




Understanding parental involvement in supporting early childhood talents and interests

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Abstract

Many parents still assume that a child's intelligence is limited to academic aspects, causing non-academic potential to often be overlooked. A preliminary study showed that two out of five parents were unaware of their child's talents and interests, indicating a gap in parental support. Therefore, this research aims to identify the roles of parents in developing the talents and interests of 5-to-6-year-old children in Bantul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta. This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with five parent respondents whose children have achievements corresponding to their talents. Data were collected through interviews and observations, and then analyzed thematically. The main findings show that parents play crucial roles encompassing five forms: introducing, managing, facilitating, supporting, and directing the child. However, this process faced obstacles such as limited practice time, insufficient supervision from working parents, and the child's unpredictable moods. These findings enrich the discourse on parental involvement in early childhood education by emphasizing the importance of parental facilitation in developing children's talents and interests.

Keywords: Early childhood; talents and interests; parents' role, involvement

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood development from birth is characterized by specific traits and potentials. Each child tends to develop more prominently in particular developmental aspects (Atabik, 2018). This understanding aligns with Gardner's view that every child possesses intelligence that can be developed throughout their life (Khuzlundani, Afifullah, & Dewi, 2020). These intelligences are categorized as multiple intelligences, consisting of nine types: linguistic, logical-mathematical, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, visual-spatial, interpersonal, naturalistic, and spiritual (Suarca, Soetjningsih, & Ardjana, 2016). Thus, children's potential extends beyond academic domains and requires recognition across diverse areas of intelligence.

In addition to intelligence, talent development is also fundamental in understanding children's potential. The United States Office of Education (USEO, 1981) proposed that gifted children are those capable of demonstrating high abilities in intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or specific academic fields that are often not fully facilitated by schools. However, many parents continue to assess children's abilities solely through academic achievement,

causing non-academic potential to be overlooked. As a result, some parents lack a holistic understanding of their child's development, including possible learning difficulties or developmental delays (Arumsari & Putri, 2020). This indicates that parental perceptions remain a challenge in supporting children's comprehensive development.

The diversity of children's potentials underscores the need for appropriate stimulation through relevant developmental activities. Gardner (2011) states that each child is unique, as reflected in one or more of the intelligences they possess. More specifically, these potentials manifest not only in academic areas but also in non-academic domains. Therefore, talent and interest development activities serve as essential stimuli for children's cognitive growth (Ratnawati, 2021). Talent refers to a basic ability to learn, while interests encourage children to reach achievement in specific fields when provided with stimuli such as practice, knowledge, experiences, and motivation. Hence, proper stimulation is crucial to nurturing children's optimal potential.

The family environment plays a central role in this developmental process. Huda and Munastiwi (2020) assert that the development of children's talents and interests does not emerge spontaneously but is influenced by various factors, particularly their immediate environment and relationship with parents. Luo and Kiewra (2021) similarly show that talent development in children is inseparable from parental guidance and facilitation. Furthermore, parental involvement can motivate children to progress more rapidly in learning (Hamida & Putra, 2021) and nurture confidence through support and facilities aligned with their potential (Irma, Nisa, & Sururiyah, 2019). These findings reinforce that parental roles are crucial in the development of children's talents and interests.

Preliminary findings from this study reveal variations in parents' awareness of their children's potential. Spontaneous previous conversation with parents of 5–6-year-old children shows that three parents recognized and supported their children's talents and interests, while two parents were unaware of them. This aligns with Anggraini, Utami, and Rahma (2020), who found that parental support through facilities, practice, knowledge, and motivation plays a significant role in talent development. These initial insights suggest the need for deeper examination of the varying levels of parental involvement.

