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Parenting style and language development in preschool children

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Abstract

Background: Preschool language development is shaped by interactions within the family and broader social environment. Parenting style may influence opportunities for communication, but previous studies have reported inconsistent findings.

Purpose: To examine the association between parenting-style category and language-development classification among preschool children at one kindergarten.

Method: This cross-sectional study included 37 parent-child pairs at Budi Mulia Al Bayaan Kindergarten, Yogyakarta. Parenting style was assessed using the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire-Short Form (PSDQ-SF), and language development using a teacher-completed observation checklist. The reported categorical association was assessed using Spearman's rank correlation ($\alpha = 0.05$).

Results: Authoritative parenting was reported by 29 parents (78.4%); permissive and authoritarian parenting were each reported by 4 (10.8%). Language development was classified as high for 36 children (97.3%) and moderate for 1 (2.7%). The reported association was not statistically significant (Spearman $\rho = -0.087$; $p = 0.609$).

Conclusion: No statistically significant association was detected in this small, single-kindergarten sample. Near-universal classification of language development as high (36/37) and the use of nominal parenting-style categories limit interpretation of the reported rank correlation.

Keywords: Language Development; Parenting Style; Preschool Children.

INTRODUCTION

Preschool language development supports communication, social interaction, and readiness for learning. Children acquire vocabulary, pronunciation, and expressive skills through multiple interactions at home and at school; language development can vary across children and settings (Hoff, 2006; Herawati & Katoningsih, 2023; Ita, Wewe, & Go.o, 2020).

Family communication is a major source of children's language experience. The quantity and quality of child-directed speech, responsive exchanges, and conversational turns are linked to later language outcomes (Rowe, 2012; Hirsh-Pasek, Adamson, Bakeman, Owen, Golinkoff, Pace, Yust, & Suma, 2015; Romeo, Leonard, Robinson, West, Mackey, Rowe, & Gabrieli, 2018). Parenting practices may help shape these opportunities, although broad style categories do not directly measure the frequency or quality of parent-child talk (Lestari, Mustika, & Ismayani, 2020).

Evidence from Indonesia is mixed. Anggraini, Salmarini, and Kusumawati (2024) and Astuti, Sari Sembiring, Indrayani, Nuriani, Jumining, and Metasari (2024) examined parenting and preschool language development, whereas Sitompul, Sapulette, Astutik, and Handayani (2023) reported no statistically significant correlation in a West Jakarta kindergarten sample. Differences in

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participants, measurement, and educational context may help explain variation across studies.

A preliminary observation at Kindergarten Budi Mulia Al Bayaan described difficulties in pronunciation, naming consonants, and expressing wishes among some children. Such difficulties warrant careful assessment rather than assumptions about their cause; case reports of preschool language delay also describe heterogeneous presentations (Wulandari, Wahyuni, & Hasibuan, 2024). This study examined the association of parenting-style category with language-development classification among children attending the kindergarten.

RESEARCH METHOD

This quantitative cross-sectional correlational study was conducted at Kindergarten Budi Mulia Al Bayaan, Yogyakarta. The submitted report described 37 participating parent-child pairs from kindergarten classes A and B (children aged 4–6 years) and identified total sampling as the recruitment approach. The number of eligible pairs outside the analyzed sample, any non-participation or exclusions, the detailed eligibility criteria, and exact data-collection dates were not documented in the available report; therefore, the findings are limited to the 37 included pairs.

Parenting style was recorded using the Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire–Short Form (PSDQ-SF). A published Indonesian adaptation contains 32 items divided among authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive dimensions and has reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86, 0.76, and 0.67, respectively (Rahmawati, Fajrianthi, & Purwono, 2022). These are properties of the published validation sample, not independently verified reliability estimates for the present 37 participants. The submitted data identify a single predominant parenting-style category per participant, but do not document the exact subscale scoring and classification rule.

Children's language development was categorized as high, moderate, or low from a homeroom teacher's observation checklist. The report does not identify the checklist's developer, item count, response scale, cut-off scores, or psychometric testing. Accordingly, the reported classifications are presented as recorded, without assuming that this checklist was validated or equivalent to a standardized language assessment.

Frequencies and percentages were summarized descriptively. The submitted analysis reported Spearman rank correlation ($\rho = -0.087$; $p = 0.609$), with statistical significance defined as $p < 0.05$. Recalculation from the published 3 × 2 counts reproduces that value when style categories are ranked authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative, respectively, and language classifications are ranked moderate then high. Because parenting styles are conceptually nominal categories without a natural rank order, this coefficient depends on coding and must be interpreted as a descriptive, exploratory analysis rather than an ordered parenting-style effect.

The study reports approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Universitas 'Aisyiyah Yogyakarta (No. 4971/KEP-UNISA/XII/2025). Written informed-consent procedures for participating parents or legal guardians were not documented in the available report.

