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# Parenting Practices and Child Violence Prevention: A Qualitative Study of Early Childhood Families

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### ABSTRACT

Violence against children remains a significant issue that can negatively affect children's physical, emotional, and social development. The family plays a crucial role in preventing violence through the implementation of appropriate parenting practices. This study aimed to explore parenting practices and their role in preventing violence against young children within the family environment. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving parents of early childhood children as the primary participants. Qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles & Huberman analytical model, which includes the processes of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. All stages of the analysis were conducted continuously throughout the research process. The findings revealed that positive parenting practices, including effective communication, positive discipline, parental emotional regulation, and affectionate interactions, played a significant role in preventing violence against young children. These practices created a safe and supportive family environment by replacing physical and verbal punishment with constructive approaches. Furthermore, communication, emotional regulation, and positive discipline worked together to strengthen violence prevention within the family. Therefore, strengthening parents' knowledge and skills through parenting education is essential for promoting child protection and healthy child development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical stage in human development that significantly influences an individual's future well-being and life outcomes. This period, often referred to as the golden age, is characterized by rapid growth in cognitive, language, social-emotional, moral, and physical development. During this stage, children require a safe, nurturing, and supportive environment to maximize their developmental potential. In this context, the family serves as the primary and most influential environment in shaping children's character, behavior, and psychological well-being. Therefore, parenting practices play a crucial role in determining the quality of early childhood development (Jeong *et al.*, 2021).

Ideally, families should provide children with protection, affection, and emotional security. However, violence against children remains a serious global concern. According to the World Health Organization (2022), more than one billion children aged 2 - 17 experience some form of violence annually, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, and neglect. Violence against children not only violates fundamental human rights but also has long-term consequences for physical health, mental health, educational attainment, and social well-being.

The family environment, which should be the safest place for children, is often where violence occurs. Recent data from the United Nations Children's Fund indicate that nearly two-thirds of children worldwide experience violent discipline from parents or caregivers (Stewart-Tufescu, 2023). Furthermore, approximately 400 million children under the age of five are regularly subjected to physical punishment and psychological aggression within their homes. These alarming statistics highlight the persistence of harmful parenting practices and underscore the urgent need for effective prevention strategies.

Child violence within families may take various forms, including physical abuse such as hitting, slapping, pinching, and pushing, as well as verbal and emotional abuse such as yelling, humiliating, threatening, and neglecting children's emotional needs. Research has consistently demonstrated that exposure to violence during childhood is associated with a wide range of adverse outcomes, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, behavioral problems, emotional dysregulation, poor academic performance, and increased risks of perpetuating violence in adulthood (Cuartas, 2021; Gardner *et al.*, 2023). These findings suggest that childhood violence is not merely a short-term issue but a lifelong public health and social concern. Previous studies have shown that children exposed to violence are at greater risk of experiencing long-term psychological, behavioral, and social problems, while positive parenting practices are associated with lower levels of child maltreatment and better developmental outcomes (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). However, most existing studies have primarily focused on the prevalence, consequences, or quantitative relationships between parenting and child violence, providing limited insight into how positive parenting practices are implemented in everyday family life (Arias-Rivera *et al.*, 2022). This study addresses this gap by exploring parents' lived experiences and identifying practical parenting strategies that contribute to violence prevention in the family context.

Parenting practices have been identified as one of the most significant factors influencing the occurrence of violence against children. Developmental psychology literature suggests that parenting styles shape children's emotional and behavioral development. Baumrind's parenting framework categorizes parenting styles into authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (democratic) approaches. Authoritarian parenting emphasizes strict obedience, rigid control, and punitive discipline, which may increase the likelihood of violent interactions between parents and children. In contrast, authoritative parenting promotes open

communication, warmth, responsiveness, and age-appropriate guidance, contributing to healthier developmental outcomes (Anggraeni, 2023b; Jeong et al., 2021).

In recent years, the concept of positive parenting has gained increasing attention as an effective approach to preventing violence against children. Positive parenting emphasizes nurturing parent-child relationships through empathy, effective communication, emotional support, non-violent discipline, and respect for children's rights. Gardner et al., (2023) highlights that positive parenting interventions can significantly reduce harsh parenting practices, strengthen parent-child relationships, and improve children's social-emotional development. Similarly, Backhaus et al., (2023) found that parenting interventions aimed at promoting positive parenting were effective in reducing violence against children across diverse cultural contexts.

The importance of positive parenting became even more evident during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased parental stress, economic hardship, and disruptions in family routines contributed to heightened risks of child maltreatment worldwide (Backhaus et al., 2023; Cluver et al., 2020). In response, international organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the End Violence Partnership have emphasized strengthening parenting support programs as a key strategy for preventing violence against children. These efforts are also aligned with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.2, which aims to end all forms of violence against children by 2030.

