



## The Implementation of Working Parents' Parenting Patterns in Fostering Independence in Four-Year-Old Children

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### ABSTRACT

Early childhood is a golden age during which brain development progresses rapidly, making appropriate parenting patterns essential for fostering independence from an early age. This study aims to identify the forms of parenting and daily habituation implemented by working parents in developing children's independence, as well as to explore the challenges encountered in this process. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design, involving a four-year-old girl and one parent as respondents. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings show that working parents are still able to nurture their child's independence through consistent application of democratic parenting. Parents provided opportunities for the child to make simple decisions, complete tasks independently, and participate in age-appropriate household activities. Habituation practices such as tidying up belongings, choosing toys, and helping with small household chores were found to strengthen the child's sense of responsibility and self-regulation skills. In addition, warm communication, positive role modeling, and clear boundaries helped the child understand rules without experiencing pressure. Challenges mainly stemmed from the parents' limited time due to work commitments; however, these obstacles were addressed through effective time management and prioritizing quality interactions. These findings reinforce that democratic parenting is effective in fostering children's independence, even among parents with demanding work schedules.

**Keywords:** *Democratic Parenting, Social Intelligence, Early Childhood*

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## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood refers to children aged 0–6 years. At this stage, children experience rapid physical growth and significant brain development known as the golden age (Nisak et al., 2022; Nurfahma et al., 2024; Wulandani et al., 2022). During this period, children require special attention, as the stimulation they receive strongly influences their brain development and future academic abilities (Churiyah & Hasibuan, 2025; Maromi et al., 2024; Maromi & Hasibuan, 2025; Puspitasari & Ni'mah, 2024; Warmansyah et al., 2023). Therefore, early childhood education is essential to support children's holistic growth and development. The developmental standards for early childhood encompass six domains: religious and moral values, physical–motor skills, cognitive development, socio-emotional skills, language, and art (Wahidah et al., 2024).

One of the key aspects of early childhood development stated in the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) No. 137 of 2014 on the National Standards for Early Childhood Education is independence, which is included in the socio-emotional development domain (Agus, 2023). This study focuses on independence in a four-year-old child who has shown developmental potential in accordance with the indicators outlined in Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014, particularly the early signs of taking responsibility for herself. These indicators are also aligned with Permendikbud No. 146 of 2014, which states that independence in children is reflected in the ability to perform self-care tasks, such as buttoning clothes or tying shoelaces (Wijayanti et al., 2019)

According to Hurlock and Brewer, children's independence involves several indicators, including physical ability, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, social skills, willingness to share, and emotional regulation (Mahmudatunnisa et al., 2024). Independence is a developmental potential that must be nurtured in early childhood. At the age of five to six, children are expected to begin separating themselves from full dependence on their parents by performing simple tasks independently in preparation for adapting to broader social environments, such as school (Fauziyyah & Nurul Afrianti, 2024; Suprihatin & Widyasari, 2023). Independence reflects a child's confidence in their ability to solve problems without relying on others. An independent individual is able to make decisions, take initiative, and be creative without disregarding their social environment (Khoirudin & Vaurina, 2022; Norma Gita et al., 2022)

Children's independence is crucial for helping them navigate life without relying excessively on others (Farantika, 2021; Sakila et al., 2023). However, many children struggle to develop independence because they are often overly protected or pampered by their parents and are restricted from engaging in various activities for example, children who are always fed by parents or discouraged from performing simple tasks such as washing clothes (Umairah & Ichsan, 2019). Independence is shaped by both genetic and environmental factors, with parents being the primary environmental influence in shaping children's personalities (Putri & Saroinsong, 2020). Families apply diverse parenting models and approaches in educating their children (Hidayati & Warmansyah, 2021; Maulani et al., 2023). Effective parenting requires strategies such as modeling, habituation, giving attention, providing advice, and applying appropriate discipline (Kusumo, 2021)

The first five years of life play a decisive role in shaping a child's physical, psychological, and intellectual capacities (Alifah et al., 2024; Masykuroh & Kurnia, 2025; Veryawan et al., 2021). During this period, children must receive optimal care and protection from their parents. When certain functions are stimulated and guided properly, children's development will not be hindered. Parents must be capable of protecting their children from harmful influences while also educating their physical, emotional, and moral growth so they can eventually stand on their own and fulfill their responsibilities. Thus, parenting should begin effectively from early childhood, as early experiences strongly influence future developmental stages (Khoirudin & Vaurina, 2022)

