



EMPOWERING PARENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH IN COMMUNITY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Siti Misra Susanti¹, Marwah², Hartati³, Rachman Saleh⁴, Firji Hertuni⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton

email: [sitimisra764@gmail.com^{1\)}](mailto:sitimisra764@gmail.com)

*Corresponding Author

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Abstrak

PKM ini bertujuan untuk memberikan memberdayakan orang tua dalam Pendidikan anak usia dini. Pentingnya Pendidikan sejak usia dini dalam membentuk karakter, kognitif, sosial, dan emosional anak akan lebih optimal. Masa usia dini (0-6 tahun) merupakan golden age bagi perkembangan anak. Namun, pemahaman orang tua mengenai pentingnya PAUD masih minim, dengan banyak yang menganggap pendidikan formal baru dimulai saat anak masuk sekolah dasar. PKM ini menggunakan metode ceramah dan tanya jawab antara orang tua, guru dan tokoh masyarakat tentang Pendidikan anak sejak usia dini. untuk memfasilitasi keterlibatan aktif orang tua dalam memahami dan menerapkan pendidikan anak usia dini. Kegiatan dilaksanakan di Desa Wakeakea, meliputi persiapan, pelaksanaan kegiatan, dan evaluasi. Adapun hasil PKM (Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat) memberikan beberapa solusi antara lain: pelibatan orang tua dalam proses Pendidikan, kolaborasi antara guru dan orang tua yaitu pendidikan anak usia dini yang berkualitas melibatkan orang tua dan guru, demi menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang aman. Orang tua sebagai pendidik pertama memiliki peran krusial dalam memberikan stimulasi yang sesuai, menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang mendukung, dan membangun pola asuh yang responsive misalnya pemenuhan kebutuhan finansial dan kasih sayang yang cukup serta motivasi anak untuk belajar demi terciptanya generasi yang berkualitas.

Kata kunci: Orang Tua, Pemberdayaan, Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini.

Abstract

This community service aims to empower parents in early childhood education. The importance of early childhood education in shaping children's character, cognitive, social, and emotional development will be more optimal. Early childhood (0-6 years) is the golden age for child development. However, parents' understanding of the importance of PAUD is still minimal, with many assuming that formal education only begins when children enter elementary school. This community service uses lecture and question-and-answer methods between parents, teachers, and community members about early childhood education. to facilitate the active involvement of parents in understanding and implementing early childhood education. Activities carried out in Wakeakea Village, including preparation, implementation of activities, and evaluation. The results of community service provide several solutions, including parental involvement in the education process, collaboration between teachers and parents, namely quality early childhood education involving parents and teachers, in order to create a safe learning environment. Parents as the first educators have a crucial role in providing appropriate stimulation, creating a supportive learning environment, and building responsive parenting patterns, for example, fulfilling financial needs and providing sufficient love and motivation for children to learn in order to create a quality generation.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Empowerment, Parents.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is a crucial foundation for developing a child's character, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities (Sa'diya, 2021). Early childhood is considered a golden age that determines the direction of a child's future development (Black, 2017). Therefore, parental involvement in a child's early education is crucial (Richter, 2017). The responsibility for a child's education is largely placed on formal institutions. At the same time, the role of the family, especially parents, is limited to earning a living and meeting the child's financial needs. Furthermore, minimal parental involvement can hinder the synergy between the home and school environments in educating children (Dasopang, 2022). Considering the importance of parents' role in early childhood education, Dewi, (2018) states that the results of this activity are expected to serve as a basis for formulating parental awareness and strengthening collaboration between families and educational institutions to support optimal child development.

However, the reality on the ground shows that parental empowerment regarding the importance of early childhood education is still relatively minimal (Risnawati, 2022). Parents consider that education only begins at elementary school age, and most parents believe that education only begins when children enter formal school, in this case, when children are in elementary school (Gjelaj, 2020). This activity aims to empower parents in early childhood education (Mustika, 2020). The novelty of this activity is providing direct and participatory education about early childhood education, and it is also designed to involve parents in discussions about early childhood education actively. Parents, as the first and primary educators, are crucial in providing stimulation appropriate to the child's developmental stage (Kemendikbud, 2024). Unfortunately, in practice, not all parents understand the importance of early childhood education. Various studies show that early learning experiences have a long-term impact on children's academic success, social skills, and emotional well-being (Heckman, 2011).

