



THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTAL EMPLOYMENT ON THE SOCIAL INTERACTION OF 5–6 YEAR OLD CHILDREN AT NURUL HIDAYAH KINDERGARTEN, KADEMANGAN DISTRICT, PROBOLINGGO CITY

Vike Nurjanah^a Robiatul Adawiyah^b

^{a,b}*Institut Ahmad Dahlan Probolinggo*

correspondence: vikenurjanah9@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the influence of parental employment on the social interaction of children aged 5–6 years at Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten, Kademangan District, Probolinggo City. A quantitative approach with a causal-associative research design was employed. The study involved 30 children selected using a saturated sampling technique. Data were collected through questionnaires, structured observations, and teacher interviews, and analyzed using simple linear regression. The findings revealed that parental employment had a significant effect on children's social interaction ($t = 2.98$; $p = 0.006 < 0.05$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.215$) indicated that parental employment explained 21.5% of the variance in children's social interaction, while the remaining 78.5% was influenced by other factors, including parenting style, the school environment, and peer relationships. Children whose parents had greater availability at home generally demonstrated better social interaction. However, the quality of communication and emotional support was found to be more influential than the amount of time spent together. In conclusion, parental employment influences children's social interaction but is not the only determining factor. Effective parent–child communication, emotional support, and positive school experiences play essential roles in fostering children's social development.

Keywords : parental employment; social interaction; early childhood

INTRODUCTION

Social and economic transformations in the modern era have led to a significant increase in the number of working parents in both developed and developing countries. In Indonesia, the proportion of dual-income families continues to rise due to increasing economic demands, changes in family structures, and expanding employment opportunities for women (Statistik, 2019). These changes have directly influenced parenting practices, particularly during early childhood, which represents a critical period for children's social and emotional development. Children aged 5–6 years are at an essential developmental stage in which they acquire communication skills, cooperative behaviors, emotional understanding, and the ability to establish meaningful social relationships (Berk, 2018). When parental presence at home is reduced because of work commitments, the process of transmitting social values and providing emotional support may be affected, potentially influencing the quality of children's social interactions.

In Indonesia, the increasing number of working families has become increasingly evident. Data published by the Central Bureau of Statistics indicate a continuous rise in labor force participation among both men and women, consequently affecting parenting patterns within households (Statistik, 2019). Within the context of early childhood education, teachers frequently encounter challenges in fostering children's social competence, particularly among those whose parents work long hours or have limited involvement in daily caregiving. This issue deserves considerable attention because social interaction during the ages of 5–6 years serves as the foundation for long-term social and emotional competence (Papalia & Martorell, 2021). Previous research conducted by (Lapanda et al., 2022) demonstrated that children's prosocial behaviors, including empathy and interpersonal skills, are strongly influenced by emotional closeness and the intensity of communication with significant adults in their immediate environment. These findings suggest that parental involvement constitutes an essential component in the development of children's social competencies.

Numerous national and international studies have consistently identified parental involvement as a significant determinant of children's social-emotional development. (Morris et al., 2017) for example, reported that poor parent–child interaction may reduce children's ability to establish and

maintain positive social relationships. Similarly, (Ruzea et al., 2023) found that children who receive insufficient parental guidance tend to experience greater difficulty adapting to peer groups. Conversely, (Aisyah, 2020) emphasized that consistent stimulation through play activities and daily interactions contributes substantially to both social and cognitive development during early childhood. These findings imply that children whose parents spend more time at home generally have greater opportunities to engage in meaningful social interactions, thereby strengthening their social competence.

However, previous studies have also indicated that not all children of working parents experience social difficulties. Factors such as the quality of parent–child interactions, effective communication, and support from teachers may compensate for the limited quantity of parental presence (Han et al., 2020). In this regard, schools play a crucial role in supporting children's social development. (Aini & Muryanti, 2022) argued that engaging learning media can enhance children's language and communication skills, enabling schools to function as an effective microsystem that promotes social development when opportunities for interaction at home are constrained by parental employment. These findings indicate that the relationship between parental employment and children's social interaction is complex rather than linear and therefore requires further investigation in different social contexts.

Despite the growing body of literature on children's social development, there remains a limited number of quantitative studies examining the influence of parental employment on children's social interaction within specific early childhood education settings, particularly kindergartens located in suburban areas. Previous studies conducted in Indonesia have primarily focused on parenting styles, communication patterns, or instructional media (Jaga et al., 2023), while relatively little attention has been given to parental employment status within specific educational institutions such as Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten in Kademangan District, Probolinggo City. Considering the unique socio-economic characteristics of the local community, parental occupational patterns, and the dynamics of teacher–parent relationships, empirical research in this context is necessary to provide a more comprehensive and contextually relevant understanding.