Parenting can be defined as the interaction between parents and children in educating, guiding, disciplining, and protecting them to help them reach maturity according to societal norms (Nurfahma et al., 2024; Verani et al., 2022). The way parents raise their children

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significantly shapes children's behavior. Parental attitudes expressed through daily interactions, efforts to meet children's needs, socialization practices, and consistent affection contribute to the development of children's personalities. In carrying out their parenting roles, parents rely on particular values and attitudes that shape how they guide and direct their children (Maemunah & Anggun, 2021)

The most widely recognized classifications of parenting styles include democratic, authoritarian, and permissive parenting. These three styles were first introduced by Diana Baumrind (1967), who explained that parenting can be categorized into authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (democratic) styles (Suryana & Sakti, 2022). The application of these styles varies greatly, especially among working parents who often face challenges in practicing consistent parenting, particularly in fostering children's independence. Heavy workloads may limit parents' interaction time with their children, which can affect the development of the child's independence (Jannah & Candra, 2020). Children cannot become independent on their own; parental guidance is essential, particularly for preschool-aged children. Independence begins in the family, where parents provide early guidance, support, and opportunities for children to practice self-directed behavior (Kusumo, 2021)

Previous studies also highlight the strong relationship between parenting styles and children's independence (Aghniarrahmah et al., 2021; Malone, 2011). Research conducted by Restiani et al., (2019) on the relationship between democratic parenting and independence among children in a PAUD IT Bina Iman preschool found a significant relationship between the application of democratic parenting and children's independence. The novelty of the present study lies in examining the parenting style of working parents a context that has not been widely explored particularly in how employment-related time constraints influence the development of independence in young children. Another study by Kusumawardani & Fauziah, (2020) examined the parenting patterns of Indonesian military parents with a single child participant living in a military family environment. The primary data sources included both parents, while secondary data were obtained from the child's developmental records. The findings revealed that the dominant parenting style applied by military parents was authoritarian. This prior study differs from the present research in terms of participant characteristics, dominant parenting style, and research methodology used.

Based on previous studies, existing phenomena, and theoretical explanations, it is evident that parenting styles play a significant role in shaping children's personalities, including their independence, social development, and emotional regulation. However, there remains a gap regarding how working parents balance professional responsibilities with effective parenting practices to support young children's independence. Therefore, this study aims to explore how working parents implement parenting patterns to foster independence in four-year-old children.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a clear case study orientation. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore natural behaviors, interactions, and parenting practices as they occur in everyday contexts.

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The study specifically adopted a case study model, which focuses on examining a single bounded case in depth—in this instance, the parenting practices of a working parent in fostering the independence of a four-year-old child. As a case study, the research investigated the phenomenon intensively within its real-life environment, enabling a comprehensive and contextual understanding of how independence develops through daily interactions, parental routines, and lived experiences. The combination of descriptive qualitative inquiry and case study characteristics ensured that the findings were rich, detailed, and grounded in authentic conditions.

### **Research Subjects and Setting**

The research subjects consisted of a four-year-old child and the working parent residing in Melirang Village, Gresik Regency. The participant was selected purposively based on the relevance to the research focus, particularly regarding the application of parenting patterns that support the development of early childhood independence. The informant was deemed capable of providing rich and accurate data that aligned with the aims of the study. The research was conducted over a three-month period, from 20 August 2025 to 20 October 2025, covering pre-field engagement, observation, interviews, and documentation.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected through documentation, interviews, and observation. Documentation provided supporting information about the child's routines and developmental records. Interviews offered deeper insights into the parent's experiences, strategies, and approaches in balancing professional responsibilities with childcare. Observations were conducted to capture spontaneous behaviors related to the child's independence in day-to-day activities. The use of these three methods in combination enhanced the credibility of the research through triangulation and ensured that the findings were derived from rich, diverse sources of information.