Early childhood is often referred to as the "golden age," a period in which a child's brain structure develops rapidly and is sensitive to environmental stimuli (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Education during this period focuses not only on academic aspects such as reading and arithmetic, but also on developing all aspects of a child's life skills. Early education will shape children to be more independent (Sari & Rasyidah, 2020). Early childhood education aims to foster self-confidence, the ability to work together, problem-solving skills, and the development of moral values (Berk, 2013). Parents serve as the primary educators before children are exposed to the outside world, including school (Hurlock, 2002). Forms of parental involvement include providing learning experiences at home, building effective communication, and modeling good behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 2019). Children

cannot distinguish whether the behavior shown is acceptable to others or not, if adults (such as parents, teachers) do not convey or inform children directly about the behaviors expected by society, provide examples to children about good attitudes, and accustom children to behaving well in everyday life wherever the child (Khaironi, 2017). According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC, (2009), quality early childhood education involves directed play activities, positive social interactions, and a safe learning environment that supports children's exploration. Thus, the role of parents is important in creating a home atmosphere that supports children's development and builds responsive and stimulating parenting patterns (Berk, 2013).

However, research shows that parental empowerment regarding early childhood education still varies widely (Apriyani, 2021). While some parents already have a good understanding of the importance of early childhood education, many still consider early childhood education to be nothing more than play activities without clear goals (Putri, 2021). This perception influences parental attitudes and involvement in supporting their children's learning process. Several factors contribute to parents' lack of understanding of the importance of early childhood education, including parental education level, socioeconomic background, access to quality information, and local culture (Yuliana, 2019).

In communities with limited resources, parents often focus more on meeting children's basic needs than stimulating their cognitive or socio-emotional development. Furthermore, in today's digital era, the proliferation of unvalidated information on social media also has the potential to create misunderstandings about early childhood education practices (Sukatin et al., 2019). Parents need to be equipped with information literacy skills so that they are able to sort out which information can be relied upon to support appropriate parenting patterns Desmita, (2014) stated that community-based education programs that involve parents in direct activities with children can significantly increase their understanding of the importance of stimulation in early childhood.

According to Berk, (2013) Early childhood is often referred to as the golden age, where 75% of the human brain's capacity is formed at this age. Proper stimulation during this period will have a long-term impact on a child's development, including learning abilities, mental health, and social behavior. Parents are the first and foremost educators for children. According to Hurlock, (2002), parents act as role models who have a strong influence on the formation of a child's personality, values, and attitudes.

Holding regular meetings between parents to share experiences and strategies for parenting (Amini, 2015). The purpose of this activity is to provide parents with an understanding of early childhood education. With parents' understanding and knowledge, it is hoped that people can be more active in



accompanying their children's learning process, providing appropriate stimulation, and creating a home environment that supports children's development.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The method used in this community service is a lecture method in the form of providing material on empowering parents about early childhood education. Parental understanding of early childhood education is important so that parents have initial knowledge in educating children. This activity was held at the Wakeakea village office on May 7, 2025. Below is a view of the Wakeakea village office as described in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Wakeakea Village Office

This activity is targeted at parents of children. Community service activities are in the form of empowering parents of children about early childhood education. This activity is carried out by two methods, namely the lecture method and the question-and-answer method. The lecture method provides material on empowering parents about early childhood education. The use of this method is accompanied by the use of media such as laptops and LCDs so that the delivery of the material can be conveyed well. Question and Answer Method The resource person uses questions to ask participants questions, and participants answer, or vice versa, about the material that has been presented. This activity is fully supported by the Wakeakea village community. This activity was attended by parents of children, 8 village officials and community leaders. This method was chosen lecture and question and answer method, with the parents of children. This method is used to monitor the activeness/involvement of parents directly in understanding and implementing early childhood education. This service was attended by parents and community leaders. The activity took place in Wakea-kea village, GU sub-district. The activity included the presentation of material on early childhood education. The following community service activity materials focused on early childhood education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Community Service activities on Empowering Parents in Early Childhood Education. This activity was held in Wakeakea Village on May 7, 2025. The activity schedule is as follows Table 1.

Table 1. Schedule of Community Service Activities

No	Activity Time	Implementation of Activities	Activity Location
1	08.00- 08.30 wita	Check in activity participants	At the Wakeakea Village Office
2	09.00- 09.05 wita	Opening	
3	09.05-09.10 wita	Singing the Indonesian national anthem	
4	09.10-10.00 wita	Begin the activity	
5	10.00- 11.30 wita	Delivery of material	
6	11.30- 11.40 wita	Prayer	
7	11.40-12.00 wita	Closing	