Based on this context, this study aims to analyze the role of parents in developing the talents and interests of 5–6-year-old children, particularly in terms of support, facilitation, and the extent of their involvement in guiding or failing to attend to the child's potential. The

analysis is expected to serve as an evaluative foundation for understanding the extent to which parental roles influence children's talent and interest development.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The research focused on parents of children aged 5–6 years, who served as the study participants. The participants consisted of five mothers, both working and non-working. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained through a form outlining the purpose, benefits, and procedures of the study. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no coercion or external pressure. In addition, all collected data were kept confidential by removing personal identifiers and replacing them with codes or initials to maintain anonymity. These procedures ensured that the research adhered to ethical standards in protecting participants' rights and privacy.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and direct observations. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the study employed source triangulation and data collection triangulation. This approach was appropriate because the participants met the criteria of being parents of children aged 5–6 years. The collected data were then transcribed and coded, followed by categorization into themes using thematic analysis. This analytical process enabled the researcher to identify patterns and derive meaningful interpretations aligned with the study's objectives.

To gain a deeper understanding of how parents recognise and support their children's talent and interest development, the interview protocol included three core questions. First, parents were asked: "How do you introduce or identify your child's talents and interests?" This question aimed to elicit parents' initial strategies and everyday practices in observing early signs of talent or emerging preferences in their children. Second, they were invited to respond to: "How do you provide direction and support in developing your child's talents and interests?" This question explored the forms of guidance parents offer, including emotional encouragement, facilitation of learning activities, and the provision of resources or opportunities that nurture children's developmental pathways. Third, the interview addressed organisational aspects through the question: "How do you organise or manage the process of developing your child's talents and interests?" This was intended to capture how parents structure routines, select programmes, coordinate schedules, and make decisions to ensure continuity and meaningful progression in their children's talent development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study was conducted to explore the various forms of parental involvement in developing children's talents and interests in Bantul Regency. As shown in Table 1, the thematic analysis identified three major themes: (1) parents' roles in managing children's talent and interest development, (2) forms of parental support, and (3) challenges faced by parents throughout the process.

Table 1.

Thematic Analysis of Parents' Roles in Supporting Children's Talent and Interest

Theme	Sub-Themes
Parents' roles in managing children's talents and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing children to their talents and interests • Guiding children to participate in training or courses • Providing verbal motivation • Building communication between parents and children • Parents acting as coaches
Forms of parental support in developing children's talents and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining children's commitment • Providing facilities and resources • Offering appreciation and consequences • Allocating financial support
Barriers to developing children's talents and interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited time or duration for children's training • Insufficient parental supervision • Managing children's emotional state and maintaining their professionalism

Parents' roles in managing children's talents and interests development

a. Introducing Children to Their Talents and Interests

The findings suggest that most parents were not directly involved in introducing or identifying their children's talents and interests. Four out of five parents stated that their children discovered their own interests through daily experiences and environmental influences, rather than through intentional guidance from parents. This pattern is illustrated in the following quote:

"...Kan masnya itu cenderung audionya kalau belajar. Setiap mau tidur diputar, Anak H pas PAUD itu tidur bareng sama masnya. Anak H jadi terbawa, bisa sendiri gitu ngikutin masnya pas ngaji..." (kutipan Ibu E)

“...His older brother tended to play learning audio. Every time he went to sleep, it was played, and when H was in kindergarten, he slept with his brother. H followed along and was able to do it on his own during recitation...” (Ibu E interview excerpt)

Kiewra (2019) notes that varied environmental exposure can also come from parents who share similar activities or hobbies. Evidence of this modelling process was indicated by one participant.

“...Pernah waktu itu kejadian lucu, N ini tak titipin ke ayahnya terus pas saya muncul show udah jalan, saya show ditengah anaknya ini malah ikut saya...” (kutipan wawancara Ibu ER)

“...There was a funny incident when I left N with her father, and when I appeared at the show, it was already in progress. When I performed in the middle, the child followed me...” (Ibu ER interview excerpt)

These findings indicate that children’s early exposure to talent-related activities is shaped not only by parents but also by broader environmental influences, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of talent development.

b. Guiding Children to Participate in Training

Parents also play a role in directing children to participate in structured training aligned with their interests. Parents explained that once a child’s interest becomes visible, they guide the child to join relevant clubs or training. As expressed below.

