

## Developing a parenting program for young couples

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### ABSTRACT

In support of developing a parenting program for young couples, this study conducted to determine whether and how significantly the module was affects parenting practice among young couples in a small groups. Data were collected through experimental research. The subjects of this research were young couples with requirements as follows: have children whose age is maximum five years old, graduated from high schools, able to communicate fluently, and are willing to attend all interventions and are not joining any similar training. The subjects were 26 parents who are domiciled in the Province of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia and recruited through social media. The data analysis technique was a paired sample t-test. The result indicated -6.299 value t and value p=0.000 or (p<0.01). It showed a significant development of parenting comprehension before and after training (mean pretest is about 62.13 and mean post-test is about 78.26). This parenting program module needs to be tested in the wider population to form into final results.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Juvenile delinquency proved to increase annually, causing concern among the population [1]. Many factors affect it, especially a family [2]. Unayah and Sabarisman [3] reported that the immediate increase in juvenile delinquency is affected by improper parenting and busy parents. The impact of ineffective parenting can also lead to the primary cause of childhood being individuals with low self-control and aggressive attitudes [4], which alter them until adulthood. Based on observation in field, some parents tend to fail their role as good examples to their children due to the lack of knowledge in parenting and the lack of emotional control in front of the children (anger and pinching). Thus, in turn, the children would imitate those attitudes.

Rakhmawati [5] confirmed that the excellent parenting pattern would create a strong bond between the identified person and the identifying person (child and parents). A married couple must be building a positive relationship. One contributor to marital satisfaction is an agreement on the rules of their parenting roles [6]. It doesn't matter if the family is neither traditional nor egalitarian in duty distributions. The rise of satisfaction will occur if the couple has the same ideology, including child parenting. For young couples or those who have just entered marriage, agreements on these matters are often neglected because they tend to focus on building economic stability and self-adjustment to the new tasks. It also influences the parents to face obstacles in shaping the child's behavior following the parents' wishes. It is because there are value differences between husband and wife in nurturing children. For instance, fathers tend to give children freedom, while mothers have strict rules. These differences make the goals are occasionally not aligned and

the parenting program is not well achieved. Child nurturing is likely surrendered to the mothers if there is no prior agreement regarding parenting because of various things, such as busy fathers, neglectful fathers, and fathers who tend to surrender all matters to their wives. The lack of internal factors such as education, personal values, and personalities will make it difficult for young couples to achieve household targets, including child parenting patterns [7].

According to those concerns, it is necessary to have an effort to build proper parenting from an early age. Childhood is the golden age or the right time for children to gain enormous potentials. To optimize all aspects such as moral, social, emotional, and cognitive aspects so that a reasonable individual can be formed [8], [9]. However, proper parenting is not easy to do. Many parents do not pay attention to parenting and conduct not appropriate and harmful parenting to children in terms of psychological and physical. The research undertaken by *Yayasan Kita and Buah Hati* from 7,000 respondents of lower to upper classes in several big cities in Indonesia shows that most parents have never set any specific goal in nurturing their children [10]. These findings are also supported by Sumargi, Sofronoff, and Morawska [11], which exhibits that there are still many Indonesian parents who do ineffective parenting when dealing with children's behavior, even though some of them have interests in parenting programs.

Linking to this issue, the researcher realizes that it is crucial to have a parenting program for parents, mostly young married couples who've had children so that their development can significantly improve. This research designed for three years, with gradual results every year. The first year of the study conducted in four districts and one city in Yogyakarta finds that parents are too busy with works and tend to hand over the child parenting to others, such as nannies/servants, grandparents, or other closest relatives. When parents are only busy in earning money, it only fulfills their children's financial needs, but not the love that their children need the most [7]. In fact, during the children's growth, the parents need to do three basic things: first, foster or physical-biomedical needs related to the fulfillment of nutrition, safety, security, sanitation, and hygiene. Second, love or needs related to the emotions or affections, and third, mental stimulation needs form an early age so that the children's learning process can develop optimally [12]. The impact that will happen when other relatives take children to care are children become spoiled, rebellious, and parents having difficulties in agreeing on rules with children due to other interventions in parenting [8].

### Parenting

In the early stage of development, children were born in a weak state. This weakness affects children's needs to be nurtured and raised by the parents until they become adults. Through parenting, all of the children's needs are fulfilled by parents in all aspects, such as physical, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive aspects. The quality of parenting accepted by the children will be essential to them in the future because this process will lead them to receive 'messages' from their beloved parents that they are loved and special.

Ki Hajar Dewantara once stated that the word "*asuh*" (foster) refers to a leader, maintainer, and adviser. It connects to the definition of parenting as a process done by the parents in leading, maintaining, and advising children. Houghugh and Long [13] defined parenting as a sequence of activities that aim to make children survive and go through well developmental stages. They also mentioned that parenting does not emphasize who does parenting but on the children's developmental activities and education.