In practice, not all parents have sufficient understanding of how to provide appropriate stimulation and education from an early age. Therefore, the community service team has an important role in bridging the knowledge gap, one of which is by providing material on parents' understanding of early childhood education. The implementation of this activity is arranged and adjusted according to mutual agreement. This activity begins with creating a schedule of activities, followed by the implementation of activities. In this activity, parents are actively involved. Active parental involvement is a crucial foundation for the success of children's education, especially from an early age. In community service activities, the activity stages are divided as follows:

Planning Stage

The first stage in this community service activity is planning to identify the needs of parents. The community service team Prepares Joint Planning with the community service team adjusted to the needs, preparation of materials, and adjustment of methods in the form of Needs Identification The initial step of the community service team is to conduct observations and initial interviews with several parents who have early childhood children, both those in the PAUD environment and those who have not accessed formal education services. The results of the identification show that there are still many gaps in parents' understanding regarding; The purpose of early childhood education, The role of the family in stimulating child development, The importance of active parental involvement. Understanding of aspects of child development (cognitive, social, language, and motor) and Differences in parenting patterns that support optimal growth and development. The duration of the material delivered is \pm 90 minutes per material.

Based on the results of the needs identification, the community service team compiled relevant, contextual, and communicative materials so that they are



easily understood by parents from various educational backgrounds. The materials were designed in the form of presentations such as the Concept of early childhood education, the Role and Responsibilities of Parents in Children's Education, Strategies for Providing Age-Appropriate Stimulation and Collaboration between Families and Early Childhood Education Institutions. The materials were also equipped with examples of simple activities that parents can do at home with their children, such as reading stories, recognizing numbers and letters through games, and strengthening religious and moral values through daily activities. Scheduling After the materials were compiled, the community service team compiled a detailed activity schedule, determined the implementation location, and interactive delivery methods. Coordination was carried out with teachers and figures so that the implementation of the activities ran smoothly and received full support.

Implementation Stage

The second stage is the implementation of community service activities, which consist of material delivery and a question-and-answer session. The activities are conducted offline (face-to-face) at the Wakeakea village office. The implementation of the activities focuses on the active participation of parents. The material is delivered communicatively with various approaches, namely oriented towards the parents' experiences. The activity begins with a general presentation on the importance of early childhood as a golden period, accompanied by data and research results that demonstrate the positive impact of early childhood education on long-term life. At this stage, parents are actively involved. The material delivery session is divided into two sessions as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Delivery of Material

Parental Involvement in Education

Parental involvement extends beyond attendance at school meetings. Parents play an active role and assume full responsibility for interacting with their

children within the family environment, particularly in providing financial support, play equipment, and, of course, the attention and affection they require. Parents regularly communicate about their children's learning activities, provide an environment that supports exploration, and provide positive encouragement. Parents play a crucial role because the primary education takes place within the family. Within the family environment, children are formed, both through stimulation and character development. Therefore, parents provide the primary education necessary for the next stage of development. Parents provide love and stimulation from the time a child is conceived. Every parent must understand development from conception and pay attention to stimulation for subsequent stages. Likewise, from the moment a child is born, parents provide their child with love and basic needs for optimal growth and development, and for the child to demonstrate attitudes and social skills acceptable in society.

This material delivery activity discusses parents' understanding of early childhood education. In this case, the family is the first library for children. It is there that children are introduced to character and matters related to child development so that children grow and develop according to their developmental stages (Talango, 2020). The following statements from parents during this activity are as follows:

"I'm so happy to have participated in this activity. I gained a lot of new knowledge, especially on how to deal with tantrums. I hope activities like this can be held regularly so that we parents don't make mistakes in raising our children. It's age-appropriate."

Parents are the primary educators in the family environment for their children, as they provide the foundation for children to live and interact with the social environment, including family members and the environment in which children grow and develop.

Collaborative Activities between Parents and Teachers in Early Childhood Education

Collaboration between teachers and parents in terms of implementing learning, such as providing direction, providing financial needs for children. Parents and teachers have primary duties that must be understood by each of the school, teachers, and parents. First, parents and teachers have the task of analyzing children's needs and providing facilities and infrastructure. Meanwhile, the parents' task is to create a sense of security and comfort for optimal growth and development for early childhood, encourage children's development, establish positive, warm, and loving communication and interactions with children, provide support and foster self-confidence in children, establish good and active relationships and communication with the school to provide information regarding children's development.



In the family environment, the role of parents is very important to create a conducive environment so that children are facilitated to learn in order to develop themselves according to the stages of child development. Meanwhile, the school environment, the role of teachers has an important role to guide and direct. Therefore, the school environment and the family environment must collaborate in guiding and supervising children in terms of learning. Therefore, it must be assisted by formal institutions (schools), because education is also a shared responsibility in national life, the task of educating children for parents can be assisted by schools and the community. Collaboration between parents and teachers is very important to support further development. After delivering material on parental involvement in collaborative parent education and collaboration between parents and PAUD teachers, the team continued with a question and answer session.