### **Indicators of Child Independence and Parenting Practices**

The indicators used in this study functioned as clear guidelines for measuring both the child's independence and the parenting strategies applied by a working parent. Indicators of child independence included responsibility toward self and others, demonstrated through the ability to perform daily activities without assistance and willingness to help others voluntarily. Self-awareness was reflected in the child's ability to tidy up toys independently. Parenting indicators included the parent's presence and communication despite work commitments, consistency in applying rules and maintaining discipline at home, and the involvement of the child in simple household activities, such as making the bed, arranging clothes, and washing dishes. These indicators served as benchmarks for evaluating the alignment between parenting practices and the development of the child's independence.

**Table 1. Instrument Grid for the Independence of Four-Year-Old Children**

Variable	Aspect Assessed	Indicators
Child Independence (Age 4)	Responsibility toward self and others	Performs daily activities without assistance; Willingly helps others
	Self-awareness	Able to tidy up toys independently
Working Parents' Parenting Practices	Presence and communication	Maintains time and communication with the child despite work routines
	Consistency of rules and discipline	Applies clear household rules and boundaries
	Involvement in activities	Involves the child in simple household tasks

### Data Analysis

The data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles & Huberman (1994), consisting of continuous and interconnected processes that were carried out throughout the research. The analysis began with data reduction, which involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing the raw information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. In this stage, the researcher focused on identifying essential patterns related to child independence and the parenting strategies used. Irrelevant data were set aside to ensure clarity and precision in the interpretation.

The second stage was data display, in which the organized information was presented in the form of descriptive narratives. This stage enabled the researcher to visualize the relationships between concepts and understand how specific parenting practices contributed to the child's developing independence. The narrative display helped identify emerging themes that reflected changes in behavior, consistency of routines, and parental involvement.

The final stage was conclusion drawing and verification, carried out continuously from the early phase of data collection until the end of the study. The researcher compared preliminary interpretations with subsequent findings to confirm consistency and accuracy. Verification was strengthened by revisiting field notes, rechecking interview results, and ensuring alignment between observed behaviors and parental explanations. This cyclical process allowed conclusions to be grounded firmly in the data and to reflect the real conditions experienced by the participant.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The results of this study were obtained through observations and in-depth interviews with the working parent (referred to as "Mother S") and her four-year-old child (initials "AS"). The findings are presented based on the indicators of independence, which include responsibility toward self and others, self-awareness, parental presence and communication, consistency of rules, and involvement in household activities. All results are conveyed in narrative form to maintain clarity and cohesion in accordance with qualitative reporting standards.

## **Responsibility Toward Self and Others**

### **Child Performs Daily Activities Without Assistance**

The findings show that the parent actively encourages the child to perform routine activities independently. “AS” has been trained to eat, drink, dress, and put on shoes without parental help. This independence is nurtured through consistent modelling and gradual practice, as expressed by the informant:

*“In helping my child develop responsibility, my husband and I train her gradually to carry out daily activities on her own. For example, we start by habitually allowing her to eat and drink independently. At first, I demonstrated how to eat and drink properly. Then, I taught her how to put on clothes, wear shoes, and complete other simple tasks. Although we are both working, we remain involved in guiding her so she grows into an independent and responsible child. Even though she stays with her grandmother, we still make time to supervise and give examples so she can get used to managing her activities independently.”*

From this description, it is evident that the parent creates structured opportunities for the child to develop independence. The emphasis on repeated practice, modelling, and gradual release of assistance supports the child's growing ability to manage daily routines autonomously.

### **Child Helps Others on Her Own Initiative**

The results also indicate that the parent intentionally exposes the child to situations that build empathy and spontaneous helping behavior. The child has begun to show initiative in helping others, influenced by direct examples and simple role-play exercises. This was conveyed clearly by the informant:

*“On weekends, my husband and I always make time to take our child for a walk. We want her to learn social interaction and develop empathy. During these outings, we demonstrate simple acts like giving a small donation to street performers or beggars. We let her participate while explaining that helping others is good because people need one another. We also use role-play with dolls before bedtime to teach helping behavior. Over time, she has begun showing initiative to help others, even though she still needs some guidance.”*

The findings confirm that emotional modelling and repeated real-life examples encourage the child to understand and practice prosocial behavior naturally.

