

A Comparative Study of Grandparents' and Parents' Parenting Styles in Shaping the Discipline of Children Aged 4–6 Years

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the differences between grandparents' and parents' parenting styles in shaping children's discipline. The shifting caregiving roles in modern families, particularly due to parents' work responsibilities, often place grandparents as the primary caregivers, leading to generational differences in values and approaches that may influence children's discipline. This research employed a comparative quantitative approach involving 66 children in Koto Datuk Village. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, and data were collected through questionnaires based on discipline indicators proposed by Baumrind and Santrock. Data analysis was conducted using an Independent Sample t-Test through SPSS version 30. The findings reveal a significant difference between parents' and grandparents' parenting styles, where parents' democratic parenting is more effective in fostering discipline compared to the more permissive approach typically practiced by grandparents. These results emphasize the importance of active parental involvement in childrearing and the need for educational support for grandparents as alternative caregivers in contemporary family settings.

Keywords: Grandparents, Child Discipline, Parents, Parenting Style

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis perbedaan pola asuh kakek-nenek dan orang tua terhadap kedisiplinan anak. Pergeseran peran pengasuhan akibat kesibukan kerja orang tua membuat kakek-nenek sering menjadi pengasuh utama, sehingga perbedaan nilai dan pendekatan antar generasi berpotensi memengaruhi pembentukan disiplin. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif komparatif dengan 66 responden anak di Desa Koto Datuk. Sampel ditentukan secara purposive, dan data diperoleh melalui kuesioner berbasis indikator disiplin menurut Baumrind dan Santrock. Analisis menggunakan uji Independent Sample t-Test melalui SPSS 30. Hasil menunjukkan perbedaan signifikan antara pola asuh orang tua dan kakek-nenek, di mana pola demokratis orang tua lebih efektif membentuk kedisiplinan dibanding pola permissif kakek-nenek. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya keterlibatan aktif orang tua serta perlunya edukasi pengasuhan bagi kakek-nenek sebagai pengasuh alternatif.

Kata Kunci: Kakek Nenek, Kedisiplinan Anak, Orang Tua, Pola Asuh

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a very important role in human life. Through the educational process, individuals can develop into qualified persons and possess strong character. Education is a process in which groups of individuals learn knowledge, skills, and habits with the aim of creating positive change. One of the most vital forms of education is Early Childhood Education (ECE). ECE is the foundational stage of education provided to children aged 0 to 8 years, which aims to optimize developmental stimulation from an early age (Kalsum et al., 2023). The ages 0 to 8 are known as the golden age, during which children are capable of absorbing up to 80% of information. Early childhood is a crucial developmental period that significantly influences the direction of a child's growth and development in the future (Tsani & Sauri, 2024).

Rapid social and economic changes in modern society have had a direct impact on family structure and dynamics, particularly in childrearing (Permata, 2022). In Indonesia, multigenerational family patterns are increasingly common due to the rising number of parents working outside the region, including migrant workers, as well as high rates of divorce and urbanization that force parents to leave their children under the care of grandparents (Mayar et al., 2022). This phenomenon brings important consequences for the formation of children's behavior and character, one of which is discipline. Discipline is a fundamental value that must be instilled from an early age because it is closely related to responsibility, self-control, compliance with social norms, academic achievement, and children's social success in the future. When caregiving roles are no longer fully carried out by biological parents, a major question arises regarding how children's discipline can be optimally developed (Hidayati et al., 2022).

Parenting style is a major factor shaping a child's future development because every parental action influences the child's growth. Parenting encompasses a set of attitudes exhibited by parents toward their children to create an emotional climate through parent-child interactions. It is also a way for parents to regulate their children's behavior as part of their responsibility to guide them toward maturity (Putri et al., 2024). Parenting is a pattern of behavior applied consistently to children over time. Several factors influence parenting, including the parent's personality, beliefs, and the parenting they themselves received. Additionally, parental education, life experience, age, living environment, and socioeconomic conditions also influence the parenting applied. All these factors play a role in determining the parenting style given to the child, including the development of the child's emotional intelligence (Rukayah et al., 2024).

