



Estimating Correlation Between Emotional Regulation and Independence in Early Childhood

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A B S T R A C T

One of the aspects of childhood independence is managing emotional turmoil. Emotion regulation is an individual's style in determining what emotions they feel, when and how to describe them, and recognizing these emotions. This research estimates the correlation between emotional regulation and independence in early childhood. This research design used analytics with a cross-sectional approach. The population was 86 mothers with young children in the Ciptomulyo Malang Public Health Center (PHC) working area. There were 80 samples with a purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were children living with their parents. The instrument for emotional regulation was the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA), and for early childhood independence was the Child Independence Questionnaire. The results showed that parents had an authoritarian parenting style (85%). They had expressive suppression in emotion regulation (92.5%) and an independent category of early childhood independence (57.5%). The Spearman Rank test obtained $p=0.002$ ($p<0.05$) and the $r=0.625$. Thus, there was a significant correlation between emotion regulation and early childhood independence. In conclusion, emotion regulation affects early childhood independence. Further research could evaluate children's social and cultural context and individual characteristics, providing deeper insight into the factors influencing early childhood independence.

INTRODUCTION

Every family has a different parenting style. Generally, parenting is an interaction pattern between parents and children (Haryono *et al.* 2018). The parenting type includes parents' attitudes and behavior when interacting with their children (Haryono *et al.* 2018). Based on Ayun (2017), parenting patterns are not just about fulfilling physical needs (food, drink, clothing, etc.) and psychological needs (love and emotions), but also include child norms, which are called interaction patterns, so that children can live in harmony with their environment. The children's social emotions are influenced by their parents' parenting styles and the outcomes of parent-child interactions (Haryono *et al.* 2018). Based on Khusuniyah (2018), parents, especially mothers, play a significant role in shaping children's social-emotional and future educational patterns. The psychological environment, particularly the family, is essential in forming a child's personality. Parent-child relationships within the family are critical throughout childhood and adulthood. The role of parents is to encourage interaction between parents and children. Vasilyeva and Shcherbakov (2016) refer to the functional role of parents as the social role of the family towards children, consistent with family life, family behavioral norms, traditions, and existing interpersonal relationships.

Based on Erikson's review in Putri and Lestari (2021), social and cultural factors influence growth and development, including changes in children's independence. The change must be understood as the

interrelation of three different systems: the somatic, ego, and social systems. This somatic system consists of all the biological techniques necessary for personal purposes. The ego system contains processing centers for thinking about things and ideas. In addition, the social system includes how people become part of themselves in society. As stated by Havinghurst in Putri & Lestari (2021), one aspect of children's independence is the child's ability to regulate emotional turmoil. This process of controlling emotions is called emotional regulation. Emotion regulation is an individual's style in determining what emotions they feel, when and how to describe them, and recognizing these emotions (Putri and Lestari, 2021).

The results of the National Socioeconomic Survey (*Survei Sosial Ekonomi Nasional* or SUSENAS) conducted by Statistics Indonesia (2020) stated that as many as 3.73% of toddlers received inappropriate parenting patterns. Based on the survey, 15 provinces had inappropriate parenting patterns or below the national average (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2020). Based on a preliminary study on Putra Harapan Kindergarten, RW 02 area, Ciptomulyo Village, Sukun District, Malang City, the authors interviewed one of the teachers and 43 students from Kindergarten A1, Kindergarten A2, and Kindergarten B. The study showed that each student had different attitudes towards socializing. Some children still could not control their emotions; some cried, withdrew, found it difficult to talk, and were angry. However, a few could explain their feelings. To deal with all students' attitudes, the teacher calmed them down, tried to dig up information on why children behaved like that, and distracted them with fun things such as playing games or toys.

The family, especially parents, has a vital role in developing a child's personality, including the emotional aspect. Newborn babies depend significantly on their environment, especially their father and mother. Parents should utilize this dependency to create a home environment as the child's first social environment. Children spend most of their lives with their families, so parents are responsible for the first few years of their lives. Observing various behaviors that children repeatedly show in interactions with father and mother, older siblings, and other adults, children will learn these behaviors and try to imitate them. Parents should regularly monitor their children to help them grow and develop emotional regulation (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2014). They need to learn the parenting style they apply to their children. They must also be good examples because memory will be stored and duplicated in the child's brain during daily activities. Improving good interaction and communication between parents and children is critical. This research estimates the correlation between emotional regulation and independence in early childhood.

METHOD

This research design used analytics with a cross-sectional approach. The population was 86 mothers with young children in the Ciptomulyo Malang Public Health Center (PHC) working area. There were 80 samples with a purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were children living with their

parents. The instrument for emotional regulation was the Emotional Regulation Questionnaire for Children and Adolescents (ERQ-CA). The questionnaire comprised two emotional regulation domains: cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. In addition, an instrument for early childhood independence was the Child Independence Questionnaire, modified from previous research (Juhairiyah, 2019). Data analysis used Spearman's rho with the SPSS 30 for Mac application to determine the correlation between emotional regulation and independence in childhood. This research received ethical clearance from the Institute of Science and Health Technology Ethics Commission, Dr. Soepraoen Hospital, Malang, with certificate number 015/028/II/EC/KEPK/2024.