## **Self-Awareness**

The child shows increasing awareness of her responsibilities, particularly in tidying up toys and belongings after use. This development emerges from consistent rules set by the parent, requiring the child to complete one activity before moving to another. The informant stated:



*“Whenever my child wants to play, I let her choose the game. But I make a rule: the first game must be tidied up before she moves to the next one. Now she often tidies up her toys on her own without being reminded.”*

This pattern demonstrates the child's internalization of responsibility and awareness of order, which results from repeated routines and clear expectations from the parent.

### **Parental Presence and Communication**

#### **Parents Allocate Time Despite Work Responsibilities**

Despite both parents having demanding work schedules, they commit to allocating daily time to engage with the child. Their involvement includes playing, talking, and guiding the child in everyday matters. The informant emphasized:

*“Even though we are busy working, we always set aside time to be with our child every day. We use these moments to talk, play, and guide her to be responsible and independent. With this, our child feels valued and learns by imitating our positive behavior.”*

The results show that even limited but consistent parental presence contributes significantly to the child's emotional security and development of independence.

#### **Communication Maintained During Work Hours**

Communication is maintained throughout the day using mobile phones, voice messages, and video calls. This ongoing interaction ensures the child feels connected despite physical separation. According to the informant:

*“We maintain communication daily through phone calls, messages, or video calls. We ask about her day, listen to her stories, and guide her through conversation. This keeps us emotionally close even when we are at work.”*

These findings confirm that continuous communication strengthens the child's confidence, sense of responsibility, and emotional stability.

#### **Consistency of Rules and Discipline**

The parent applies clear household rules to instill discipline without restricting autonomy. The child is encouraged to follow routines but still has freedom to choose the order of activities. As shared by the informant:

*“To develop independence and responsibility, I always set clear rules at home without limiting her freedom. For example, there is a schedule for playing, studying, and tidying up, but she can choose which activity to do first as long as she follows the rules.”*

This approach allows the child to make decisions independently while understanding boundaries and consequences.

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### **Involvement in Household Activities**

The child is intentionally included in simple household chores to enhance independence. The parent ensures that the activities are enjoyable by incorporating songs, counting games, or audiovisual stimulation. The informant explained:

*“To develop independence, I usually involve my child in simple household chores. For example, making the bed while singing, arranging clothes while counting, or washing dishes while listening to songs. We guide her first, but then let her do it on her own.”*

These findings indicate that involvement in household tasks helps the child develop responsibility, self-control, and practical independence.

### **Discussion**

The findings demonstrate that democratic parenting practices effectively foster independence in young children through habituation, modeling, communication, and structured involvement. The strategies used such as scaffolding daily routines, emotional modeling, setting clear household rules, and involving children in household tasks are consistent with previous literature emphasizing the role of parental interaction in shaping independent behavior. The emphasis on modeling supports the view that parents serve as the earliest and most influential role models for children's independence development. This aligns with Khotimah (2023), who states that children internalize independence by observing and imitating parental actions. The findings also support the claim that repetitive routines and habit formation are foundational to developing self-regulation (Damayanti & Gandana, 2025; Sovia, 2025). The child's increasing initiative in tidying toys and helping others indicates an internalization of responsibility.

Moreover, warm communication, even when parents are physically absent due to work, reflects the importance of emotional bonding in fostering independence. This is consistent with Pabundu & Ramadhana (2023), who argue that communication is central to independence-building in early childhood. Children's involvement in household activities, as shown in this study, reflects the role of experiential practices in shaping practical independence (Febriyanti et al., 2024; Nurpadilah et al., 2024). This aligns with Syafnita & Lina, (2023), reinforcing that children become more autonomous when granted meaningful participation in daily routines. Overall, the results show that democratic parenting, characterized by guidance, warmth, consistency, and involvement, significantly contributes to the development of independence in early childhood.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that working parents are able to effectively foster independence in young children through the application of democratic parenting practices. Despite the demands of employment, the parent in this case study successfully maintained emotional presence, consistent communication, and structured guidance, allowing the child to develop autonomy, responsibility, and self-awareness. Opportunities for choice-making, involvement in simple household tasks, clear yet flexible rules, and positive behavioral



modelling proved essential in enabling the child to act independently and initiate responsible behaviors without constant prompting. These results demonstrate that democratic parenting remains a powerful framework for nurturing early independence, even within the constraints of parental work commitments, and that intentional, warm, and consistent parental engagement can strengthen children's character development, including responsibility, empathy, and self-regulation.

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