

THE ROLE OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE FORMATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS THROUGH THE COOKING CLASS PROGRAM AT SCHOOL

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Abstract: *This study aims to explore how parental involvement shapes early childhood social-emotional skills through the cooking class program at TK ABA 05 Medan. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that the cooking class serves as an effective media of stimulating children's independence, social interaction, and emotional regulation. The program also strengthens collaboration between teachers and parents in fostering a holistic learning environment. School support, flexible implementation, and varied menus contribute to its success. However, some parents' limited awareness of healthy eating remains a challenge. This study recommends strengthening communication and continuous education between schools and families.*

Keywords *Parental involvement, cooking class, social-emotional skills, early childhood.*

Introduction

Tourism The development of social and emotional skills in early childhood is one of the main pillars of shaping success in education and, more broadly, in social life. These skills include recognizing and controlling emotions, establishing social relationships, and fostering empathy and responsibility for the surrounding environment (Denham et al., 2011). Children who are equipped with social-emotional skills from an early age will be better prepared to enter the school world and foster positive interpersonal relationships (Jf et al., 2025). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2025), learning approaches that focus on strengthening social-emotional skills can significantly improve academic achievement and reduce deviant behavior. In this context, parental involvement plays a central role in facilitating this development, primarily through collaborative and meaningful activities.

One innovation in early childhood education that has begun to be adopted in various PAUD and TK institutions is the implementation of cooking classes that involve parents' active participation. This activity not only introduces children to the process of food processing and the importance of nutrition, but also serves as a space for interaction that fosters healthy emotional communication, cooperation, and strengthens family ties. Through cooking activities, children learn to manage feelings, share roles, be patient, and get emotional support from their closest

figures (Xu et al., 2024). In addition, DeJesus et al. (2019) explained that encouraging children to participate in food preparation is recommended by pediatric guidelines and has been included in public health interventions. However, practice shows that there is limited understanding of how these activities contribute to children's social-emotional development in the school context. Challenges such as parental time constraints, concerns for children's safety, and the lack of integration of these activities in the ECD curriculum are barriers.

Studies have explored the benefits of cooking together, particularly in terms of shaping healthy eating patterns and boosting children's self-confidence. For example, research by Horst et al. (2024) showed that children's participation in cooking programs led to greater courage in trying new foods, higher self-confidence, and a stronger emotional connection with the family. Meanwhile, findings from Lavelle et al. (2023) revealed that the Fun with Food program was effective in reducing children's anxiety towards food and building positive interactions between parents and children. However, the majority of these studies used quantitative approaches that have not comprehensively explored the emotional and social dynamics of cooking together, especially in institutional contexts such as schools.

Departing from these conditions, this research is important to explore in depth the experiences and dynamics of parental involvement in cooking classes at school, by taking the title, "The Role of Parental Involvement in the Formation of Early Childhood Social-Emotional Skills Through the Cooking Class Program at School. Thus, this study is expected not only to enrich academic discourse on the role of families in children's education but also to provide practical recommendations for educators, parents, and policymakers on designing learning programs that encourage early social-emotional development. Given the importance of shaping children's character and social skills from preschool age, the study of parents' roles in cooking-class activities in educational settings is a relevant and urgent topic that warrants in-depth examination.

Literature Review

1. Islamic Education Framework in Developing Early Childhood Social-Emotional Skills

In the tradition of Islamic education, an integrated approach grounded in the concepts of *tarbiyah* (holistic coaching), *ta'lim* (teaching), and *ta'dīb* (instilling adab and character) provides an important foundation for shaping children's personalities, especially in social-emotional development (Dacholfany & Hasanah, 2018). *Tarbiyah* represents a coaching process that covers the physical, emotional, spiritual, and social dimensions of children as a whole. Meanwhile, *ta'lim* focuses on the transfer of knowledge, such as cooking skills and understanding the principles of halal and *thayyib* food. Meanwhile, *ta'dīb* emphasizes the internalization of adab values, such as patience, empathy, discipline, and sharing. In the context of the school's cooking class program, parental involvement reflects the practical implementation of these *tarbiyah* and *ta'dīb* values, as children learn through direct practice under the moral guidance of parents and teachers.

2. Parents' Involvement as First Educators in Children's Social-Emotional Development

In the context of Islamic education, parents are recognized as early *murabbi* figures, namely the primary educators who play an important role in instilling moral and social values since childhood (Imamah & Ma'ruf, 2019). Their participation in activities such as school cooking classes not only serves as supervision or technical assistance but also as a manifestation of an educational role that introduces values such as tolerance, exemplary behavior, honesty, and cooperation. These collaborative activities reflect the principles of *ukhuwah* and *ta'awun*, which

directly support the development of children's social-emotional competencies, including the ability to manage emotions, interact positively, and build empathy and effective communication.

