

The Role of Parenting in Fostering Independence Among Kindergarten Children: A Qualitative Case Study

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Article Information

Article History:

Received: May-2025

Revised: June-2025

Accepted: June-2025

Keywords:

*parenting styles;
early childhood
independence;
kindergarten children.*

Abstract

This study explores the impact of parenting styles on the development of independence in early childhood. Focusing on five children in Group A of a kindergarten in Cirebon who demonstrated lower levels of independence, this qualitative case study involved participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Findings reveal that parenting significantly shapes children's independence, particularly in emotional regulation, responsibility, and confidence. Democratic parenting fostered the most positive outcomes, supporting both physical and psychological independence. In contrast, authoritarian parenting emphasized discipline but limited emotional development, while permissive and neglectful parenting often led to dependency and poor self-regulation. The study also highlights the influence of external caregivers, such as grandparents, whose indulgent behavior may undermine autonomy, even when democratic parenting is practiced at home. These findings underscore the need for consistent, responsive parenting and collaboration between home and school to foster independence in young children.

How to Cite:

Ilma'nunah, L., Mulyana, A., & Jazariyah, J. (2025). The Role of Parenting in Fostering Independence Among Kindergarten Children: A Qualitative Case Study. *GENIUS: Indonesian Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 6(1), 87–102.
<https://doi.org/10.35719/gns.v6i1.195>



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a foundational stage for children's development before formal schooling. Targeting children aged 0–6 years, it aims to provide optimal stimulation to support holistic growth. As highlighted by Novitasari and Fauziddin (2022), education builds knowledge and shapes character ([Novitasari & Fauziddin, 2022](#)). This developmental phase encompasses cognitive, emotional, social, physical, moral, and spiritual aspects. Among these, cultivating independence is particularly crucial, as it equips children to engage confidently within their social environment.

The early years are often called the golden age—an essential period for building character and basic competencies. Appropriate and consistent stimulation during this time helps children grow into well-rounded individuals. A primary developmental focus at this stage is the social-emotional aspect, which includes a child's ability to manage emotions and relate with others ([Salma & Hasibuan, 2023](#)). Independence is a key component of this aspect, closely tied to self-regulation and interacting according to social norms ([Domino, 2023](#); [Moss & Moss-Racusin, 2021](#)).

Children's independence is a critical indicator of social-emotional development. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014, children aged 4–5 years should begin to exhibit independence, such as performing simple tasks without adult assistance ([Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia Nomor 137 Tentang Standar Nasional Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 2014](#)). Examples include removing shoes, managing personal belongings, eating independently, and tidying up after activities. These behaviors reflect physical and motor development ([Čoh, 2020](#); [Vorotilkina et al., 2020](#)) and psychological readiness to navigate environmental challenges. Therefore, nurturing independence requires active support from parents, teachers, and the broader community.

Parenting plays a pivotal role in shaping children's independence. It encompasses how parents nurture, guide, and engage with their children in everyday situations. Rizkyani et al. (2020) state that the family is the initial social unit influencing children's behavior and autonomy ([Rizkyani et al., 2020](#)). Effective parenting fosters independence, while overprotective or authoritarian approaches may hinder it ([Amaliana & Afrianti, 2022](#); [Karyanto et al., 2022](#)). As a child's first teacher, parents must offer meaningful stimuli to promote autonomous behavior from an early age.

Numerous studies emphasize the significant impact of parental roles—particularly of both mothers and fathers—on a child's development of independence. Morgan et al. (2020) noted that fathers contribute by encouraging children to solve simple problems independently, fostering accountability and self-reliance ([Morgan et al., 2020](#)). Simultaneously, the school environment complements this process. Teachers support children's independence by guiding them through routines and offering opportunities to take initiative.

Preliminary observations revealed uneven development of independence among children. Of the 22 students, 17 displayed independent behaviors such as removing shoes, organizing belongings, and confidently participating in

class activities. Conversely, 5 students required continued assistance with basic tasks. This variation is presumed to stem from differing parenting styles at home, making it a compelling subject for further investigation.