Based on these considerations, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of how parental employment intensity influences the quality of social interaction among children aged 5–6 years. In addition to its theoretical contribution, the findings are expected to provide practical recommendations for schools, parents, and policymakers in developing educational and parenting strategies that are responsive to the needs of working families. Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of parental employment on the social interaction of children aged 5–6 years at Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten, Kademangan District, Probolinggo City and to provide empirical evidence regarding the relationship between parental employment and early childhood social development.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a causal-associative research design to examine the relationship between parental employment and the social interaction of early childhood children (Creswell, 2019). The study was conducted at Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten, Kademangan District, Probolinggo City. The research population consisted of all children aged 5–6 years enrolled in the kindergarten, totaling 30 participants. Given the relatively small population size, a saturated sampling technique was applied, whereby all members of the population were included as research participants. The independent variable (X) in this study was parental employment, which was operationalized based on parents' occupational status and work intensity. The dependent variable (Y) was children's social interaction, which was assessed through indicators including cooperation, sharing, empathy, and communication skills. Data were collected using three instruments: a structured questionnaire administered to parents to identify their employment status and level of involvement in childcare, a structured observation checklist completed by classroom teachers to assess children's social interaction, and limited interviews with teachers to support the interpretation of the quantitative findings.

The data collection process consisted of three stages. First, structured observations were conducted to obtain direct information regarding children's social behavior within the school environment. Second, closed-ended questionnaires were distributed to parents to collect quantitative data concerning their employment status and participation in parenting activities. Third, limited

interviews were carried out with classroom teachers to provide contextual information that complemented the observational findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These procedures enabled the researchers to obtain comprehensive data from multiple sources while maintaining the quantitative orientation of the study. Prior to hypothesis testing, the collected data were subjected to normality and linearity tests to ensure that the assumptions required for parametric statistical analysis were satisfied. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using simple linear regression with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics to determine the effect of parental employment on children's social interaction. The statistical analysis was performed at a significance level of 0.05, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to measure the proportion of variance in children's social interaction explained by parental employment.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This study involved 30 children aged 5–6 years enrolled at Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten, Kademangan District, Probolinggo City. The demographic data indicated that parents' occupations were categorized into three groups, namely formal employment, informal employment, and unemployed (homemakers). The distribution of parental employment status is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Parental Employment Status (N = 30)

No	Employment Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Formal Employees (Civil Servants, Teachers, Company Employees)	9	30%
2	Informal Workers (Traders, Laborers, Self-employed)	12	40%
3	Unemployed (Homemakers)	9	30%
Total		30	100%

Source: Processed Research Data (2024).

Based on Table 1, the majority of parents were employed in the informal sector (40%), followed by formal-sector employees (30%) and unemployed parents (30%). This distribution indicates that most children in the study sample come from families with varying levels of parental work engagement.

The descriptive analysis of the dependent variable showed that the overall mean score of children's social interaction was 72.8 out of 100, which falls into the moderate category. This suggests that, in general, the children demonstrated adequate social interaction skills; however, there is still room for improvement in several aspects of social behavior.

Further analysis of each indicator revealed differences in children's social interaction skills. Communication and cooperation obtained the highest average scores (Mean = 3.2 on a four-point scale), indicating that children were relatively active and willing to participate in group-based learning activities. Meanwhile, sharing and empathy showed lower average scores (Mean = 2.7), suggesting that these aspects require further reinforcement through guided learning and social practice.

The comparison of children's social interaction scores based on parental employment status is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Social Interaction Scores Based on Parental Employment

No	Parental Employment	Mean Score	Category
1	Unemployed (Homemakers)	78.6	Good
2	Formal Employees	75.3	Good
3	Informal Workers	71.2	Fair

Source: Processed Research Data (2024).

The data presented in Table 2 reveal a clear variation in children's social interaction scores across different parental employment categories. Children whose parents were unemployed (homemakers) obtained the highest mean score (78.6), followed by children of formal-sector employees (75.3). In contrast, children of informal-sector workers recorded the lowest mean score (71.2). These findings suggest that differences in parental availability may be associated with variations in children's social interaction levels.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that children's social interaction is relatively moderate, with noticeable differences based on parental employment status. However, these findings are descriptive in nature and are further examined in the inferential statistical analysis to determine the significance of the relationship between parental employment and children's social interaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The inferential statistical analysis revealed that parental employment has a significant effect on children's social interaction. The simple linear regression analysis produced a regression coefficient ($B = 0.462$), with a t -value of 2.98 and a significance level of $p = 0.006$ ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that the relationship between parental employment and children's social interaction is statistically significant, meaning that changes in parental employment conditions are associated with variations in children's social interaction levels. Furthermore, the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.215$) indicates that 21.5% of the variance in children's social interaction is explained by parental employment, while the remaining 78.5% is influenced by other factors such as parenting style, school environment, peer relationships, and socio-economic conditions. This finding suggests that although parental employment plays a role in shaping children's social behavior, it is not the sole determinant of social development in early childhood (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007).