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RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1. Characteristics of parents (N = 37)

Variable	Results
Parent age, years, mean ± SD (range)	**36.59 ± 6.25 (25–53)**
parent age group (n/%)	
≤29	5/13.5
30–39	21/56.8
40–49	10/27.0
≥50	1/2.7
Education level (n/%)	
Senior high school	1/2.7
Bachelor's degree	29/78.4
Postgraduate	7/18.9
Gender (n/%)	
Male	8/21.6
Female	29/78.4
Employment status (n/%)	
Unemployed	15/40.5
Self-employed	3/8.1
Civil servant	9/24.3
Private-sector employee	9/24.3
Labor	1/2.7

As presented in Table 1, most parents had a bachelor's degree (29 participants, 78.4%) and were female (29 participants, 78.4%). The largest employment category was unemployed (15 participants, 40.5%).

Table 2. Characteristics of children (N = 37)

Variable	Results
Age, years, estimated mean ± SD	**5.26 ± 0.43**
Age group (n/%)	
4–5 years	9/24.3
>5–6 years	28/75.7
Gender (n/%)	
Male	24/64.9
Female	13/35.1

As presented in Table 2, the estimated mean age was 5.26 ± 0.43 years. Most children were older than 5 and up to 6 years (28 children, 75.7%), and 24 (64.9%) were male.

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Table 3. Association between parenting style and language development (N = 37)

Parenting style	Moderate	High	Total, n/%	Spearman ρ	*p* value
Authoritarian	0/0.0	4/100.0	4/10.8	−0.087	0.609
Permissive	0/0.0	4/100.0	4/10.8		
Authoritative	1/3.4	28/96.6	29/78.4		

As presented in Table 3, authoritative parenting was the most common style (29 parents, 78.4%), and permissive and authoritarian parenting were each reported by 4 parents (10.8%). Language development was rated high for 36 children (97.3%) and moderate for 1 (2.7%). No statistically significant rank association was reported under the selected category coding (Spearman ρ = −0.087, p = 0.609).

DISCUSSION

Authoritative parenting was the predominant classification in this sample. The category is generally described in terms of warmth, responsiveness, boundaries, and reasoning; however, a broad parenting style should not be treated as a direct measure of parental language input. Published Indonesian studies illustrate considerable variation in parenting practices and their broader developmental contexts (Kusumawardani & Fauziah, 2021; Sari, Sumardi, & Mulyadi, 2020; Mulyeni, Sutisna, Suminar, & Herlina, 2023). The PSDQ-SF validation study supports separate parenting-style dimensions rather than assuming those categories represent points along a single severity continuum (Rahmawati et al., 2022).

High language-development ratings occurred for 36 of 37 children. This strong ceiling effect means that the checklist distinguished very few children and sharply constrains what can be inferred from comparisons across parenting categories. Research on preschool language abilities and documented developmental delays underscores the importance of measurement methods capable of describing meaningful differences in communication skills (Herawati & Katoningsih, 2023; Wulandari et al., 2024). Moreover, the preliminary observation of language difficulties and the subsequent near-universal high ratings are based on different assessment approaches and should not be interpreted as contradictory diagnoses.

No statistically significant rank association was observed (ρ = −0.087; p = 0.609). Sitompul et al. (2023) likewise reported a nonsignificant association, whereas Anggraini et al. (2024) and Astuti et al. (2024) examined associations in other settings. Importantly, the same table can yield a different correlation if the three nominal parenting styles are assigned another numerical order; the result therefore does not support conclusions about a graded influence of parenting style. Because one child alone was outside the highest language category, the analysis also has extremely limited ability to distinguish groups.

Child language development depends on specific, recurring interactions, not only generalized parenting labels. Research links caregiver speech quality and conversational exchanges with language growth (Rowe, 2012; Hirsh-Pasek et al., 2015; Romeo et al., 2018), and longitudinal preschool classroom research links teachers' language practices with later literacy outcomes (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). A meta-analysis of parent-implemented interventions also supports the clinical relevance of direct parent-child language practice for children with language difficulties, although the present observational study did not test such an intervention (Roberts & Kaiser, 2011).

LIMITATIONS

The sample was small (N = 37) and drawn from one kindergarten. Language development showed a marked ceiling effect (36/37 high), with only four children each in the authoritarian and permissive categories. Parenting styles are nominal, so the Spearman result is sensitive to arbitrary ordering of groups. The teacher checklist's scoring, thresholds,

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validity, and reliability were not documented, and categorization may have lost information. Source population, eligibility details, participation accounting, and exact dates were also unavailable. The cross-sectional design cannot establish causality, and important child and family factors were not assessed.

CONCLUSION

Authoritative parenting was the most frequent style and almost all children received high language-development ratings. A statistically significant association was not detected in the reported rank analysis ($\rho = -0.087$; $p = 0.609$), but the result is limited by a small sample, outcome ceiling effect, and coding of nominal parenting-style categories. It should not be interpreted as evidence that parenting practices or interaction quality are unrelated to language development.

SUGGESTION

Further studies should recruit larger and more diverse preschool samples; use documented, validated language assessments with informative continuous scores; and analyze PSDQ-SF dimension scores separately instead of assigning an arbitrary rank to parenting styles. Reproducible sampling procedures, consent documentation, and complete checklist psychometrics are essential. Studies could also assess direct caregiver-child communication, teacher and peer interactions, and language-focused play approaches, including hand-puppet storytelling as explored by Safitry, Nurunnisa, and Firmansyah (2025) and Utami, Lestari, and Kamilah (2023). Social interaction in the kindergarten setting may merit examination, as suggested by Zahrianis, Saragih, and Andini (2024).

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