Brooks [6] displayed that child parenting is an active process by providing a secure and preserved environment for children. Parenting requires an ability to understand the needs of children and set the exact border firmly and the maturity of parents to put aside personal needs over children occasionally.

According to the above explanation, it can be concluded that child parenting is an interaction between parents and children directly or indirectly which are meant to go through their developmental stages properly. A parenting process will lead two sides to change each other when children are growing to be adults.

Nowadays, parenting construction is done theoretically and practically and it is based on the parenting concept offered by Baumrind [14] who divided parenting into three styles; authoritarianism, authoritative, ignorance, and obeying the commands. These four classifications engage with a mixture of acceptance and responsive attitudes with demand and control. The characteristics of each parenting style as follows: 1) Authoritarianism is a restricted and convicted parenting style where children have to follow all their parents' instructions and respect all efforts done by the parents; 2) Authoritative is a parenting style prioritizes the children's needs, but the parents are not in doubt in controlling the children. This parenting style shows support to a child's constructive attitudes, underlies their action towards ratio and thoughts, and tends to choose a warm approach to be closer to their children; 3) Ignorance is a parenting style that has less engagement of the parents in the children's life. Children do their activities without having proper supervision so that some of the children have lousy self-control and low self-esteem; 4) Obeying the Commands is a parenting style where the parents are actively taken parts in nurturing the children, but giving neither too

much pressure nor control them. Parents believe that providing enough space for children to develop creativity and gain confidence.

The classification of parenting styles as mentioned above had been examined through various perspective and the results show that there are correlations between parenting and academic ability of the children [15], [16], self-control [4], as well as the positive traits [5].

The connection between parenting and other aspects of the children's life exhibit that family can lead to an increase or decrease in the children's competence. A low-resourcing child who lives in high-quality parenting and environments proves the high scores in his/her competency compared to a high-resourcing child who lives in low-quality parenting and environments.

The parenting dimension in this research derived from Baumrind's statements [17], including several aspects:

- a) Demand  
This dimension describes the standards that the parents demand to their children, whether it is too high for the children, to do or even have no demand in how they act.
- b) Control  
This dimension describes how far the parents apply prior agreed discipline to supervise their children's attitudes. There some indicators in it; restrictiveness, strictness, intrusiveness, and arbitrary exercise of power.
- c) Responsiveness  
This dimension describes the parents' ability to understand the condition of their children and take proper actions towards it. The parents with high responsiveness will understand all aspects of children's needs, whether physical, emotional, cognitive or affection. They realize that each aspect has the same vital portion to be fulfilled.
- d) Accepting  
This dimension describes the awareness measurement of parents to listen to and collect the children's opinions, wishes and complains as well as punishments if needed.

Moreover, as a family, parenting shares a sequence of characteristics into specific categorization and defines how each parenting function affects the children's lives. Brooks [6] mentioned four influences of parents after the child is born: 1) Providing the secured environment to overcome risks; 2) Providing experiences to maximum potential development; 3) Becoming advisers in a more significant community; and 4) Becoming unchallengeable power to their children. Through those complex parenting functions, a child can be raised and nurtured from a weak individual to a powerful one in his/her life and others'.

Generally, it can assumed that parenting involves an intense interaction between parents and their children which enormously influences children individually. Parenting is an early investment that has to be planned, agreed on, and done seriously by the parents.

### **Young couples and parenting**

In addition to the husband and wife's age factor, the marital age also displays differences in characteristics. Bornstein [18] divided the span of marriage into three stages, as follows;

- a) The early years (0-10 years)  
It is the beginning of married life. The first ten years are divided into 'acquaintance phase' and is followed by 'sealing unphased'.  
In the acquaintance phase, both husband and wife try to know each other, while on sealing unphased, the couples try to achieve their decisions, like having children, continuing careers, or fixing each role in marriage.
- b) The middle years (10-30 years)  
In the second period, a 'child full phase' is followed by 'us again phase'. The full child phase focuses on their development and maintenance as couples and describes their new future goals. On us again phase, both focus on the upgrading intimacy and find each other as a top result of happiness. In this phase, we can also find the empty nest syndrome, in which the couples suffer after their children leave or get married and start their new lives.
- c) The mature years (over 30 years)  
In this phase, both husband and wife enjoy their time as grandfather and grandmother. They do life reflection, enjoy the togetherness, and even return to their individual lives as one of them already passed away.

According to those periods, the range of the early years is a crucial stage in parenting. Both spouses have wider responsibilities in parenting. As a consequence, parents in this stage must offer a mature concept of marriage, including parenting. They bring several complex needs and qualities in parenting. They have to gain new experience in the history of building connections and maintaining responsibilities as they raise the

children. Brooks [6] stated that some factors can affect parenting; the level of physical health and psychological stability, relationships with parents and relatives, relationships with wider social networks, and the ability to solve problems and job satisfaction. Baker [19] stated that other factors are socioeconomic conditions, education, religious values, personality, and the number of child ownership.