Indicators of parenting in this study include democratic parenting, authoritarian parenting, and permissive parenting (Winarti et al., 2021). Various factors influence each parent's approach to caregiving, which may differ from one parent to another. Parenting reflects the attitudes or ways in which parents interact with their children. Parenting is the method chosen by parents to educate their children as part of their responsibilities. Parenting includes the attitudes shown when interacting, guiding, educating, and nurturing children in daily life, with the aim of helping the child succeed in life (Freitas, 2024).

Grandparenting is a form of caregiving carried out by the older generation for their grandchildren, either fully or as a supplement to parents' roles. Grandparents who serve as primary caregivers tend to use permissive, lenient, and affectionate parenting approaches due to emotional tendencies, nostalgia for the past, and a desire to give attention as a form of compensation for limitations they faced when raising their own children. Conversely, parents generally apply a more authoritative parenting style that balances affection and rules. Social learning theory by Albert Bandura (1977) states that a balance between affection and discipline is the most effective parenting style in instilling discipline.

Findings from Maulida (2025), show that generational differences in parenting significantly affect children's disciplinary behavior. They indicate that children raised by their parents are more likely to obey rules, have consistent routines, and be responsible for personal and social tasks compared to children raised by grandparents. Aulina (2013) also states that children learn through observation and imitation of behaviors from significant figures in their lives. In this case, parents and grandparents become the primary role models in the internalization of values and norms. Since parents are generally more active in supervision, guidance, and enforcement of rules, disciplinary values are more consistently instilled. In contrast, when children are raised by grandparents who tend to be indulgent, children may interpret that rule violations do not always result in consequences, making discipline more difficult to establish. (Handayani et al., 2021).

On the other hand, modern parents also face their own challenges, such as work pressure, limited time, and high levels of stress that may affect the quality of their parenting (Oktarima, 2025). Therefore, it is important to examine how these two groups of primary caregivers produce different impacts on children's disciplinary development. This study is important not only because of the high prevalence of grandparent caregiving in Indonesia but also because of the lack of research directly comparing the influence of these two parenting styles on one vital dimension of child development, namely discipline (Eriyanti et al., 2019).

Discipline is one of the main character traits that significantly determines student success, both in educational settings and daily life. Discipline is reflected in compliance with rules, orderly behavior, and respect for decisions and instructions. This attitude is an essential foundation for facing life challenges and establishing healthy social relationships (Ahmad et al., 2024). Discipline does not emerge naturally but is shaped through learning processes within the environment. Parental parenting, teacher guidance, and community influence are external factors that shape discipline, while internal factors such as self-motivation also play an important role. Children who are disciplined tend to be more organized in their studies, understand the importance of time, show honesty, take responsibility, and maintain a healthy and organized lifestyle (Sari, 2021).

Based on preliminary observations in several rural families, especially families where children are raised by grandparents, it was found that disciplinary patterns were more lenient, such as early school entry, high dependence on adults, and limited responsibility for household tasks. This phenomenon is increasingly common due to the rise of multigenerational families caused by urbanization, work migration, and social conditions that require parents to work out of town for extended periods. As a result, grandparents become

primary caregivers, even though their age and approach may not always align with the developmental needs of today's children.

In developmental psychology literature, parenting styles significantly affect the formation of children's discipline. Santrock (2007) states that children internalize discipline through consistent rules, boundaries, and positive reinforcement from primary caregivers. When grandparents are overly permissive and indulgent, children may develop egocentric behaviors and low self-control. Conversely, authoritarian parenting may lead to rebellion and anxiety (Qalbina et al., 2025). Therefore, it is important to objectively analyze how these approaches occur in practice and their implications for children's disciplinary development. This is supported by research by Sabartiningsih (2018) which states that consistency in rule enforcement and the implementation of reward–punishment systems strongly influence the formation of disciplinary behavior among elementary school children, regardless of who the primary caregiver is.