The results further show that higher parental work intensity tends to be associated with lower levels of children's social interaction. Children whose parents were unemployed (homemakers) demonstrated higher social interaction scores compared to those whose parents were employed, particularly in the informal sector. This pattern may be explained by the greater availability of time among non-working parents, which allows for more frequent communication, emotional bonding, and direct supervision of children's social behavior at home (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020). From a developmental perspective, early childhood is a critical period for the formation of social skills such as cooperation, empathy, sharing, and communication. Limited parental presence due to work obligations may reduce opportunities for children to engage in guided social interactions within the family environment. However, it is important to note that social development does not depend solely on family conditions.

Interestingly, the findings also indicate that some children of working parents still demonstrated strong social interaction skills. This suggests that the quality of parenting, particularly emotional warmth, communication patterns, and responsiveness to children's needs, can compensate for limited quantity of time spent together (Bornstein et al., 2006). In other words, effective parenting does not rely only on time availability, but also on the quality of interaction between parents and children. In addition, the school environment plays a crucial role in supporting children's social development. Through structured learning activities, group work, and peer interaction, children are provided with opportunities to develop social competencies even when parental involvement at home is limited. This supports the idea that early childhood development is shaped by multiple interconnected environments.

These findings are consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasizes that child development is influenced by interactions between various environmental systems, including the family (microsystem), school, and peer group (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2007). Therefore, parental employment should be understood as one of several contextual factors influencing children's social interaction, rather than a single dominant factor.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study concludes that parental employment has a significant influence on the social interaction of children aged 5–6 years at Nurul Hidayah Kindergarten, Kademangan District, Probolinggo City. The findings indicate that differences in parental employment are associated with variations in children's social interaction levels. However, parental employment is not the only factor influencing children's social development. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.215$) shows that 21.5% of children's social interaction is explained by parental employment, while the remaining 78.5% is influenced by other factors such as parenting style, school environment, peer relationships, and socio-economic conditions. This highlights that children's social development is shaped by multiple interacting environmental factors.

In addition, children whose parents have lower work intensity tend to show higher social interaction scores, although this is not absolute. Some children of working parents still demonstrate good social interaction skills, indicating that the quality of parent–child interaction plays an important role. Based on these findings, several suggestions are proposed. Parents, especially those with busy work schedules, are encouraged to maintain the quality of interaction with their children through effective communication, emotional support, and meaningful time together. Schools are expected to strengthen collaborative and play-based learning activities to support children’s social development. Future researchers are also encouraged to examine additional factors such as parenting style, peer influence, and family environment to obtain more comprehensive results.

REFERENCES

- Aini, N., & Muryanti, E. (2022). Efektivitas Efektivitas Macromedia flash dalam Mengembangkan Kosakata Bahasa Inggris pada Anak Usia Dini. *Incrementapedia: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(2), 68–73.
- Aisyah, A. (2020). Mengembangkan Kemampuan Kognitif Anak Usia Dini Melalui Permainan Balok. *Incrementapedia: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 2(2), 37–41.
- Berk, L. E. (2018). The role of make-believe play in development of self-regulation. *Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development*.
- Bornstein, M. H., Hahn, C.-S., Bell, C., Haynes, O. M., Slater, A., Golding, J., Wolke, D., & Team, A. S. (2006). Stability in cognition across early childhood: A developmental cascade. *Psychological Science*, 17(2), 151–158.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2007). The bioecological model of human development. *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 1.
- Creswell, J. W. (2019). *Research design: Pendekatan metode kualitatif, kuantitatif dan campuran*.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Han, W.-J., Hetzner, N. P., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2020). Employment and parenting. In *Psychological insights for understanding COVID-19 and families, parents, and children* (pp. 157–183). Routledge.
- Jaga, M. R., Lomi, A. N. K., & Hornay, P. M. A. (2023). The social factors that influence children’s interactions and behavior in classroom. *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Undiksha*, 11(2), 200–209.
- Lapanda, S., Sofia, A., & Drupadi, R. (2022). Hubungan Empati dengan Perilaku Prosocial Anak Usia Dini: THE RELATIONSHIP OF EMPATHY WITH THE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF EARLY CHILDREN. *Incrementapedia: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, 4(2), 1–7.
- Morris, A. S., Criss, M. M., Silk, J. S., & Houlberg, B. J. (2017). The impact of parenting on emotion regulation during childhood and adolescence. *Child Development Perspectives*, 11(4), 233–238.
- Nomaguchi, K., & Milkie, M. A. (2020). Parenthood and well-being: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 82(1), 198–223.
- Papalia, D. E., & Martorell, G. (2021). *Desenvolvimento Humano-14*. McGraw Hill Brasil.
- Ruzea, I., Aliza, N., Afandes, M. F., & Yulianti, Y. (2023). Pengaruh Pola Komunikasi Demokratis Orang Tua terhadap Perkembangan Interaksi Sosial pada Anak. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Counseling*, 7(2), 200–208.
- Statistik, B. P. (2019). Statistik ketenagakerjaan. *Jakarta: Biro Pusat Statistik*.