This study explores the influence of parenting styles on children's independence in a kindergarten setting in Cirebon. Specifically, it seeks to (1) analyze the independence behaviors of children, (2) identify the parenting patterns used by their parents, and (3) examine the impact of these patterns on the development of independence. The insights gained are expected to assist both parents and educators in fostering optimal child development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research method with a case study approach to explore the relationship between parenting styles and the development of children's independence at a kindergarten in Cirebon, Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen to explore social phenomena in-depth through descriptive data, focusing on narratives and participant experiences. The case study design enabled intensive examination of a specific group of subjects to gain a comprehensive understanding of parenting behaviors and their impact.

The research subjects consisted of five students from a total of 22 students who were identified as having lower independence scores based on an initial assessment. The students identified as AL, ZA, IR, NA, and MU were chosen purposively using specific criteria. These students consistently demonstrated less independent behavior compared to their peers. In addition to the students, their five respective parents were also involved in the study to provide perspectives on parenting practices.

Data were collected through three main techniques:

1. Participatory Observation – Researchers observed children's daily behavior and interactions during classroom activities to document indicators of independence.
2. Semi-Structured Interviews—The five selected parents were interviewed to gather information regarding their parenting styles and interactions with their children at home.
3. Documentation – Supporting data were obtained from child development records, daily activity logs, and relevant documentation provided by the kindergarten.

To strengthen the study's validity, both primary data (from direct observation and interviews) and secondary data (from documents, books, previous interviews, and institutional records) were used.

The research was guided by structured instruments that aligned with nationally recognized benchmarks. To assess children's independence, the study referred to the Child Development Achievement Level Standards established by the Indonesian government. Four primary indicators of independence were evaluated: the ability to perform self-help tasks, demonstrate self-confidence, show responsibility, and manage emotions.

In analyzing parenting styles, the study adopted Baumrind's parenting typology, which categorizes parenting into four styles (Baumrind, 1966, 1971):

1. Authoritarian
2. Authoritative (Democratic)
3. Permissive
4. Neglectful

Based on these independence indicators, observation instruments were structured to assess children's behavior. Meanwhile, interview guides were developed to extract information on daily parenting practices, challenges, and family dynamics.

The data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Researchers selected, categorized, and simplified the raw data during the data reduction phase to focus on the most relevant themes. That was followed by the data display phase, in which the processed data were presented organized and visually, facilitating comparison and interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying findings by cross-referencing multiple data sources, ensuring validity through triangulation between observation results, interview responses, and supporting documentation.

RESULT

1. Early Childhood Independence Behavior

Observations and interviews with five children with lower independence scores and input from their parents revealed that parenting significantly influences the development of children's independence. The study identified various parenting styles used by the participants, including permissive (pampering), authoritarian, neglectful, and democratic approaches. Each style uniquely affects how children develop autonomy in their daily lives.

Table 1
Independence Score

No	Name	Indikator Items										Sum	Max Score	%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	S	N	
1	RI	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	18	20	90
2	AQ	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	18	20	90
3	ND	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	18	20	90
4	AY	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	18	20	90
5	AL	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	12	20	60
6	AZ	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	19	20	95
7	ME	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	19	20	95
8	ZA	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	11	20	55
9	CH	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	18	20	90
10	IR	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	15	20	75

No	Name	Indikator Items										Sum	Max Score	%
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	S	N	
11	AI	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	19	20	95
12	NA	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	18	20	90
13	AD	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	18	20	90
14	NA	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	16	20	80
15	FA	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	18	20	90
16	SY	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	19	20	95
17	LU	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	19	20	95
18	SA	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	18	20	90
19	AK	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	19	20	95
20	RA	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	18	20	90
21	MU	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	17	20	85
22	RP	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	16	20	80

Table 1 presents the independence scores of students based on ten indicators, including physical, social, and psychological behaviors. The findings show that physical skills such as removing shoes, storing bags, selecting toys independently, and performing in front of the class were more frequently observed. In contrast, indicators related to emotional regulation and social behavior—such as speaking politely, apologizing, returning borrowed items, and managing tantrums—appeared less frequently. That indicates a developmental gap in the observed children's psychological and social dimensions of independence.