RESULT

The research was conducted at Putra Harapan Kindergarten, Malang. This kindergarten is in the Working Area of the Ciptomulyo PHC, Malang. There were five permanent teachers at Putra Harapan Kindergarten and one extracurricular teacher. The number of students at Kindergarten Putra Harapan Malang was 80, divided into several classes, namely Kindergarten A1 with 24 children, Kindergarten A2 with 16 children, and Kindergarten B with 40 children.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
20- 30 years old	20	25
31- 40 years old	42	52.5
51- 60 years old	18	22.5
Sex		
Male	24	30
Female	56	70
Occupation		
Civil servants/ Indonesian National Armed Forces/ Indonesian National Police	2	2.5
Private sector employees	24	30
Self-employed	20	25
Not working	34	42.5
Education		
Elementary school	8	10
Junior high school	14	17.5
Senior high school	52	65
Higher education	6	7.5
Duration of Marriage		
1-10 years	40	50
11- 20 years	30	37.5
> 20 years	10	12.5
Type of Family		
Nuclear Family	62	77.5
Extended Family	10	10
Divorce	8	12.5
Parenting Style		
Permissive	2	2.5
Authoritarian	68	85
Democratic	10	12.5

Table 1 shows that half of respondents are parents of early childhood with an age range of 31-40 (52.5%), most are mothers (70%), almost half of them are parents who do not work (42.4%), most have Senior High School (65%), half of them had been married for 1-10 years (50%), and most are nuclear family (77.5%). In addition, most respondents applied the authoritarian parenting style (85%).

Table 2 Emotional Regulation and Early Childhood Independence

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	r/p
Emotion regulation			
Expressive Suppression	74	92.5	
Cognitive Reappraisal	6	7.5	
Early childhood independence			0.625/0.002
Not independent	0	0	
Moderate	34	42.5	
Independent	46	57.5	

Most respondents had expressive suppression in emotion regulation (92.5%) and an independent category of early childhood independence (57.5%). The Spearman Rank test obtained $p=0.002$ ($p<0.05$) and the $r=0.625$. Thus, there was a significant correlation between emotion regulation and early childhood independence.

DISCUSSION

Most respondents in this study applied the authoritarian parenting style (Table 1). The relationship between parenting styles and early childhood independence is not always direct and easy to predict. Although parenting styles influence the development of various skills in children, the child's independence is also influenced by internal and external factors. Children with a more confident and courageous temperament tend to be more independent, even though the parenting style they receive may not be very supportive. In addition, social factors, such as experience in an educational environment or interactions with peers, also contribute to the formation of independence. For example, children who are given more frequent opportunities to make their own decisions at home or school will be more accustomed to responsibility and more independent.

In controlling emotions, a person needs to be able to regulate them. Emotional regulation can be interpreted as a way for individuals to face their emotions when they feel them and how they express them (Gross, 2010). In addition, it is also defined as the ability to evaluate and change emotional reactions to behave in a certain way that is appropriate to the situation. Parents must direct their children in regulating emotions, starting from the simplest things, such as how parents help their children recognize the emotions or feelings they feel. To understand children's feelings, they need to be given an understanding of the various emotions. After the child learns it, the child can express the feeling. Parents must also teach their children about controlling emotional reactions so that emotional regulation within the child can run well.

Most respondents in this investigation had expressive suppression in emotion regulation (Table 2). In developmental theory, a child's emotional regulation is influenced by several factors other than parenting. Attachment theory states that a secure emotional relationship between a child and caregiver can underline a child's ability to manage emotions. Children with secure attachments are more likely to have good emotional regulation skills because they feel safe to express their feelings and learn how to manage them. However, other theories suggest that a child's temperament, social skills, and social environment can influence a child's emotional regulation. Specifically, the information processing theory suggests that children's ability to recognize and interpret their feelings and respond appropriately depends mainly on their cognitive and social development.

Most respondents had an independent category of early childhood independence (Table 2). According to developmental psychology theory, early childhood independence is influenced by parenting style. The theory of social-emotional development, as explained by Erikson in Putri & Lestari (2021), especially in the "Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt" stage at an early age, emphasizes the importance of providing balanced freedom between support and control from parents to support the development of independence. Children learn to be independent in various aspects at this age, from managing themselves to doing simple tasks. In the context of parenting, this theory suggests that parents who provide support but still give children freedom to explore can help children feel more confident and independent. However, other factors such as the child's temperament or the broader social context (e.g., social environment, interactions with peers) may also influence the level of independence that develops. Furthermore, the information processing theory explains that children who are more frequently involved in activities that require problem solving and decision making tend to have a higher level of independence, even though the parenting provided is less supportive. Thus, although parenting style is essential, other factors can influence a child's independence.

There was a significant correlation between emotion regulation and early childhood independence (Table 2). Parents have different methods for growing independence in early childhood. Some parents allow their children to carry out daily activities independently, a learning process, but some tend to assist their children. Independence is an individual attitude acquired cumulatively during development, where individuals will continue to learn to behave independently in various environmental situations, so that individuals will ultimately be able to think and act independently (Tjandraningtyas, 2004). It is an effort to train children to solve problems. Further, it is the ability to manage all our possessions, manage time, walk and think independently, and take risks and solve problems. Early childhood independence can be evaluated from the child's habituation and ability in physical abilities, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, sociability, willingness to share, and control of emotions (Dianne, 2008). Furthermore, the indicators of independence for kindergarten children are habits consisting of physical ability, self-

confidence, responsibility, discipline, good at socializing, willing to share, and controlling emotions (Brewer, 2006).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, emotion regulation affects early childhood independence. Further research could evaluate children's social and cultural context and individual characteristics, providing deeper insight into the factors influencing early childhood independence.

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