Despite growing awareness of children's rights and the increasing promotion of positive parenting approaches, a significant gap remains between ideal parenting practices and the realities experienced by many families. This study highlights the importance of strengthening parents' knowledge and skills through parenting education programs to promote child protection and healthy child development. Therefore, this study aims to examine parenting practices and their role in preventing violence against young children within the family environment.

## 2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore parenting practices and their role in preventing violence against young children within the family environment. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within their natural settings. The case study design was considered appropriate because it facilitates an in-depth investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Schoch, 2020). The study was conducted among families with early childhood children. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives and their experiences in child-rearing practices. The primary participants consisted of parents who actively engaged in the daily care and upbringing of children aged 0–6 years. Additional information was obtained from family members and early childhood educators to enrich the data and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Data collection was conducted through observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation enabled the researchers to directly examine parent-child interactions and parenting behaviors within the family environment (Humphreys & Garon-Bissonnette, 2025). The observations focused on communication patterns, disciplinary practices, emotional responses, and parental behaviors related to child violence prevention. Semi-structured interviews were employed to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and understandings of non-violent parenting practices. This technique provided flexibility for participants to express their views while allowing researchers to probe for

deeper information. Documentation, including field notes, interview transcripts, and relevant supporting records, was utilized to complement and validate the data collected through observations and interviews.

Qualitative data were analyzed using interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Syawaludin & Rintayati, 2019). Data reduction involved selecting, organizing, and simplifying relevant information obtained from multiple sources. Subsequently, data were displayed in thematic categories and descriptive narratives to facilitate interpretation and understanding. Finally, conclusions were drawn through the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and relationships emerging from the data. The analytical process was conducted continuously throughout the study to ensure consistency and rigor in the interpretation of findings.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, several strategies were employed. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Member checking was carried out by returning preliminary findings to participants for confirmation and validation (Amin et al., 2020). Furthermore, detailed descriptions of the research process and findings were provided to enhance transferability, while maintaining an audit trail contributed to the dependability and confirmability of the study. These procedures were implemented to strengthen the credibility, reliability, and validity of the research findings.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Non-Violent Child Education as a Form of Child Protection

The interview results showed that the participant perceived non-violent child education as a parenting process based on affection, patience, and role modeling. The participant believed that children learn more effectively through examples demonstrated by parents than through punishment or coercive actions. According to the participant, physical and verbal violence does not solve behavioral problems but instead creates fear and hinders children's emotional development.

Observations revealed that parents consistently avoided the use of harsh language, yelling, or threats when interacting with their children. When children made mistakes, parents preferred to engage them in direct conversations and explain why certain behaviors were inappropriate. Parents also demonstrated calmness when responding to challenging child behaviors. This approach created a supportive atmosphere that enabled children to better understand and accept parental guidance. In addition, the participant emphasized that practicing non-violent parenting requires continuous learning. Parents recognized that each child possesses unique characteristics, requiring parenting approaches tailored to individual needs and developmental stages. This awareness reflects a strong commitment to improving parenting quality and fostering child well-being.

The findings suggest that parents understand the importance of non-violent education as an essential component of child protection. Parenting practices grounded in affection and positive role modeling enable children to learn within a safe and supportive environment. (Anggraeni, 2023c) reports that family environments free from violence contribute significantly to children's psychological development and overall well-being.

Non-violent child education also reflects the principles of positive parenting, which emphasize respect for children's rights and dignity. World Health Organization (2022) asserts that parenting approaches based on respect and empathy can reduce harsh disciplinary practices and improve parent-child relationships. These findings are consistent with Backhaus et al., (2023), who found that parents adopting positive parenting approaches are less likely

to use physical punishment than those employing authoritarian parenting styles. Consequently, non-violent child education can be regarded as an effective form of child protection within the family context.

### 3.2. The Implementation of Positive Discipline in Addressing Children's Misbehavior

The interview findings indicated that when children made mistakes, parents preferred to apply educational consequences rather than physical punishment or threats. These consequences had been previously agreed upon, enabling children to understand the relationship between their actions and the resulting outcomes. Observational data demonstrated that parents provided children with opportunities to explain the reasons behind their behavior before offering guidance or implementing consequences. For instance, when a child refused to tidy up toys, parents did not immediately scold the child but instead initiated a discussion about the importance of cleanliness and personal responsibility. The participant further explained that the primary purpose of applying consequences was not to make children feel guilty or fearful but rather to help them recognize mistakes and learn how to improve their behavior. This approach enabled children to accept rules more positively and reduced excessive emotional reactions when receiving correction.

