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## Child-Centered Learning In The Home Environment: Implementation And Challenges

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**Abstract :** This study examined the implementation of child-centered learning principles by the parents of TK Al Muthmainnah students, their knowledge of these principles, and the challenges they faced. A qualitative case study method was adopted, with ten parents participating as primary informants. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The analysis revealed that parents possessed a foundational understanding of child-centered learning, viewing it as a way to foster autonomy and cater to their children's interests. They applied these principles at home by allowing children to make choices and encouraging exploration. However, they encountered challenges such as limited resources and the need for balancing guidance with children's independence. The findings suggest that while parents are inclined towards child-centered practices, the efficacy of these practices is affected by the availability of resources and support

**Keywords :** Child-Centered Learning, Parental Involvement, Early Childhood Education.

### INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of early childhood education, child-centered learning has emerged as a paramount approach, advocating for the importance of tailoring educational experiences to the developmental stages and interests of the child (Gaur et al., 2020; Henward et al., 2019). Recent scholarship has reinforced the constructivist theories of Piaget and Vygotsky, emphasizing the significance of active learning and the social context of education (Aminah et al., 2020; Martí, 2020; Octaviani et al., 2023; Taufiq, 2022). The efficacy of this approach is increasingly acknowledged, not only within formal educational settings but also within the home, where parents play a pivotal role in their children's learning (Burke & Cleaver, 2019; Nurhayati et al., 2023; Siu & Ng, 2022). The role of parents in facilitating their children's education has garnered significant attention in contemporary research. Comprehensive strategies that encompass parental education to support this role effectively is highly recommended (Latif et al., 2023; Nurhayati et al., 2021; Suharyat et al., 2023).

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The critical impact of parental engagement, especially in informal learning environments, highlighting the profound influence of parent-child interactions on educational outcomes (Nurhayati, 2021; Rumsari & Nurhayati, 2020). Child-centered, play-based education enhances young children's problem-solving skills and socio-emotional competences, but requires collaboration between parents, teachers, and a mutually beneficial learning community for teachers (Kim, 2020). Offline home learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was effective when focusing on child-centeredness and family-based support, but connections among peers were lacking due to social distancing and physical limitations (Siu & Ng, 2022). Zilinzkyte and Kazlauskiene (2020) explores different types of parental involvement in children's learning at home, such as control and autonomy supportive practices which are essential in child centered learning implementation. Parental involvement in children's learning activities at home is important for the optimal of their growth and development (Auliya & Fauziah, 2020; Juhana & Nurhayati, 2023; Nursa'adah et al., 2022; Rahayu & Nurhayati, 2023).

However, implementing child-centered learning at home is not without its challenges. Ramirez et.al (2022) identify difficulties in being learning facilitator for their children, including limited resources and the need for additional support systems for parents. Pusparini et al. (2022) address examined the role of parents in guiding learning activities at home and identified problems such as limited understanding of materials, limited facilities, and parents' educational backgrounds that can influence the effectiveness of child-centered educational practices. Socio-cultural and economic factors play a pivotal role in the feasibility and success of home educational practices (Guterman & Neuman, 2018). Wardhani and Ilyas (2019) found significant differences in students' motivation based on parental socio-economic status. Furthermore, Elliot (2020) suggests that factors beyond income and parental education, such as child characteristics, parent age, and family structure, contribute to the variability in home learning activities among socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Despite the recognition of child-centered learning importance, there is a gap in research regarding the practical application of child-centered learning principles by parents within the home environment. This disconnects between theoretical ideals and everyday practice necessitates further exploration, particularly focusing on how parents interpret and implement these principles in diverse settings.

The current study seeks to build on this body of literature by focusing on the specific experiences of parents at TK Al Muthmainnah. By examining how these parents integrate child-centered principles in a distinct socio-cultural setting, this research aims to shed light on the

practical application of educational theories in diverse home environments, contributing to the broader discourse on the intersection of education, socio-economic conditions, and family dynamics. Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to answer the following question: How do parents at TK Al Muthmainnah implement child-centered learning principles at home, and what challenges and successes do they encounter in this endeavor? The novelty of this research lay in its focus on the specific socio-cultural environment of TK Al Muthmainnah, located in a developing country. By examining the intricacies of how parents interpreted, adapted, and applied child-centered learning principles, the research addressed a notable gap in the existing literature. It ventured beyond institutional education to understand parental agency in child development, contributing new insights to the dialogue on educational equity and the applicability of pedagogical approaches across cultures. The investigation expanded the understanding of the transposition of child-centered learning into the home environment and its impact on early childhood development. The findings bridged the gap between educational theory and parental practice, providing valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in the cross-cultural relevance of child-centered educational models.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This qualitative case study investigates the challenges and successes parents experience when applying child-centered learning principles at TK Al Muthmainnah in Kecamatan Bojongloa Kidul, Kota Bandung. The qualitative approach with case study method was selected for its effectiveness in providing an in-depth understanding of the nuanced practices and experiences of individuals in a real-life context (Sugiyono, 2023). The context of the research is centered around TK Al Muthmainnah, a purposive sample of ten parents of TK Al Muthmainnah students forms the core of this study's participants. These individuals were chosen based on their willingness to contribute and the diversity of their experiences to capture a wide array of insights into the implementation process of child-centered learning at home.

