’s ability to manage emotions
and the role of parents in helping children manage their emotions.

NK is a girl aged five years and 10 months. The observation results show that NK can
manage negative emotions by distracting herself with other activities when her friends
bother her. She reports to the teachers when there is an unpleasant incident and dares to
reprimand friends who irritate her. This is also supported by the teacher’s statement, viz:
“NK keeps quiet and ignores friends who bully her. Even though she is a girl, she dares to
speak out when people bully her. She said, ‘If I stay silent, my friends will not stop bullying
me, so I have to say something about it.”’ (CW 02.02.1).

In addition, NK’s mother stated:
“I talk to NK when she makes mistakes. I also try not to get angry with the child because I
am afraid she will get scared and imitate me. I also do not complain much for the same
reason. I also try not to threaten, blame, mock, or hit her. My husband and I often tell NK
to be good friends with her friends. I often say this at home or before she goes to class,
and then I ask her stories after school.” (CW 2.02.1).

“NK once cried and got mad at her friend for scribbling over her drawing. Thank God she
did not hit her friend because she was upset. She just cried, and the teacher said it was for
a while. Then the teacher said that NK asked for some water because I made her drink after
she cried or got angry to help her calm down. It has become a habit for her. When NK can
control her anger, I usually praise her. I say that she is a big and strong girl.” (CW 2.02.2).

NK’s father stated that NK never responds when his friends bother him because his mother and
I told him to control his emotions. NK’s father conveyed these rights, namely:
“My wife and I agreed to advise NK not to retaliate when disturbed. It is best to report it to
the teacher or leave so there is no fight and no one cries. However, I ask children to have
the courage to say "no" to their friends so that their friends do not bother them anymore"
(CW 2.01.1).

NK’s mother always takes the time to attend PTA meetings organized by the kindergarten.
She also reads articles about parenting. NK’s mother also communicates with the teacher about
NK’s development. Here is NK’s teacher’s statement:
“NK’s mother keeps track of her daughter’s development by messaging us, sometimes
through WA (WhatsApp). But sometimes, she talks directly with us when she picks up her
daughter.” (CW 02.02.2).

“I have noticed that when parents are attentive, their children develop better. For
example, if the child can manage negative emotions, they do not easily get upset; they do
not cry. If they are counseled, they will listen and easily calm down.” (CW 02.02.2).

In addition, NK’s mother revealed that:
“I sometimes message her teachers how she is doing academically and behaviorally ....”
(CW 2.02.3).

Based on the interviews and observations, it can be concluded that NK’s parents have the
roles of supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians in managing their negative
emotions. NK’s parents support their daughter by encouraging positive behaviors. This is
especially true when the child can manage negative emotions. As teachers, NK’s parents teach
problem-solving and negative emotion management. As a student, NK’s mother attends the
kindergarten’s PTA meetings. NK’s mother inquires about her progress with the teachers either
in person or indirectly through the social media WhatsApp. As counselors, NK's parents advise her to behave kindly among friends, which is done at home, before entering her classroom, and after listening to her after-school story.

3.3. Parents of AT

Parents have a role as supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians in managing their negative emotions. AT's parents provide positive reinforcement, respond calmly to their mistakes, listen attentively to their concerns, avoid showing anger in their presence, teach them how to solve problems and manage negative emotions, and fulfill the role of a protector, providing comfort and attempting to ease AT's negative emotions. The following is a description of children's ability to manage emotions and the role of parents in helping children manage their emotions.

AT is a boy aged five years and 11 months. The observations demonstrate AT's practical management of negative emotions, displaying no signs of anger, swearing, hurting or disturbing his friends, yelling, or being rude to those who bother him. Additionally, AT promptly reports incidents to the teacher when feeling disturbed. The teacher's statement also supports this:

"AT is a boy, but he's well-behaved, never plays hard with his friends. Although sometimes when joking, children like to be pretentious, AT never hurts his friends." (CW 03.03.1).