“Kalau untuk arahan dan dukungan untuk masuk ke klub. Soalnya percuma mbak ada bakat nggak ikut klub kan jadi nggak bisa ikut lomba.” (kutipan wawancara Ibu S)

“Regarding guidance and support for joining a club, it’s pointless if a child has talent but doesn’t join a club because then they cannot participate in competitions.” (Ibu S interview excerpt)

Witte et al. (2015) emphasise that parents often serve as children’s first coaches while still requiring specialised trainers. Ibu ER illustrated this dual role:

“Oh, pasti itu, kita kan datang sekolah modelling kan bukan cuma naroh anak aja. Tapi kita juga memperhatikan si coach-nya ngomong apa kemudian nanti arahannya seperti apa.” (kutipan wawancara Ibu ER)

“Oh, definitely. We come to the modelling school not just to leave the child there. We also pay attention to what the coach says and how the guidance is provided.” (Ibu ER interview excerpt)

Thus, parental guidance in training is not limited to enrolling children in programmes but also includes modelling, monitoring, and reinforcing children's commitment.

c. Communicating With Children During the Process

Effective communication emerged as an essential mechanism through which parents guide and emotionally support children. Parents engage in discussions to validate children's feelings and expectations. As expressed by Ibu LB:

"Saya sudah saya sampaikan. Kalau dari anak alhamdulillahnya. Misalnya kita mau memberikan pengertian kalau lomba nggak harus menang kan kita perlu waktu sendiri, apaya nggak langsung detik itu diinformasikan." (kutipan wawancara Ibu LB)

"I have already explained to the child. Alhamdulillah, the child understands. For example, if we want to explain that competitions don't have to be about winning, we need to take our time and not inform them immediately." (Ibu LB interview excerpt)

These findings show that communication becomes a critical parenting strategy for sustaining children's emotional readiness and long-term engagement.

d. Parents Acting as Coaches

Many parents take an active coaching role, especially outside formal training schedules. For instance, Ibu E sets designated practice times:

"Kalau terlibat sebagai pelatih iya. Biasanya rutin setelah maghrib murojaah bareng sama anak-anak. Ya, sembari mengecek hafalan dan menambah hafalan anak-anak." (kutipan wawancara Ibu E)

"Yes, I am involved as a coach. Usually after Maghrib, we routinely revise together with the children while checking and adding to their memorisation." (Ibu E interview excerpt)

Meanwhile, some parents, such as Ibu LB, choose not to commit their children to a single club because they wish to explore a variety of interests:

"Saya masih kepengen explore banyak hal dari anak, belum yang mau fokus, oh ya mewarnai terus ikut les mewarnai kemana – mana ikut, harus ikut lomba enggak sih." (kutipan wawancara Ibu LB)

"I still want to explore many things with my child, not yet focusing on one. For example, colouring, attending colouring lessons here and there... must they join competitions?" (Ibu LB interview excerpt)

These examples demonstrate that parents adopt different coaching styles depending on their goals, either focusing on structured training or broader exploration.

Forms of parental support

a. Maintaining Children's Commitment

Parental commitment ensures consistent engagement in talent development. All five parents highlighted the importance of communication, habituation, and involving children in decision-making. Ibu U stated:

"Dijaga dengan adanya komunikasi mbak, ngobrol sama anaknya Sukanya apa sama yang nggak disuka apa aja gitu. Biasanya pas kalau tampil mandiri diminta orang buat pentas gitu kan saya yang carikan kostum itu saya juga obrolkan sama anaknya suka nggak sama kostumnya." (Ibu U interview excerpt)

"It is maintained through communication, discussing with the child what they like and dislike. Usually, when they perform independently, I provide the costume and also discuss with the child whether they like it or not."