The lack of studies directly comparing the influence of grandparents' and parents' parenting styles on child discipline creates a significant research gap. This gap is not only quantitative but also conceptual. Existing studies tend to assume that grandparenting is supplementary or non-dominant, whereas in reality, grandparents often serve as permanent primary caregivers. Moreover, most research focuses on emotional aspects or general well-being, rather than specifically examining discipline. Therefore, this study is not only practically relevant but also provides theoretical contributions to the development of child psychology and family science in Indonesia.

Based on this phenomenon, the research question is whether there is a difference in parenting styles between grandparents and parents in shaping children's discipline. The main objective of this study is to determine the differences between grandparents' and parents' parenting styles in influencing children's disciplinary levels, and to analyze these differences comprehensively to provide a scientific basis for formulating more effective and contextual caregiving strategies for both parents and grandparents.

METHODS

This study employed a comparative quantitative approach to determine whether there are differences between the parenting styles of grandparents and parents in influencing children's discipline. Comparative quantitative research is an approach used to compare two or more groups or variables to identify statistically significant differences among them (Aida et al., 2025). The quantitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to compare two groups or variables in order to identify differences between the two variables. Parents, as the primary caregivers in nuclear families, tend to adopt structured parenting styles that align with their direct responsibilities. Meanwhile, grandparents who act as substitute caregivers due to economic, social, or certain conditions such as divorce or urbanization tend to apply more permissive, warm, and less rule-oriented approaches in caregiving (Maida, 2025).

Children's discipline was measured as their attitudes and behaviors in complying with rules, fulfilling responsibilities, and exercising self-control in various situations. The indicators of discipline in this study include obedience to rules, regularity in daily routines, emotional and behavioral self-control, and responsible behavior toward tasks. According to Kalil & Ryan (2020) children who are raised with consistency, reasonable control, and

emotional attention tend to demonstrate higher levels of discipline compared to those raised in highly permissive or overly authoritarian environments.

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with criteria involving children aged 4–6 years who were cared for by either grandparents or parents. Purposive sampling is a selective sampling technique based on specific criteria determined by the researcher to obtain relevant and in-depth data in accordance with the research objectives (Ramadani et al., 2025). The sample was drawn from kindergarten-aged children, with a total of 66 respondents consisting of parents and grandparents in Koto Datuk. The research was conducted over a period of two months. The measurement scale used a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always), and the instrument was developed based on indicators validated by previous studies (Chen et al., 2024).

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Parents And Other Caregivers			
Age	< 20 Years	0	0%
	20–30 Years	10	15.1%
	30–40 Years	24	36.5%
	40–50 Years	10	15.1%
	> 50 Years	22	33.3%
Relationship to Child	Father	20	30.3%
	Mother	20	30.3%
	Grandfather	10	15.1%
	Grandmother	16	24.3%
Child's Age	4–5 Years	22	33.3%
	5–6 Years	44	66.7%
Living Status	Living in the Same House	51	77.3%
	Not Living in the Same House	14	21.2%
	Occasionally	1	1.5%
Caregiving Hours	< 2 Hours	16	24.2%
	2–4 Hours	10	15.2%
	4–6 Hours	14	21.2%
	> 6 Hours	26	39.4%
Marital Status	Married	64	96.9%
	Divorced (Living)	0	0%
	Divorced (Deceased)	2	3.1%
Children Or Grandchildren			
Gender	Male	31	47%
	Female	35	53%

(Source: processed research data, 2025)

Based on Table 1, most respondents were female, who are generally more involved in caregiving. The age range varied, with parents generally in productive age groups and grandparents in older age groups. The caregiving relationship included biological parents and grandparents, reflecting intergenerational differences in caregiving practices. The children or grandchildren cared for were mostly in early childhood to early primary school age, which is

a critical phase in the formation of discipline. In terms of living arrangements, most respondents lived in the same household as the child or grandchild, influencing the intensity of caregiving interactions. The caregiving hours indicate that parents tend to spend more time caring for children than grandparents. Most respondents were married, supporting relative stability in caregiving patterns.