Furthermore, AT's mother stated that:

"I teach AT to remain calm and not retaliate when arguing with friends. I listen to his side and offer options to keep playing or rest at home, suggesting he play again later. I instruct AT on resolving issues with friends and speaking kindly. I do not support violence like slapping or swearing. Previously, AT hit his sibling, but I taught him to express disapproval verbally, choose another toy, and ask for parental help rather than resorting to aggression. I always inquire about his school day activities, praising good behavior and advising on avoiding repeated mistakes." (CW 3.03.1).

AT's mother also said:

"My partner and I agree on listening to our children. We avoid showing anger or scolding them in their presence, fearing they might imitate this behavior. We also limit their mobile game time to help them control their emotions better. Their father often engages them in activities like biking, playing soccer, or walking to see rice fields and fish to reduce their phone usage. I actively participate in PTA meetings, eager to learn about good parenting. We are committed to raising our children to be intelligent, patient, and adaptable." (CW 3.03.2).

"When my son does something good, I make a habit of praising him so he feels happy and appreciated. I also communicate with teachers through WA, which is handy, and I consult with them about my son." (CW 3.03.3).

"One time AT was crying at home after a fight with his playmate; I tried to calm him down and talked to him about it." (CW 3.03.4).

This statement was reinforced by AT's father, who teaches children to manage emotions.

"If the child experiences negative emotions, then we try to listen and direct the child to control his emotions by telling stories or doing other things that make his heart happy again" (CW 3.01.4).

The statement made by AT's mother is in line with the teacher's statement, stating that:

"AT's mother appears to be patient with her son. She consistently attends school meetings and often communicates via WhatsApp about AT's progress. She rarely scolds or threatens him. AT enjoys sharing his stories with her, feeling comfortable due to her approachable attitude. Additionally, AT mentions that his mother is very patient and seldom gets angry." (CW 03.03.2).

"I notice that the children's ability to control their emotions coincides with other developments. For example, when AT is faced with a difficult task, he does it patiently; he dares to ask for help." (CW 03.03.3).
Based on the findings from interviews and observations, it can be concluded that AT's parents play the roles of supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians in managing his negative emotions. AT’s parents provide positive reinforcement to support their children's good behavior and emotional regulation, respond calmly to their mistakes, listen attentively to their concerns, and avoid showing anger in their presence. As teachers, they teach him how to solve problems and manage negative emotions. As a student, AT’s mother actively participates in PTA meetings hosted by the kindergarten and communicates regularly with the teacher to track her son’s progress. As counselors, AT’s parents guide him on how to behave well with friends. Furthermore, AT’s mother fulfills the role of a protector, providing comfort and attempting to ease AT’s negative emotions.

According to the evidence, Table 1 illustrates parental roles in managing negative emotions during early childhood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Roles</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supporter</strong></td>
<td>Use hugs and positive affirmations to praise and motivate children who effectively manage their negative emotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrate problem-solving skills in everyday life, such as being gentle, getting along with others, and avoiding aggression when dealing with conflicts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Explore various parenting resources and seek input from teachers and school-based suggestions on how to educate children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counselor</strong></td>
<td>Counseling children on managing interpersonal conflict through behavioral strategies or verbal communication, including rejection and expressing discomfort, can increase their comfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guardian</strong></td>
<td>Encourage children to express their feelings honestly and learn how to cope by listening to their stories.</td>
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</table>

**Discussion**

The current study focuses on the pivotal role of parents in managing the negative emotions of kindergarten children, a subject underscored by previous research. As highlighted in the objectives, this investigation explores the multifaceted roles of parents, including supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians, in the emotional development of their children. Prior studies have established that effective parental involvement and guidance are instrumental in helping children navigate emotional challenges (Kraft & Dougherty, 2013; Maschi et al., 2009). This background sets the stage for a nuanced understanding of how parental actions and attitudes influence children’s emotional management capabilities.