Engaging children in relevant decisions fosters commitment and consistency.

b. Providing Facilities

Parents facilitate talent development by providing equipment and practice spaces. All five parents supplied equipment. Ibu U stated:

"Kalau fasilitas nari sampur itu saya sediain lebih dari 1 mbak buat ganti-gantian gitu." (Ibu U interview excerpt)

"For the Sampur dance, I provide more than one set so they can rotate during practice"

Observation showed that practice spaces were shared family areas rather than dedicated rooms. Providing facilities, even informally, enables consistent skill practice.

c. Appreciation and Consequences

Appreciation fosters motivation; clear consequences promote responsibility. For example, Ibu E mentioned that she usually offers it first. She believes that if they want to participate, they must commit from start to finish and maintain their mood throughout. Additionally, Ibu LB said:

“Mungkin kayak misale kayak setelah lomba di mall, ya wes dituruti tapi ya selama sesuai persediaan.” (Ibu LB interview excerpt)

“For example, after a competition at the mall, we follow through but only within the available budget.”

Balanced appreciation and consequences support motivation and engagement in talent development.

d. Financial Allocation

Financial support is crucial for talent exploration, as like what Ibu E explained:

“...Saya bilang sama anak-anak “apapun kegiatan mas sama adek, selama itu untuk menunjang belajar. Ayah/bunda insyaallah bisa mendukung”. Jadi, untuk mendukung bakat minat ya nggak masalah.” (Ibu E interview excerpt)

“...I told my children, ‘Whatever activity you do, as long as it supports learning, your father and I will try to support it.’ So, supporting talents and interests is not a problem.”

Other parents also provide incidental or club fee support. Financial contribution is necessary, whether planned or incidental, to enable children to explore and develop their skills.

Challenges in developing children’s talents and interests

a. Limited Time for Practice

Parents face difficulties due to limited time for training, as like Bu U expressed:

“Kalau hambatan pas mau pentas gitu mbak. Kan ada latian tambahan, kadang kurang waktunya. Terus juga kalau latihan dirumah gitu malah kurang focus.” (Ibu U interview excerpt)

“A challenge arises when preparing for performances. There are additional practices, sometimes time is insufficient, and home practice is often unfocused.”

Another participant added a story.

“Kalau saya kan sebenarnya pengen ngeleske tapi anaknya gimana. Kan bisanya 1 minggu sekali ya harus meluangkan waktu dulu ta. Terus kalau lomba mewarnai adiknya saya bawa semua ya agak repot pas itu aja sih.” (Ibu LB interview excerpt)

“I want to avoid it, but what about the child? We can only practice once a week, so time must be allocated. During colouring competitions, bringing my younger child along makes it somewhat difficult.”

Time constraints reflect the balance parents must maintain between daily responsibilities and supporting talent development.

b. Limited Parental Assistance

Working parents cannot always accompany children consistently, as like Bu ER said:

“Dari segi waktu karena kita orangtua bekerja kemudian masih untung ayahnya itu kerjanya agak lebih santai ketimbang saya. Jadinya kadang-kadang apa – apa bisa ke ayahnya.” (Ibu ER interview excerpt)

“In terms of time, both parents work, but luckily the father’s work is somewhat lighter than mine. So sometimes the child’s needs fall to the father.”

Coordinated communication between parents is vital to ensure continuous support.

c. Managing Children’s Emotional State

Emotional support is critical during practice or competitions. Ibu E:

“Show itu selesai jam 9 dan 10 malam. Show terakhir itu harus pake heels karena gaun malam, nah dia show di panggung itu senyum trus dari panggung dia nangis semua model anak – anak. Sampe N ini di bopong ayahnya dilepasin, dipijitin segala macem kakinya. Setiap habis show itu pasti full kita ajakin pijet full sebadan.” (Ibu E interview excerpt)

“The show ended around 9–10 PM. The last performance required heels because of the evening dress. She smiled on stage but cried afterwards, like all the other children. N was carried by her father, and her feet were massaged. After every show, we always invited her for a full-body massage.”

Emotional support, often coordinated between parents, sustains children’s motivation and resilience during talent development.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that parents play a fundamental role in nurturing children’s talents and interests through early identification of potential, management of learning experiences, and the provision of sustained support. This role is reflected in how parents observe children’s natural behaviours, offer motivation, and create an emotionally safe and responsive environment. A stable psychological climate is crucial for development, consistent with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, which posits that physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation form the foundation for optimal growth (Kurniawati & Maemonah, 2021). When these needs are met, children demonstrate greater readiness to

explore their abilities, engage in practice, and persist through challenges that accompany the developmental process.