Data was collected through a triangulated approach, utilizing observations, interviews, and document analyses to ensure a robust examination of the research questions. Observational data were gathered through visits to the participants' homes, allowing for the direct examination of the application of child-centered principles in a naturalistic setting. These observations were carefully documented with comprehensive notes detailing the environment and the interactions observed. In addition to observations, semi-structured interviews provided a platform for parents to articulate their experiences, offering depth and context to the observed behaviors.

These interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the participants, to capture the discussions accurately, which were subsequently transcribed verbatim for detailed analysis.

A review of various documents supplied by the parents, including educational resources and children's work samples, supplemented the primary data sources. These documents were instrumental in providing additional layers of understanding to the parent's methods and approaches to implementing child-centered learning at home. The analysis of the qualitative data commenced with a thorough reading of the interview transcripts and observational notes to familiarize with the depth of the content. Initial codes were generated manually, reflecting key themes related to the successes and challenges of implementing child-centered learning principles. Through an iterative process, these codes were refined and grouped into broader themes that captured the essence of the parental experiences.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

**Parental Knowledge and Perceptions of Child-Centered Learning.** The qualitative data revealed varied levels of parental understanding and appreciation for child-centered learning principles. Most parents associated child-centered learning with an educational philosophy that prioritizes the child's interests and promotes their active engagement in the learning process. One parent expressed, "I've come to understand that in child-centered learning, it's not about what we think our kids should learn, but about listening to them and understanding their natural curiosities." This sentiment underscores a shift in perspective from a more traditional, adult-led approach to one that values the child's input. Another parent shared a reflective insight: "Initially, I thought child-centered learning was all about letting the child do whatever they want. But now, I see it's about guiding them to discover their potential in a structured yet flexible manner." This evolution in understanding highlights the ongoing learning process parents themselves are engaged in as they implement these principles at home. Despite this growing comprehension, some parents voiced uncertainties about operationalizing the concept. "Sometimes I worry if I'm too hands-off or too involved. It's hard to find the balance," admitted one parent, illustrating the complexity of applying child-centered learning consistently.

The variation in parental knowledge and perception of child-centered learning principles observed in this study underscores a critical aspect of educational research—how theory is translated into practice by non-educators. The initial misunderstandings and subsequent deepening of insight among parents reflect the 'praxis shock' that occurs when theoretical educational concepts encounter the complexities of real-world application. This is a

phenomenon detailed in studies like those of Chimbi et al. (2021), who examined how educators reconcile pedagogical theory with classroom realities, and which can be extended to parents acting as facilitators of their children's education. The parents' shift from seeing child-centered learning as permissive to viewing it as structured yet flexible aligns with recent research emphasizing the need for balance in educational approaches. Authors such as Roberts (2021) highlights the importance of educators noticing and responding to children's interests to encourage science learning through child-led inquiries. This research advocate for a balanced approach that combines child-led inquiry with adult guidance to maximize learning potential. This balance, evident in the parents' evolving practices, suggests that while theoretical knowledge is foundational, the lived experience of applying these principles can lead to a more nuanced understanding that reflects the dynamic interplay between structure and freedom in child-centered learning.

Successes in Implementation. The successes reported by parents in implementing child-centered learning were multifaceted, reflecting both cognitive and affective domains of child development. A parent joyfully noted, "Since we've started focusing more on what she's interested in, her enthusiasm for learning has just blossomed. She's reading more, asking questions, and even writing little stories." Another observed, "It's not just academic; he's more open with us about his thoughts and feelings. He's thriving because he feels heard." Parents also recounted positive changes in the family dynamics: "Our home has become a learning space that's alive with ideas and creativity. We all contribute, and we all learn," a parent described, indicating that child-centered learning had a communal effect, enhancing the educational atmosphere of the home.