These findings indicate that parents implemented the concept of positive discipline in their parenting practices. Positive discipline emphasizes learning and character development rather than punishment. Children are encouraged to understand the rationale behind rules, fostering internal awareness and self-regulation. According to World Health Organization (2024), positive discipline is an effective strategy for promoting prosocial behavior and reducing the risk of violence in parenting. This approach helps children develop responsibility, problem-solving abilities, and decision-making skills. Similarly, physical punishment is associated with increased aggressive behavior and emotional difficulties among children. In contrast, positive discipline supports healthier social-emotional development (Branco *et al.*, 2022; McCoy *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the implementation of positive discipline within families represents an important strategy for preventing violence against young children.

### 3.3. Parental Emotional Regulation as a Factor in Preventing Child Violence

Interview results revealed that the participant recognized the importance of emotional regulation in parenting. Parents acknowledged experiencing feelings of fatigue, stress, and frustration when dealing with challenging child behaviors. However, before responding to children, they intentionally attempted to calm themselves.

Several coping strategies were employed, including taking short breaks, engaging in enjoyable activities, practicing deep breathing, or redirecting attention to other tasks. Parents believed that decisions made while angry were often inappropriate and potentially harmful to children. Observational findings further indicated that parents did not exhibit aggressive behaviors when addressing children's mistakes. Instead, they chose to communicate in a calmer tone once their emotions had stabilized. This behavior contributed to a more constructive atmosphere for parent-child interaction and communication.

Emotional regulation emerged as a critical factor in preventing violence against children. Parents who can effectively manage their emotions tend to make more rational decisions and are less likely to engage in impulsive actions that may harm their children. Wu & Xu (2020) explain that parenting stress is one of the primary risk factors associated with family violence. Consequently, developing emotional regulation skills should be an integral component of parenting education programs. The findings of this study suggest that emotional regulation not only protects children from the risk of violence but also serves as a positive model for

children in managing their own emotions. Thus, parental emotional regulation contributes both to healthier family relationships and to children's social-emotional development.

### **3.4. The Role of Effective Communication in Preventing Violence Against Children**

The interview findings indicated that communication served as the primary strategy used by parents in raising their children. The participant stated that when children made mistakes, discussions focused on the behavior rather than criticizing the child's character or personality. Observational data showed that communication occurred through a two-way process. Children were encouraged to express their opinions, explain their actions, and share their feelings. Parents listened attentively before providing advice or solutions. This approach made children feel respected and valued, encouraging them to openly discuss their experiences and concerns. The findings suggest that effective communication fosters positive emotional relationships between parents and children.

Effective communication represents a fundamental component of positive parenting. Through open communication, children develop a sense of security, self-confidence, and the ability to express emotions in healthy ways. Jervis et al., (2023) identifies supportive communication as a protective factor that can reduce the risk of violence against children within families. Children who feel heard and respected are more likely to establish close relationships with their parents, enabling conflicts to be resolved constructively. These findings are consistent with (Syakhrani & Aslan, 2024), who reported that the quality of family communication positively influences children's social-emotional development and psychological well-being. Therefore, strengthening parental communication skills should be a key focus of family education and parenting support programs.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that parenting practices play a significant role in preventing violence against young children within the family environment. Positive parenting practices characterized by effective communication, non-violent child-rearing approaches, positive discipline, and parents' ability to regulate their emotions were found to contribute to the creation of a safe, supportive, and nurturing family environment. Such conditions provide opportunities for children to develop optimally in their social, emotional, and moral domains without experiencing forms of treatment that may negatively affect their well-being and development. The results further suggest that relationships built through open communication, mutual respect, and affection contribute substantially to strengthening emotional bonds between parents and children. In addition, the implementation of educational discipline and effective emotional regulation by parents appears to support healthy family interactions and reduce the likelihood of violent behaviors in the parenting process.

The novelty of this study lies in the identification of the interconnected roles of effective communication, parental emotional regulation, and positive discipline as core components of positive parenting practices that contribute to the prevention of violence against young children. These findings suggest that violence prevention extends beyond the avoidance of physical or verbal punishment and encompasses parents' capacity to establish supportive, responsive, and developmentally appropriate relationships with their children. Based on these findings, strengthening parental capacity through continuous parenting education and support programs is considered essential as part of broader child protection efforts. Furthermore, future studies are encouraged to involve more diverse participants and broader

research settings in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of parenting practices and the factors contributing to the prevention of violence against young children.

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## 6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The authors confirm that all data and findings presented in this study are the result of the research conducted and have been reported objectively. Furthermore, the authors affirm that this manuscript is an original work, has not been published previously, and is not currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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