This study employed an Independent Sample t-Test to examine whether there were significant differences between the two groups—children cared for by parents and those cared for by grandparents—based on the questionnaire instrument developed. The measurement used a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, 5 = always), and the instrument was developed based on indicators validated by previous studies (Chen et al., 2024).

In this study, data analysis involved descriptive statistics, including percentages, standard deviations, and means to determine respondents' participation levels in each variable. Subsequently, the hypothesis was tested using simple regression analysis. The development of regression analysis involves observing an event or phenomenon not only at a single point in time but also across multiple periods (Rahayu et al., 2023). Several assumptions must be fulfilled to conduct regression analysis, including tests of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity using SPSS version 30.00.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In this study, the data collected through questionnaires distributed to respondents cared for by grandparents and parents were analyzed to examine whether there were significant differences in children's discipline based on the parenting style they received. The questionnaire was developed based on indicators of child discipline, including obedience to rules, responsibility, independence, and punctuality, structured using a Likert scale. The total sample used in this study consisted of 66 parents and grandparents, divided into two main groups: children raised directly by their biological parents and children who spent most of their time under the care of their grandparents. Data processing began with descriptive analysis, which was used to determine the achievement level of each variable.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Parenting Style	66	86	145	122.12	13.700	187.677
Child Discipline	66	51	80	68.02	7.859	61.769
Valid (listwise)	N	66				

(Source: SPSS processed data, version 30, 2025)

Based on Table 2, the parenting style variable shows a minimum score of 86 and a maximum of 145, with a mean of 122.12, a standard deviation of 13.700, and a variance of 187.677. This indicates that most respondents have a high perception of parenting style, as the mean value is close to the highest score and the spread of responses is not too wide, suggesting that respondents tended to provide consistent answers. For the child discipline variable, the minimum value is 51, maximum 80, mean 68.02, standard deviation 7.859, and variance 61.769. The relatively high average score suggests that respondents assessed children's discipline as generally good, although the distribution of data is slightly narrower compared to parenting style. Furthermore, several assumptions must be fulfilled before performing regression testing, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity.

Table 3. Classical Assumption Tests

No	Classical Assumption Test	Value	Threshold	Criteria
1	Normality Test	K-S (0.200)	> 0.05	Normally distributed data
2	Multicollinearity Test	VIF (1)	< 10	No multicollinearity
3	Heteroscedasticity Test	Glejser (0.127)	> 0.05	No heteroscedasticity

(Source: SPSS processed data, version 30, 2025)

Based on Table 3, the variables in this study have met the assumptions of classical linear regression, meaning that the regression model is suitable for further analysis and can be used to draw reliable conclusions. In a linear regression model, several assumptions must be tested to ensure that the generated estimates are unbiased and trustworthy. The classical assumption tests performed include normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, with statistical indicators reflecting data distribution, correlations among independent variables, and homogeneity of error variances across observations.

The normality test result, based on the Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance value greater than 0.05, indicates that the residual data are normally distributed. The multicollinearity test shows that the independent variable has a VIF value below 10, meaning that there is no strong correlation between independent variables. Meanwhile, the Glejser Test for heteroscedasticity produced significance values greater than 0.05, indicating no heteroscedasticity; in other words, the residual variance is homogeneous, showing consistent prediction errors across the range of data.

To determine whether there was a significant difference between the two independent groups in this study, a comparative statistical analysis using the Independent Sample t-Test was conducted. This test is appropriate because the data are quantitative and the sample consists of two independent groups. The analysis aimed to compare the average level of children's discipline based on the parenting styles applied by grandparents and parents, thereby determining whether there is a statistically meaningful difference between the two.

Tabel 4. Uji t

Coefficients ^a		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	

1	(Constant)	3.167	3.335	.950	.346
	Parenting style	.531	.027	.926	19.565 .000

a. Dependent Variable: Kedisiplinan Anak

(Source: SPSS processed data, version 30, 2025)

Based on Table 4, the statistical results show that the t-value is 19.565, with a t-table value of 1.99773, and a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.00. The significance value is far below the standard threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. Thus, there is a substantial difference in the level of discipline between children cared for by parents and those cared for by grandparents.