Question and answer session. Parents were given the opportunity to share their experiences, problems they face in educating children, and find solutions together. Such as the question of parents "How to divide time between work and accompanying children to study?" The service team answered with an empathetic approach, providing explanations in easy-to-understand language, and providing space for other participants to share experiences. The main points of the material are as follows: 1). Education is not just school: Children's education begins at home, long before they enter formal school. Parents are the first and foremost teachers. 2). Age-appropriate stimulation: Providing stimulation in the form of play activities while learning, storytelling, talking with children, inviting exploration of the surrounding environment. 3) Positive parenting: Avoiding verbal and physical violence, giving appreciation to children's efforts, and providing clear and consistent boundaries. 4). The dual role of parents and PAUD institutions: The importance of synergy between home and school so that children receive a complete and continuous education.

Evaluation Stage

The final stage of the activity is evaluation and feedback. Evaluation is conducted to determine the extent to which the activity has achieved its objectives and to provide a basis for improving similar activities in the future. Written and oral reflection: Participants were asked to write down one new thing they learned and one thing they would try to practice at home. Several parents responded, reflecting significant changes in understanding. Parents were also given the opportunity to provide feedback on the delivery method and the appropriateness of the activity's timing. The evaluation results showed that most parents felt the activity was very beneficial. They felt more confident in educating their children at home and were motivated to be more involved in their children's education. This finding is in line with. Most participants stated that the activity was very beneficial and hoped that there would be regular meetings on an ongoing basis and that

parental involvement would have a positive influence on early childhood development. The following is an example of an evaluation instrument for parent empowerment regarding early childhood education.

Parental empowerment in early childhood education is an urgent need in building a quality generational foundation (Yuhani`ah, 2022). Empirical data shows that most parents' understanding of the importance of early childhood education is still minimal, as seen in Wakeakea Village. The perception that education only starts at the elementary school level reflects the low literacy of family education. In fact, a child's golden period is a critical phase of brain development which reaches 75% of its capacity at an early age (Hasanah, 2016). This lack of awareness hinders parental involvement in providing appropriate stimulation from an early age. (Amanda, 2022) emphasizes the importance of environmental stimulation in the formation of brain nerve pathways that are essential for children's emotional and social intelligence.

From the perspective of the developmental ecology approach (Sari et al., 2020), children's education cannot be separated from the interaction between systems that affect individual development, one of which is the family system. Parents as the main agents in the microsystem have the responsibility to create an environment that supports children's growth and development, both cognitively and affectively (Khaironi, 2017). Unfortunately, in practice, many parents are not equipped with the skills or knowledge on how to accompany their children in a way that is appropriate to their developmental stage (Rosti et al., 2023). This is exacerbated by external factors such as economic limitations, low access to quality information, and the influence of local culture that has not internalized the importance of education from an early age (Fahrudin & Astini, 2018). Therefore, a participatory approach in service that actively involves parents has proven to be an effective solution in building their understanding and practical skills.

This community service activity shows the importance of synergy between parents, teachers, and the community in creating a sustainable education ecosystem (Hardiningrum et al., 2023). The collaboration not only strengthens the role of parents as the first and foremost educators, but also encourages the realization of a safe and supportive learning environment, as emphasized (Al Ayyubi et al., 2024). The material presented in this community service activity ranging from the concept of early childhood education, early childhood stimulation strategies, to strengthening positive communication can provide concrete provisions for parents in carrying out these roles (Ma'sum, 2018). The impact can be seen from the increase in parental participation and critical reflection after the activity (Putri, 2021). Therefore, the sustainability of this program needs to be systematically designed through regular parenting classes, parent-teacher communication forums, and community-based mentoring so that the results



achieved are not temporary, but are able to provide long-term transformation in parenting and family education practices.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Community service conducted in Wakeakea Village demonstrated that parents' understanding of the importance of early childhood education varies. This activity successfully increased parental understanding and active involvement in children's education, through lectures, discussions, and collaboration between parents, teachers, and community leaders. Parents recognized their crucial role as the first and primary educators, particularly in providing early stimulation, creating a safe and supportive learning environment, and fostering responsive and compassionate parenting. Effective collaboration between families and early childhood education institutions is essential to optimally support children's growth and development.

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of these community service activities on parenting practices and child development, so that they can form the basis for developing similar policies or programs in the future.

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