Although children displayed independent behaviors related to physical abilities, the observations suggest that only a few indicators appeared consistently. For example, children could perform tasks such as removing their shoes, storing their bags, selecting toys, and occasionally performing in front of the class. However, behaviors requiring emotional maturity and social awareness—such as expressing opinions confidently, politely, or apologizing—were not consistently demonstrated. Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of these behaviors across the five focus children.

Table 2
The Value of Children's Independence

No	Indicators/Statements	Value	AL	MU	NA	ZA	IR
1	Able to take off shoes/footwear by himself.	M		√	√		√
		TM	√			√	
2	Able to store his/her bag.	M		√	√		√
		TM	√			√	
3	Able to express his/her opinion.	M		√	√	√	√
		TM	√				
4	Dare to perform in front of the class.	M		√	√		
		TM	√			√	√
5		M	√	√	√		√

No	Indicators/Statements	Value	AL	MU	NA	ZA	IR
	Dare to choose their toys without being accompanied by others.	TM				√	
6	Able to tidy up the learning tools that have been used.	M		√			√
		TM	√		√	√	
7	Able to apologize when making mistakes.	M		√			
		TM	√		√	√	√
8	Returning friends' belongings that have been borrowed.	M		√			
		TM	√		√	√	√
9	He can hold back anger when his wishes are not fulfilled.	M			√		
		TM	√	√		√	√
10	Speaking politely to others.	M		√	√		
		TM	√			√	√

Description:

M = appearing

TM = not appearing

The results of independence assessments align with parental interview responses. When asked how they handle situations when their children request help, three parents explained that they assist while guiding their children to develop independence. For example, one parent stated, "I help my child while teaching them how to do it independently in the future." Another shared, "Sometimes I observe first; if it is difficult, I help. If not, I just direct." These responses suggest that some parents attempt to balance assistance with encouragement for independent behavior.

Despite this, observational data still show that several independence indicators had not developed optimally. Only the "choosing toys without being accompanied" indicator appeared across all subjects. Two children did not consistently meet other indicators, such as "taking off shoes" and "storing bags," indicating continued reliance on adults. Similarly, one child did not express opinions independently, indicating limited self-confidence. Moreover, three out of five children were reluctant to perform in front of the class, possibly due to shyness or lack of encouragement. However, all five children could tidy up learning tools after use, showing that some aspects of independence have been well established.

Indicators such as "apologizing," "returning borrowed items," "managing anger," and "speaking politely" were not consistently met. Four out of five children could not demonstrate these behaviors in most cases. The lack of development in these areas may reflect inadequate social-emotional learning support at home or school. The limited presence of polite speech and apologetic behavior suggests a need for stronger role modeling and

reinforcement of social norms. These gaps indicate that children's independence, particularly in emotional regulation and interpersonal behavior, still faces significant obstacles.

Multiple indicators falling into the "Not Appearing" category (TM) underscore the developmental challenges in achieving holistic independence. Excessively permissive or inconsistent parenting hindered the acquisition of foundational independence skills. This finding underscores the importance of educating parents on instilling independence from an early age through consistent routines and simple responsibilities.

Data analysis further revealed that parenting practices that provide children with opportunities to act independently while offering guidance and support are the most effective in fostering independence. This type of parenting fosters self-confidence and prepares children to face challenges autonomously. Conversely, excessive supervision or premature assistance often weakens children's initiative and responsibility, making them overly reliant on adults.

The study also highlights the role of the school environment in shaping children's independent behavior. Alongside parenting at home, structured routines and encouragement from teachers support the development of autonomy. The synergy between home and school environments is critical in cultivating independence during early childhood.