The finding that there is a difference in parenting styles between grandparents and parents in influencing children's discipline is an important contribution to child developmental studies and family psychology. The results show that children raised by parents have higher levels of discipline compared to those raised by grandparents. This difference reflects the variations in caregiving approaches used by the two generations, which ultimately affect behavioral formation, particularly in the aspect of discipline.

Parents tend to apply a more balanced parenting style between affection and control. They are more aware of the importance of instilling values of discipline, responsibility, and rule adherence from an early age. Based on Table 4, the statistical results show that the t-value is 19.565, with a t-table value of 1.99773, and a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.00. The significance value is far below the standard threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. Thus, there is a substantial difference in the level of discipline between children cared for by parents and those cared for by grandparents.

The finding that there is a difference in parenting styles between grandparents and parents in influencing children's discipline is an important contribution to child developmental studies and family psychology. The results show that children raised by parents have higher levels of discipline compared to those raised by grandparents. This difference reflects the variations in caregiving approaches used by the two generations, which ultimately affect behavioral formation, particularly in the aspect of discipline. Parents tend to apply a more balanced parenting style between affection and control. They are more aware of the importance of instilling values of discipline, responsibility, and rule adherence from an early age (Ludfi & Fina, 2024). This allows them to implement more effective and adaptive parenting styles. In line with Baumrind's (1966), findings, children raised with democratic parenting tend to become more accomplished, self-controlled, and cooperative compared to those raised with authoritarian or permissive parenting styles.

Meanwhile, grandparents often play fundamentally different caregiving roles. Although they possess extensive experience in raising children, their caregiving approach tends to be more permissive. Many grandparents express affection by indulging their grandchildren, allowing behaviors that should be limited, and being reluctant to impose punishments or reprimands. While driven by love, such behaviors can weaken the structure needed for developing children's discipline (Ahmed, 2025). Grandparents also frequently

refrain from setting strict boundaries because they believe that the primary responsibility for discipline still lies with the parents. According to Handayani (2021), grandparents tend to tolerate deviant behaviors as a form of noncritical affection, and they often do not provide immediate consequences for misbehavior.

Generational differences also play a role. Grandparents were raised in different cultural and social norms compared to the current generation (Khusna, 2024). They may be less familiar with modern psychological and pedagogical developments, making their caregiving approaches less aligned with the needs of today's children in a more complex sociocultural environment (Khofila & Misrah, 2024). Age factors also influence their energy and consistency in enforcing rules and maintaining control (Latifah et al., 2016).

These findings are reinforced by recent research by Sari (Sari, 2021) which states that parenting especially democratic parenting significantly contributes to children's disciplinary behavior at school and at home. Children who receive this type of parenting display greater rule compliance, stronger understanding of behavioral consequences, and higher internal motivation to follow rules voluntarily. Conversely, caregiving by grandparents that is permissive or inconsistent tends to correlate negatively with children's discipline (Lestari & Mahrus, 2025). Another study by Hasanah (2022) also states that children raised by grandparents demonstrate lower independence and discipline compared to children raised by their biological parents.

Thus, the finding that significant differences exist between grandparents' and parents' parenting styles in influencing children's discipline is not only academically relevant but also practically important for the community. These results highlight the need for parents' active involvement in caregiving, even when caregiving responsibilities are delegated to grandparents due to work or other circumstances. Interventions and parenting training involving grandparents may serve as strategic solutions to enhance children's disciplinary development. Shared awareness between both generations about balancing affection and discipline will help create a conducive family environment for optimal child development.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that children who are raised by their parents have higher levels of discipline compared to those cared for by their grandparents. Overall, children's discipline falls into the high category, although several indicators such as consistency in completing tasks and time management still require attention. These results highlight the importance of active parental involvement in caregiving, as well as the need for synergy between parents and grandparents. Intergenerational parenting education is recommended to enhance caregiving effectiveness. These findings may serve as a reference for families and related institutions in designing more optimal family education strategies.

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