Those factors indicate the readiness of married couples to become parents. This is often difficult to do among parents with lack emotional and maturity thoughts. In Indonesia, the ideal person must be at least 21 years old to get married. This is regulated in the 1974 Marriage Law Article 6 paragraph 2. Psychologically, the age of 21 is included in the category of early adulthood, where the tasks of development at this time include: working and building a career, being responsible as a citizen, joining an activity or social gatherings, choosing a spouse, managing the household, and learning to care for children [14]. These developmental tasks will be fulfilled because the status of the adult state has generally reached maturity.

Practically, those who have legally entered the ideal marital age are lacking long-term plans in managing the household, including how to prepare themselves as parents. Research by Sumargi, Sofronoff, and Morawska [11] shows that many parents in Indonesia practice less effective parenting when dealing with children's behavior. This happens because the transition to life as a parent requires a lot of psychological adjustments. Young parents are also associated with high vulnerability to divorce, child abuse, depression, and other risky behaviors [20]. The study results illustrate that although someone has been declared ready to build a family in early adulthood, the challenges of being young parents must still receive serious attention.

### **The development of parenting program**

Various factors that complexly influence parenting between parents have a logical consequence of differences in patterns. Also, individual differences between husband and wife can be a cause of different parenting directions.

The importance of parenting plan has led to the development of various family-based empowerment programs throughout the world. Healthy Families Massachusetts (HFM) [21] is a home-visit program conducted in Massachusetts, one of the US states, to help young parents in parenting, child development, education, and family planning maternal health during pregnancy, and family welfare. HFM is a program that provides home visit assistance, including helping young couples design household goals, providing activity-based curriculum, family support, routine screening for child development, and affiliation with medical service providers and other assistance needed. As a result, the HFM program has a positive influence on overcoming parental stress, condom use, domestic violence, and school drop.

Another program developed by the government is the Parenting Plan, a curriculum designed to help divorced couples so that their children continue to get their rights and prioritize resolution [22]. Parenting Plan helps parents formulate various parenting issues that must be mutually agreed upon and carried out after a divorce. This program's compilation departs from data on the increasing number of divorces in the United Kingdom, which ultimately triggers several problems surrounding childcare and education.

One of the family-based programs that have been tested in Indonesia is the Positive Parenting Program (Triple P). Triple P is a family intervention based on the social learning paradigm that aims to increase family knowledge, abilities, and self-confidence to overcome children's emotional and behavioral problems [22]. The program is structured as a multilevel; level 1-Universal Triple P focuses on media and communication strategies, level 2-Selected Triple P focuses on family interventions briefly, level 3-Primary Care Triple P focuses on specific issues of care, level 4- Standard Triple P focuses on broad family issues, and level 5- Enhanced Triple P focuses on intensive family intervention. This program shows decreased in child behavior problems, erroneous parenting practices, parental stress, and increased parental confidence [11].

The various programs will be a reference for the parenting program preparation for young couples as the aim of this research. The development of a research-based parenting program expected to be a reference for young couples in developing a positive parenting model. The program is also expected to be able to strengthen the role of parents as the primary unit in shaping the character of children. The child parenting program is based on the needs and problems faced by young parents in Yogyakarta Province.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This was development research, namely analysis systematically using existing theories, to produce new models/modules [23]. Research is designed multi years for three years in total. The third year of research is the application of the parenting program module in an experimental setting.

This parenting training is called "BIJAK (wise)" training. The use of the term "BIJAK" is an acronym for the principles of parenting skills learned in this training, including: (B) Visionary thinking, (I) Interactive in communication, (J) Keeping and managing emotions, (A) Analysis and solution of problems, and (K) Parents cooperation. The learning strategy in this training done by providing material/psycho-

education inputs, discussions, games and doing role-play simulations. Participants are also given several exercises and monitoring sheets to continue the material in the form of independent practice. Table 1 displays a summary of the parenting program modules that have passed the module validation stage.

Table 1. Summary of parenting planning training modules

Materials	Goals	Methods
Formulate the vision, mission, and goals of parenting	a. Participants recognize the importance of the vision, mission, and goals of care b. Participants can formulate the vision, mission, and goals of care	Psycho-education, Workshop/Practices
Parenting framework: A synergy between parents in parenting	a. Participants are aware of the synergistic roles of father and mother in parenting	Psycho-education
The paradigm of child values, dimensions and forms of parenting	Participants understand the current parenting paradigm	Psycho-education
Overcoming parenting barriers: a. Introduction b. Communication skills c. Emotion regulation	a. Participants understand and identify parenting barriers b. Participants can overcome barriers to parenting through self-recognition, communication skills, and emotional regulation	Psycho-education, Workshop/Practices

### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1. Research location and samples

Parents who have criteria as a young couple (maximum age 24 years or maximum marriage age five years, and/or a maximum age five years of the first child), who can fluently communicate both orally and in writing and are willing to undergo research are the subjects of this study. The research subjects were chosen who are domiciled in the Province of the Special Region of Yogyakarta and recruited through WhatsApp Messenger social media.