2. Parenting of Children

Parenting involves how adults educate, guide, and discipline children to shape their character. Interview findings indicate varied responses from parents when dealing with their children's difficulties. One mother explained that she asks her child about their feelings and provides step-by-step assistance. Another prefers to encourage and praise the child's efforts before offering help. Some parents allow their children to try resolving problems independently before intervening.

Establishing household rules also plays a role in parenting. One parent applies a rule-keeping system to foster a sense of responsibility, while another uses a more flexible approach. One mother instills moral values, such as respecting others' belongings, while another emphasizes discipline by applying consequences when rules are violated.

Appreciation and rewards were also part of several parents' strategies. Some parents use verbal praise and small gifts to acknowledge their children's efforts, while others fulfill specific requests as rewards for achievement. These practices enhance children's motivation to strive and learn independently.

When children experience failure, parents generally provide emotional support. Some mothers comfort their children and encourage them to try again, while others use fun distractions or physical affection to boost their children's spirits. These differing strategies reflect varying emotional support mechanisms across parenting styles.

Table 3
Application of Parenting

Type of Parenting	Applied by	Reason
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Permissive	Mrs. ETK	Feeling tired in dealing with crying children.
	Mrs. ETT	Cannot bear to see the child experiencing difficulties and whining.
Neglectful	Mrs. INY	The assumption is that children will develop by themselves according to age.
Authoritarian	Mrs. PJY	Parents assume that children will grow according to their wishes by emphasizing discipline and obedience to rules.
Democratic	Mrs. PWT	Want to provide controlled freedom, open communication, and positive motivation.

Based on the study findings, democratic parenting demonstrated the most positive influence on children's independence. Children raised in democratic households were more confident, capable of completing simple tasks independently, and exhibited a strong sense of responsibility. Conversely, permissive parenting tended to impede independence, as children became overly reliant on parental assistance. Table 3 summarizes the application of parenting styles among the five participating parents.

The data revealed distinct variations in the five parents' parenting styles, which were categorized as indulgent, neglectful, authoritarian, and democratic. Democratic parenting yielded the most favorable outcomes in both physical and psychological aspects of children's independence. This style balances parental expectations with emotional responsiveness, enabling children to feel supported and responsible. In contrast, permissive and neglectful parenting styles were associated with less desirable outcomes, particularly due to the absence of structured guidance and consistent boundaries.

3. The Impact of Parents' Parenting on the Development of Children's Independence

Interview and observation analysis confirmed parenting styles' influence on children's independence. For example, ZA's parent demonstrated a permissive approach, immediately helping the child when whining occurred. This behavior reduced the child's motivation to complete tasks independently.

Authoritarian parenting was seen in the case of NA. Her parent applied firm rules and discipline. As a result, NA demonstrated strong physical independence, such as organizing learning materials. However, she had not yet developed adequate emotional regulation skills, indicating an imbalance between control and psychological support.

A neglectful parenting style was observed in the case of IR. The parent described a soft parenting approach without clear rules or supervision. Consequently, IR experienced challenges in psychological independence, particularly in managing emotions and acknowledging wrongdoing. IR often

displayed aggressive behavior, which may reflect a lack of emotional direction from the caregiver.

Democratic parenting was evident in MU's case. This style involved active dialogue and mutual agreement on expectations and consequences. Although MU benefited from this supportive environment, he still exhibited tantrums when his desires were unmet, suggesting that emotional regulation continues to require strengthening.

DISCUSSION

Instilling independence in early childhood is critical for laying the foundation for self-directed behavior later in life. In this context, independence is defined as a child's ability to carry out daily tasks without relying on others ([Ananda et al., 2024](#)). According to Pareira and Atal (2019), children aged 4–5 years who have developed independence typically exhibit confidence, responsibility, autonomy, and initiative in various learning and social settings ([Pareira & Atal, 2019](#)).