The results reveal a comprehensive role played by parents in shaping their children’s ability to manage negative emotions. In the cases of AD, NK, and AT, parents adopted roles beyond traditional care, extending to being role models, communicators, and emotional regulators. Particularly noteworthy are the non-retaliatory approach adopted by AD, the assertiveness displayed by NK, and the emotional restraint exhibited by AT. These behaviors reflect the substantial influence of parental guidance and the importance of a nurturing home environment in children's emotional intelligence development.

Comparing these findings with previous studies, there is a precise alignment with the notion that responsive parenting contributes significantly to children's emotional regulation (Grolnick & Farkas, 2022; Magnuson, 2007). The observed behaviors of AD, NK, and AT and their correlation with parental involvement support the hypothesis that children mirror their parents' emotional responses and coping mechanisms. This mirrors the findings of Mortensen & Barnett, (2019) and Qiu & Shum (2022), who noted the positive impact of warm and responsive parenting on children's emotion regulation skills. However, the current study extends this understanding
by providing detailed examples of how parental behaviors influence children’s emotional responses.

The significance of these findings lies in their contribution to the understanding of early childhood emotional development. Parents are the primary influencers and educators in their children’s lives, especially in emotional management. As observed in the study, the variety of roles undertaken by parents highlights the complexity of parenting about children’s emotional development. While these findings are illuminating, it is essential to interpret them cautiously due to the limited sample size and the subjective nature of self-reported data.

The study also sheds light on the impact of parental educational background on their approach to managing their children's emotions. The findings align with Magnuson (2007) and Bradley & Corwyn (2002), highlighting the correlation between a parent's level of education and their child's emotional and social development. Educated parents, as demonstrated in the cases of AD, NK, and AT, tend to employ more sophisticated emotional regulation strategies, emphasizing verbal communication, positive reinforcement, and role modeling. This suggests that parental education is crucial in equipping parents with the skills necessary for practical emotional guidance.

Moreover, the research underscores the importance of parental involvement in educational settings, as evidenced by the active participation of parents in PTA meetings and consistent communication with teachers. As suggested by Haleem et al., (2022) and Qiu & Shum, (2022), such involvement is crucial for establishing a comprehensive support system for children at home and in educational environments. This supports the evidence that effective communication between parents and teachers greatly enhances children's behavioral and emotional development. (Blair et al., 2018; Essau et al., 2019; S. Tang et al., 2021). The integrated approach of parents in both home and school settings fosters an environment conducive to the holistic development of children, particularly in managing negative emotions.

The implications of these findings are profound for both parents and educators. They underscore the necessity of a supportive, responsive, and involved parenting approach in the early years, particularly in emotional development. This research advocates for parenting strategies emphasizing positive reinforcement, active listening, and constructive communication, aligning with Bandura (2008) observational learning theory. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of parental education and involvement, as seen in the parents' active participation in PTA meetings and consistent communication with teachers, resonating with findings from Epstein (2010); and Hornby (2011). These insights are crucial for developing effective parental guidance programs and enhancing teacher-parent collaborations in early childhood education settings.

**Conclusion**

This study aimed to explore the role of parents in managing their children's negative emotions during early childhood, revealing that parents act as supporters, teachers, students, counselors, and guardians. Our observations from cases like AD, NK, and AT show that parents use strategies such as positive behavior modeling, teaching problem-solving and emotional management, and providing comfort. This aligns with Bandura's observational learning theory and underscores the importance of parental education and engagement, resonating with the works of Hornby and Epstein. However, the study's limitations include a limited sample size and reliance on qualitative data, suggesting the need for broader, more diverse studies and quantitative methods for future research. Overall, this research highlights the significant impact of parental involvement on children's emotional development, emphasizing the necessity of a nurturing, communicative approach to foster emotional resilience and intelligence in early childhood, which is crucial for developing effective parental guidance programs and enhancing teacher-parent collaboration.

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