Method

This research was conducted using a qualitative case study approach to deeply explore parental involvement in developing early childhood social-emotional skills through cooking-class activities at ABA 05 Medan Kindergarten on Jl. Mustafa No.3, Glugur Darat I, District, East Medan, Medan City. The choice of this approach is based on its ability to capture subjective experiences, the meaning contained in social interactions, and the complexity of relationships between individuals that cannot be explained by statistical approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research specifically focuses on the dynamics of parents' involvement with their children and the school in cooking activities designed as a vehicle for learning social values such as empathy, cooperation, and self-control.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document collection techniques. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with several key informants, namely parents, class teachers, and school principals, who have an active role in planning and implementing cooking class activities. Observations were made during the activity to observe children's emotional responses, interaction patterns, and parents' participation in the learning process. In addition, documents such as activity sheets, photos of activity results, and teacher notes were used as additional data sources. To ensure data validity, the researcher applied source and method triangulation and reconfirmed the findings with the participants (Miles, MB, Huberman, AM, Saldaña, 2014).

The data analysis process was conducted using a thematic analysis approach through the stages of data reduction, information presentation, and conclusion drawing. The collected data were coded and grouped into main themes that emerged consistently, including the intensity of parental involvement, the types of social-emotional values that develop, and the role of the cooking class in shaping children's character. All findings were interpreted within the framework of early childhood Islamic education, taking into account the concepts of *tarbiyah* (coaching), *ta'lim* (teaching), and *ta'dīb* (moral formation). Thus, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding not only of what happens in practice in the field, but also the reasons and mechanisms behind the effectiveness of parental involvement in strengthening children's social-emotional aspects.

Result and Discussion

1. Cooking Class Implementation and Parent Involvement

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of the cooking class program at Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal (ABA) 05 Medan Kindergarten is carried out systematically and in an organized manner, from careful planning through to field implementation. In the process, parents are actively involved. Before the activity begins, teachers take the initiative to communicate with and coordinate with parents to explain the activity's purpose and its benefits for the development of fine motor and social-emotional skills in early childhood.

Based on an interview with Mrs. Arvi, a class teacher at TK ABA 5 Medan, she said that: "...activities that involve parents in this kindergarten are cooking classes. This program is held regularly, at least once a semester, with simple yet educational cooking activities. Children usually cook sandwiches, bakwan, bandrek, jasuke, and lemon tea. Activities to strengthen children's practical learning."

The interview results reinforce that the cooking class is not just a cooking activity, but an experiential learning approach. The children showed high interest when introduced to the various kitchen tools and ingredients. They participate in the whole process of the activity, from buttering, to cutting fruits, to arranging the food on the plate. This process creates an interactive and fun learning atmosphere. Some challenges, such as fear or aversion to certain ingredients, can be overcome through creative approaches from teachers and parental support, for example, by providing lighthearted games and verbal encouragement. It confirms that a humanistic, contextualized approach to learning can enhance the effectiveness of activities.

Furthermore, this program aligns with the spirit of the Merdeka Curriculum implemented in early childhood education units, with a thematic, transdisciplinary approach that supports children's development across motor, social, cognitive, and spiritual domains (Baharuddin, 2021). From the perspective of Islamic education, this activity indirectly instills values such as *ta'awun* (mutual help), patience, responsibility, and gratitude through real experience (Ainurahma & Setiawan, 2022). Children are trained to work together, wait for their turn, speak politely, and respect their own and their friends' work. The roles of teachers as facilitators who accompany children's exploration, and of parents as first character mentors (*murabbi*), show strong synergy in the process of early character education. This synergy reflects the holistic learning model that is now the primary focus of national education policy, prioritizing character development and life skills over academic achievement.

2. Development of Social-Emotional Skills and Islamic Education Values

During the cooking class, the development of children's social-emotional skills showed significant progress. Children not only gained experience in practicing fine motor skills such as stirring, slicing, and arranging food, but also developed social competence through collaborative activities. In each cooking session, they are trained to work in groups, share tasks, help each other, and communicate effectively with peers and adults. These activities create a conducive space for children to learn to understand their own and others' emotions, resolve minor conflicts independently, and build empathy. In addition, they are exposed to different types of food ingredients through different colors, shapes, smells, and textures, which stimulate cognitive and sensory development and improve eye-hand coordination.

Food decorating and serving activities also provide space for children to express their creativity and develop an appreciation for aesthetic values. Through the freedom to choose the color or shape of the dish, children learn to express themselves positively and build self-confidence. The highlight of this activity is when children taste their own products, which not only provides emotional satisfaction but also builds a sense of pride and responsibility for the process and increases self-efficacy. Research by Firmawati et al. (2023) shows that hands-on activities, such as cooking classes, can strengthen children's self-confidence, independence, and social awareness by making them feel involved in a real, meaningful process.