#### 3.2. The data collecting method

This research used the experimental method with a randomized pretest-post-test control group design. The requirements are the experimental group and the control group and random assignments. Measuring instruments are in the form of tests of understanding parenting planning provided at the time of the pretest and post-test. The test used an objective test form consisting of questions or statements by choosing one (or more) of several possible answers. It consists of two parts: 1) Items or questions, which can be in the form of questions or statements; 2) Option or alternative, namely the possible answers that can be chosen by the tester.

#### 3.3. The analysis of data

Since the data is quantitative, so it is analyzed statistically by using the t-test to explain the difference in the gaining score (pretest-post-test) between the experimental group and the control group. Assumptions that must be able to use on the variance analysis techniques are the normality of the distribution and homogeneity of variance. Overall analysis performed with the help of a computer program SPSS 21.0 for Windows.

#### 3.4. The result of the research

##### 3.1.1. Assumption test

Assumptions test is a prerequisite to be able to do a hypothesis test in the form of a t-test. The assumptions that must be met are the distribution of normally distributed scores with homogeneous variance [24]. The analysis was performed by using the SPSS program for Windows 21.00.

The results of the normality distribution test showed that the distribution scores were normal, indicated by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z coefficient of pretest scores of 1.068 ( $p = 0.204$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ) and post-test scores of 0.682 ( $p = 0.741$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ). This means that the distribution of pretest and post-test scores does not deviate from the theoretical distribution normality. The variance homogeneity test results showed that the Leven-Statistic coefficient was 2.843 ( $p = 0.099$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), so there were no significant differences between the variances. It was concluded that the variance was homogeneous. Moreover, based on normality and homogeneity tests, data can be analyzed for hypothesis testing.

##### 3.1.2. Hypothesis test results

The results of the t-test analysis showed a t-value of -6.299 with a value of  $p = 0.000$  or ( $p < 0.01$ ), which means there was a very significant increase in parental understanding between before and after

attending parenting training (mean pretest of 62.13 and mean post-test of 78.26). Thus, the hypothesis proposed is accepted.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The results showed that parenting training can increase parental knowledge and awareness about parenting and the importance of developing its designs. The findings of this study support previous studies on parenting education and training, among others from Kaminski, Valle, Filene and Boyle [25], who conducted a meta-analysis of elements related to the effectiveness of the parenting training program. Research done by Lewis, Feely, Seay, Fedoravicius and Kohl [26] shows that parents of trainees who use the Triple P model can accept and feel that the Triple P program is suitable for the parenting implementation. Many types of research in Indonesia support the findings of this study whose targets are young parents, including Rasyad [27], who developed a parenting model for young participants based on character education.

Methodologically, there are some limitations to this experimental study. The barriers in this research were obtaining the research subjects that meet the criteria of young couples. Most husbands were unable to attend because of their busy work. The majority worked many part times or worked in the garden/forest to follow the majority of the experiment and only three husbands were present. The age of the research subjects also varies greatly, starting in their 20s to 60s. The experiments were not based on the original design because conditions made it impossible to divide the participants into experimental groups and control groups, so this experiment was carried out without using a control group. According to Campbell [28] experiments conducted like this tend to be quasi-experimental because it does not use a control group and there is no randomization of the group.

Experimental conditions are also difficult to control the effects/biases of the experiment. Some participants take part in the training while inviting children who are still toddlers (infants to kindergarten age) so that concentration is divided. This condition is one of the factors that threaten the internal validity of the experiment results, such as history. History is another event that took place at the same time as the experiment took place [28].

The extreme number of participants in the subject also influences the validity of statistical conclusions, especially in the aspect of heterogeneity. According to Hastjarjo [28], heterogeneity is an increased variability on the dependent variable which happens in the treatment conditions and will increase the error variance. As a result, the process of detecting an influence will be more difficult. Based on some limitations of this test results, the Parenting Program Module will still be tested in the broader population scope to be ready to use and utilized by the wider community.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the BIJAK Parenting Module can improve understanding of parenting for young parents. However, this module is still need to be tested in a wider population scope to be ready for use and utilized by the wider community.

Suggestions for further research are to find prospective experimental subjects through WhatsApp application's broadcast. Also, this can selected participants genuinely meet the criteria of married couples, who are young (having children under five) and have a high commitment to become trainees.

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