The findings of this study indicate that parenting styles directly and significantly impact the development of children's independence. That supports prior research suggesting that effective communication between parents and their children facilitates smoother task completion and nurtures independent behaviors ([Ma'rufah & Hidayati, 2024](#)). Parenting influences how children behave at home and how they navigate routines and challenges at school, especially when school and home environments reinforce each other's values.

Social interactions with peers and teachers also contribute to the development of independence. Through group-based activities—such as tidying up toys, eating communally, or organizing classroom tools—children gain firsthand experience in decision-making and problem-solving. Saudah et al. (2022) emphasize that such experiences enhance autonomy when supported consistently by teachers and caregivers ([Saudah et al., 2022](#)).

Analysis of the Parenting Style

Two parents in the study were found to practice indulgent or permissive parenting, primarily due to fatigue or difficulty managing their children's tantrums. These parents tended to accommodate their children's demands to avoid conflict, which aligns with Noviani and Barus's (2024) description of permissive parenting ([Noviani & Barus, 2024](#)). This parenting style prioritizes physical comfort and emotional ease over discipline and social learning, often resulting in a lack of boundaries that impede the development of responsibility and emotional regulation.

Neglectful parenting was also identified in one case, where the parent allowed the child to develop naturally without structured supervision. During interviews, the parents assumed that independence would emerge with age. Observations, however, showed a lack of parental engagement in the child's daily activities. This finding is consistent with Noviani and Barus (2024), who describe neglectful parenting as involving minimal involvement, reduced supervision, and low responsiveness—factors that can undermine emotional and social development ([Noviani & Barus, 2024](#)).

An authoritarian parenting pattern was observed in a parent who emphasized strict discipline and obedience. The child was expected to follow rigid rules, such as completing tasks before playing. Although this approach improved the child's physical independence and discipline, it limited opportunities for creativity and initiative. These findings support Fitriyani's (2015) argument that authoritarian parenting enforces high control, which can stifle psychological freedom and hinder independent problem-solving ([Fitriyani, 2015](#)).

Democratic parenting was practiced by one informant who balanced giving children freedom with clearly communicated boundaries. This parent allowed the child to make decisions and only intervened when necessary while explaining the reasoning behind decisions. Observations of this child showed behaviors consistent with democratic parenting indicators—such as positive communication, willingness to try tasks independently, and responsiveness to motivation. Fitriyani (2015) notes that democratic parenting supports exploration while maintaining supportive parental expectations, creating an optimal environment for independence development ([Fitriyani, 2015](#)).

Democratic parenting had the most significant positive impact on children's independence across various indicators. Children raised under this style were more capable of completing daily tasks such as removing their shoes, organizing their bags, and selecting toys independently. Although one child still showed challenges in emotional regulation (e.g., crying when expectations were not met), these children demonstrated higher levels of self-confidence and responsibility ([Nikmah & Sa'adah, 2021](#)).

Despite its rigidity, authoritarian parenting also fostered a degree of physical independence, particularly in task execution and rule-following. As Ismawati et al. (2024) suggest, this style can instill discipline, although it may suppress creativity and emotional expression ([Ismawati et al., 2024](#)). It was evident in the study's observation that children under authoritarian care struggled with emotional expression, including difficulty in apologizing or sharing with peers.

However, the opposite practice was found in research conducted by Yang in 2024. According to Yang, children raised in permissive households do not tend to be socially confident, as authoritative parenting is the most effective approach to developing social competence ([Yang, 2024](#)). Similarly, Lionetti et al., who studied the interaction between early parenting and children's sensitivity, stated that sensitive children raised with permissive parenting are at risk for developing rumination and depressive symptoms ([Lionetti et al., 2022](#)).

Although in some conditions associated with adverse outcomes, permissive parenting showed some positive effects, such as boosting children's self-esteem. Putri and Lestari (2021) state that children raised in permissive households tend to be socially confident. However, this study found that children under permissive care still faced difficulty managing emotional outbursts and often relied on their parents during tasks, indicating a gap between self-esteem and practical independence ([Putri & Lestari, 2021](#)).