From the perspective of Islamic education, the cooking class is not just a practical activity, but also has an important spiritual and moral dimension. Fundamental Islamic values such as *tarbiyah* (comprehensive education), *ta'lim* (teaching knowledge), and *ta'dīb* (formation of manners) are naturally integrated into this activity (Dacholfany & Hasanah, 2018). For example, when children are taught to be responsible for cleaning the cooking utensils after the activity, they are learning the value of trustworthiness (El Montadzery et al., 2024). When they are reminded to wash their hands before and after cooking, it reflects the value of cleanliness, which is part of faith. A simple reflection, guided by teachers and parents, on the food and cooking process is also an opportunity to instill gratitude for the sustenance that Allah provides.

Furthermore, the involvement of parents and teachers in cooking class strengthens their role as role models in instilling Islamic values from an early age (Wijayanto, 2020). Children are invited to be polite, to wait their turn patiently, not to fight over ingredients, and to respect friends who are talking or working. All of this embodies the value of manner in Islam. The learning process that takes place through this interaction becomes more than just a fun activity, it also serves as a means of building a strong Islamic character (Robie Fanreza, 2017). Thus, cooking class activities serve not only as a medium for cognitive and motor development, but also as a vehicle for the holistic formation of children's noble morals.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Based on observations and interviews, several supporting factors were identified as contributing to the success of cooking class activities at TK ABA 05 Medan. One of the key factors supporting the success of this activity is the school's budget support, which funds food ingredients, cooking utensils, and decorative equipment. In addition, there was strong collaboration between the principal and teachers in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities on an ongoing basis. Cooking class activities have become an integrated part of the school curriculum as a form of implementing fun contextual learning for early childhood. Flexibility in timing and menu variations provides more space for children's creative exploration. The varied menu in each session, such as sandwiches, bakwan, jasuke, and lemon tea, has proven to increase children's motivation and participation because it provides new and interesting experiences in each implementation.

Although the school's support shows a strong commitment, parents' participation in this program still faces several obstacles. One of the main obstacles is the low level of awareness among some parents about the importance of balanced nutrition and the role of healthy food in child development. There are still many parents who prefer to provide instant or fast food for practical reasons, without considering its impact on children's health. This phenomenon indicates the need for intensive efforts to provide nutrition education to parents, so they better understand their strategic role in supporting children's learning, primarily through healthy cooking practices. Cooking class activities are not intended solely for school; they are also meant to continue in the home environment as a form of reinforcement of learning. When children engage in cooking activities with parents at home, they internalize important values such as independence, emotional closeness, and active involvement in their overall development (Lavelle et al., 2023).

In line with the findings of Aghitsny & Mursid (2024), cooking activities with children are practical in developing various aspects of independence at an early age. These include the physical ability to complete tasks without relying on others, the courage to make decisions that reflect healthy emotional development, and social skills reflected in positive interactions and cooperation with the surrounding environment. Thus, parents' involvement in these activities not only provides technical support but also plays a strategic role in character development and the strengthening of children's life skills (Rahimah & Koto, 2022). The synergy between school and family in supporting the cooking class program is one form of holistic education practice that places children as active subjects in a fun and meaningful learning process.

Conclusion

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that parents' participation in the cooking class program at TK ABA 05 Medan has a significant positive impact on the development of early childhood social-emotional skills. This program is not only a forum for children's practical

learning in the culinary field but also a collaborative bridge between educational institutions and families. The successful implementation of this activity is supported by several internal factors, including budget allocations, adequate facilities, and harmonious coordination between school principals and educators in regularly planning and implementing the program.

Activities designed with flexible schedules and varied menus also offer ample opportunities for children to explore. It facilitates self-expression, stimulates curiosity, and supports experiential learning. Children show active involvement and high enthusiasm during each activity session, indicating that the program provides a fun and educational experience. In line with Rahmita and Imron's (2019) findings, this cooking activity also promotes children's independence in physical, emotional, and social domains.

However, parental involvement still faces several obstacles, especially regarding the low awareness of the importance of providing children with healthy food. The preference for instant food, which is considered more practical, is a challenge in supporting children's optimal growth and development. Therefore, a more intensive communication strategy is needed from the school to increase parents' understanding and encourage the continuation of learning activities in the family environment.

Thus, it can be confirmed that the active involvement of parents in the cooking class program has strategic value in supporting the holistic development of children's character and life skills. Collaboration between the school and family environment is an essential element in shaping a contextualized and sustainable early childhood education process.

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