Emotional support and positive parent–child communication further emerge as decisive factors influencing children’s growth. Verbal encouragement and supportive interactions strengthen children’s perceptions of competence, reduce anxiety, and bolster self-confidence (Santosa & Naryoso, 2019; Anzani et al., 2021). This aligns with *Self-Determination Theory*, which highlights that fulfilment of psychological needs (e.g., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) directly fosters intrinsic motivation and persistence in learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this perspective, parental motivation is not merely verbal reinforcement but a deeper process of value internalisation that shapes children’s independence and perseverance.

Instrumental support, including the provision of facilities, equipment, and access to specialised training, also contributes significantly to maximising children’s potential. Adequate facilities enhance the quality of practice and learning outcomes (Jahrir & Hasyim, 2024; Tribuana & Rukiyah, 2019). However, a critical analysis reveals that parents’ capacity to provide such resources is strongly shaped by the family’s socioeconomic background. Drawing on Bourdieu’s (1986) conceptualisation of economic, social, and cultural capital, the development of children’s talents is not solely a reflection of individual ability but is also deeply influenced by the distribution of capital within the family. As a result, children from families with greater economic and cultural capital often enjoy broader developmental opportunities, raising important concerns about equity of access—a dimension frequently overlooked in early childhood talent development research. Moreover, material provision without meaningful parental presence can devolve into “material support without pedagogical presence,” which may not effectively nurture discipline, character, or deep learning engagement. Thus, instrumental support must be seen as one component within a broader ecosystem, rather than a standalone marker of parental involvement.

Providing children with direct experiences and involvement in learning communities further facilitates authentic recognition of their interests (Sari & Rahma, 2019). This approach reflects Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (1979), which emphasises that child development is shaped by multilayered interactions from the microsystem of the family to mesosystem linkages, to broader societal structures. In this context, training centres, peer communities, and broader social environments act as important developmental spaces that enrich children’s exposure to diverse skills and experiences.

Nonetheless, the process of nurturing children’s talents is also confronted with various

challenges. Limited practice time due to school demands, inconsistent parental supervision, and scheduling difficulties can disrupt the continuity of training (Rahman & Huraerah, 2023). These constraints are not merely technical, but structural, reflecting the tensions of modern family life in balancing work, domestic responsibilities, and children's developmental needs. Inconsistencies in communication and inadequate coordination between parents may further weaken the effectiveness of parental support. Thus, the success of children's development is shaped not only by individual parental actions but by the quality of collaborative parenting and the family's capacity to organise routines and priorities.

Overall, the findings underscore that parental roles in supporting children's talents and interests are ecological, interdependent, and cannot be understood in isolation. The fulfilment of basic needs, emotional support, constructive communication, provision of facilities, and engagement with learning communities together form a mutually reinforcing developmental ecosystem. Recognising the interconnectedness of these elements reveals that children's success is not merely a product of innate aptitude, but also the result of parenting quality, family relational dynamics, and parents' ability to mediate both emotional and structural barriers. This study thus highlights that talent development in early childhood is a complex process requiring intentional parenting, multilayered support, and a stable, reflective family ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that parents hold an essential role in developing children's talents and interests through five key actions: introducing, managing, facilitating, supporting, and guiding. Among these roles, the most prominent forms of support—providing facilities and offering verbal encouragement—are consistently practiced and have the greatest influence on enhancing children's motivation and achievement. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these roles is shaped by common challenges such as limited time, work-related constraints, and fluctuations in children's emotional readiness.

These findings highlight the need for parents to engage more consciously and systematically in fulfilling all five roles to optimise their children's developmental potential. The study also suggests that early childhood educators and policymakers should design educational programmes that strengthen parental capacity to support children's talents holistically beyond academic domains. Given the small number of participants and the specific local context of this study, the findings cannot be widely generalised. Future research should involve larger and

more diverse samples and incorporate cross-regional comparisons to deepen understanding of parental contributions to children's talent development.

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