Children from neglectful households displayed independent behaviors—such as removing their shoes or expressing opinions—suggesting that autonomy may develop naturally to some extent. Ismawati et al. (2024) argue that

minimal supervision can foster creativity and initiative ([Ismawati et al., 2024](#)). Nevertheless, in this study, neglectful parenting also correlated with poor emotional regulation, insecurity, and the inability to demonstrate socially expected behaviors such as apologizing or politeness.

While each parenting style yields both positive and negative outcomes, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles appear to have more pronounced limitations, especially in supporting emotional development. Somewhat differently, Chen et al. found that authoritarian and neglectful parenting styles were associated with higher levels of child maladjustment, while permissive and authoritative parenting styles were protective factors ([Chen et al., 2024](#)). Children raised in authoritarian households often lacked the freedom to take initiative ([Mardiana, 2020](#)), whereas children from permissive backgrounds struggled with self-control and responsibility ([Putri & Lestari, 2021](#)). These effects reinforce the importance of balanced parenting, supporting autonomy and structure.

Neglectful parenting carries further risks, often resulting in emotional insecurity and reduced social competence. Hasanah (2016) found that children with emotionally absent parents may struggle with interpersonal skills and emotional resilience ([Hasanah, 2016](#)). That aligns with the findings of this study, in which children from neglectful environments had difficulty demonstrating polite or empathetic behavior.

Interestingly, the study identified that even democratic parenting can be undermined by external caregivers, such as grandparents, who may adopt indulgent approaches. In one case, although the parent applied democratic parenting at home, the grandmother's tendency to spoil the child reduced overall independence. Nikmah and Sa'adah (2021) explain that third-party caregivers can unintentionally hinder autonomy development if overly lenient or overprotective ([Nikmah & Sa'adah, 2021](#)).

In conclusion, while all parenting styles influence children's independence differently, democratic parenting offers the most balanced and constructive approach. It supports children's physical and psychological autonomy through positive communication, guidance, and consistency. To optimize its impact, however, this style must be reinforced by all caregivers involved in the child's daily life. For future practice, it is essential that parents are educated on the importance of balancing freedom with guidance and encouraged to adopt consistent and responsive parenting strategies that empower children to grow independently.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the development of independence among kindergarten children remains suboptimal. Several indicators of independence—particularly self-confidence, responsibility, emotional regulation, and creativity—were underdeveloped in the observed students. These developmental delays suggest that various internal and external factors, especially parenting styles, significantly influence children's independent behavior during early childhood.

The findings indicate that parenting plays a central role in shaping children's independence. However, not all parenting styles observed in this study

effectively supported the development of autonomy. Democratic parenting demonstrated the most consistent positive impact, fostering self-confidence, initiative, and task responsibility in children. In contrast, while promoting discipline, authoritarian parenting tended to limit creativity and emotional flexibility. Permissive and neglectful parenting styles were associated with higher levels of dependence, poor emotional regulation, and limited social awareness. However, some children still showed strengths in specific areas, such as problem-solving or verbal expression.

Each parenting style brought both benefits and challenges. While neglectful parenting occasionally encouraged self-direction, it also contributed to emotional insecurity. Authoritarian parenting instilled discipline but restricted independent thinking. Permissive parenting enhanced short-term emotional comfort but often hindered resilience. Notably, even democratic parenting could be compromised when external caregivers applied inconsistent approaches, such as excessive indulgence from grandparents. These findings highlight the importance of consistency and collaboration across all caregiving figures in a child's life.

In light of these findings, this study emphasizes the need for parental education and early childhood interventions that promote balanced and supportive parenting. Encouraging parents to adopt responsive, structured, and autonomy-supportive strategies is essential for fostering independence in early learners. Future research is encouraged to explore this topic further with larger samples and more diverse contexts to deepen our understanding of how parenting practices can be optimized to support the holistic development of independence in young children.

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