The successes in implementing child-centered learning, particularly the enhanced autonomy and engagement observed by parents, resonate with Riley (2016) self-determination theory, but they also reflect the findings of Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of observational learning and self-efficacy in education (Devi et al., 2017). When children see their interests and choices being valued and respected, they are likely to develop a stronger belief in their capabilities, which in turn fosters greater engagement and a desire for mastery. Moreover, the communal learning atmosphere reported by some parents aligns with Clapp and Hanson (2019) introduces the concept of participatory creativity, emphasizing the shift from individual ideation to interactions within sociohistorical systems. The home environment, as described by parents in this study, becomes a site of collective educational

practice where child-centered principles are not just applied but are absorbed into the family's learning culture.

**Challenges and Solutions.** Challenges were predominantly centered on logistical and practical aspects of implementing a child-centric approach. "There are days when nothing seems to work, and I feel out of my depth," one parent confessed, highlighting the inherent unpredictability in personalizing education. Parents also grappled with external constraints. "I want to provide her with resources to explore her interests, but it's not always financially feasible," a parent lamented, pointing to socioeconomic factors that can limit the application of child-centered learning. In addressing these challenges, parents showed resourcefulness and a commitment to adapting their strategies. "When I don't know something, we learn it together, or we seek out community resources like the library or online educational videos," shared one parent, reflecting a collaborative approach to problem-solving and learning. The challenges faced by parents, particularly around resources and consistent application, are consistent with the literature that highlights environmental and socio-economic factors as significant determinants of educational outcomes.

Wulandari and Mubah (2022) discussion on the importance of resource availability for effective learning environments provides a framework for understanding the parents' struggles. Furthermore, the inconsistency in application may also be related to the concept of 'boundary crossing,' as parents navigate between their pre-existing beliefs about education and the new practices suggested by child-centered learning—a concept explored by Akkerman and Bruining (Akkerman & Bruining, 2016)). The challenges of finding balance and understanding the role of the adult in child-centered learning reflect the complexities of this approach, as outlined by authors like Syamsuriadi (2018), who contend that child-centered education requires adults to navigate the delicate process of offering support without usurping the child's agency and Zhou (2017) suggested that child-centered education in China should focus on children's needs and interests, but teachers should still play a crucial role in ensuring effective implementation. The parents' experiences suggest that more guidance on operationalizing this balance could be beneficial.

Overall, the data suggests that while parents embrace the ethos of child-centered learning and are observing clear benefits in their children's engagement and emotional development, they also encounter several challenges. These include understanding how to apply the principles in daily life, managing resource constraints, and maintaining the flexibility to adapt to their children's evolving interests. The synthesis of these findings points to a need for

a supportive framework that can provide parents with the tools and confidence to navigate the complexities of child-centered learning at home. This includes access to resources, community support, and perhaps ongoing training to deepen their understanding and application of child-centered educational practices. The implications for parents emerging from this study are multi-fold. Firstly, there is a clear indication that parents benefit from understanding not only the principles of child-centered learning but also the strategies for their effective implementation. This underscores the need for accessible educational resources that can help parents navigate the practical aspects of child-centered learning.

Secondly, the study suggests that parents may benefit from support networks that can offer guidance and share best practices, a concept supported by social learning theory (Grusec, 2020). Educators and policymakers should consider these findings as a call to action to foster partnerships with families, recognizing parents as co-educators who require support and resources to fulfill this role effectively. This may include knowledge development for parents, as well as policy initiatives that facilitate access to educational materials and community programs. Such measures could help mitigate the challenges identified by parents and maximize the successes in applying child-centered learning principles.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study at TK Al Muthmainnah illuminates the complex tapestry of parental engagement with child-centered learning principles. The research findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of how theoretical educational constructs are navigated and operationalized by parents. Successes articulated by parents, such as increased child engagement and emotional well-being, underscore the efficacy of child-centered learning approaches, resonating with constructivist and self-determination theories. However, the challenges faced—resource limitations, application consistency, and balancing guidance with autonomy—reflect the broader literature's discourse on environmental and socio-economic influences on educational practices. These insights offer a substantive contribution to the field, highlighting the vital role of parents as facilitators of education and the need for accessible resources and community support systems. The study suggests a departure from traditional perceptions of learning, signaling a shift towards more collaborative, familial learning dynamics that warrant further investigation. Future research can expand upon these findings by exploring longitudinal impacts of child-centered learning in the home environment and by identifying specific resources and support systems that enhance its implementation.

Investigations into the scalability of such approaches in diverse socio-economic contexts would also be valuable, potentially sparking new theories on the interplay between child agency, parental involvement, and educational outcomes. This study lays the groundwork for such inquiries, marking a step forward in our collective understanding of the intricacies of early childhood education and the role of the family in shaping lifelong learning trajectories.

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