



Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Citra Bakti

p-ISSN 2355-5106 || e-ISSN 2620-6641

<https://jurnal.citrabakti.ac.id/index.php/jil>



## DIFFERENCES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY SKILLS BASED ON POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE PARENTING STYLES

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### Article History

*Received:*  
November 20, 2025

*Accepted:*  
January 21, 2026

*Published:*  
February 28, 2026

### Abstract

This study aims to describe the differences in literacy skills of early childhood children based on positive and negative parenting patterns at Harapan Bangsa Kindergarten in Bajawa. Literacy skills were assessed through three aspects: language comprehension, language expression, and literacy. The study used a comparative quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. Data were obtained from 50 children through a parenting questionnaire filled out by parents, then respondents were categorized into positive parenting patterns ( $n = 32$ ) and negative parenting patterns ( $n = 18$ ). Analysis of differences was conducted using the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test. The results showed a significant difference in literacy skills between the two groups ( $p < 0.05$ ) with a large effect size, where children who received positive parenting patterns had higher literacy skills than children who received negative parenting patterns. Significant differences were also consistent in the three aspects of literacy, namely language comprehension, language expression, and literacy. These findings emphasize the importance of strengthening positive parenting patterns and home–school collaboration in creating an environment that supports language and literacy stimulation from an early age. This study is limited by its cross-sectional design and self-reported parenting measurements, which prevent direct causal conclusions. This study provides an original contextual contribution to early childhood education units in the Bajawa region, providing a comprehensive analysis of three aspects of literacy simultaneously, a topic that has been limited in previous research.

**Keywords:** positive parenting, negative parenting, literacy skills, early childhood

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan perbedaan kemampuan literasi anak usia dini berdasarkan pola asuh positif dan pola asuh negatif di TKK Negeri Harapan Bangsa Bajawa. Kemampuan literasi dikaji melalui tiga aspek, yaitu memahami bahasa, mengungkapkan bahasa, dan keaksaraan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif komparatif dengan desain cross-sectional. Data diperoleh dari 50 anak melalui kuesioner pola asuh yang diisi oleh orang tua, kemudian responden dikelompokkan ke dalam pola asuh positif ( $n = 32$ ) dan pola asuh negatif ( $n = 18$ ). Analisis perbedaan dilakukan menggunakan uji nonparametrik Mann–Whitney U. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat perbedaan kemampuan literasi yang signifikan antara kedua kelompok ( $p < 0,05$ ) dengan ukuran efek besar, di mana anak yang menerima pola asuh positif memiliki kemampuan literasi lebih tinggi dibandingkan anak yang menerima pola asuh negatif. Perbedaan signifikan juga konsisten pada ketiga aspek literasi, yaitu memahami bahasa, mengungkapkan bahasa, dan keaksaraan. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan pola asuh positif serta kolaborasi rumah–sekolah dalam menciptakan lingkungan yang mendukung stimulasi bahasa dan literasi sejak usia dini. Penelitian ini memiliki keterbatasan pada penggunaan desain cross-sectional dan pengukuran pola asuh berbasis self-report orang tua, sehingga tidak dapat menyimpulkan hubungan kausal secara langsung. Secara orisinal, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi kontekstual pada satuan PAUD di wilayah Bajawa dengan analisis komprehensif pada tiga aspek literasi secara simultan, yang masih terbatas dibahas pada penelitian sebelumnya.

**Kata kunci:** pola asuh positif, pola asuh negatif, kemampuan literasi, anak usia dini,

## Background

The family is the smallest social group formed through marriage bonds and serves as the first environment where children grow and develop. In this context, both fathers and mothers play central roles as primary figures in child-rearing and education. Prior to entering formal education, families already fulfil basic educational functions, both in character development and cognitive and language stimulation. Gunarsa emphasizes that the role of the family is not only related to the continuation of lineage but also includes an educational function, as the family is the primary source of education for children (Sit & Nasution, 2021). Therefore, the quality of family interactions has a direct impact on a child's development, including early literacy development.

Within the framework of emergent literacy, early childhood literacy skills are understood as the result of accumulated language experiences through meaningful interactions such as conversations, listening to stories, symbolic play, and engaging with books and symbols in the surrounding environment (Snow et al., 1998; Mardiyah et al., 2024). Recent literature also confirms that early literacy experiences at home significantly contribute to the development of vocabulary, phonological awareness, and academic readiness in children (Amalia et al., 2025). Literacy at this stage is not merely defined as the formal ability to read and write but encompasses the development of receptive language (understanding language), expressive language (expressing language), and literacy readiness (recognition of symbols, letters, and sounds). The concepts of home literacy environment (HLE) and shared reading practices have gained increasing emphasis in

studies from 2024–2025 as foundational to the transition of children into elementary education.

One of the key factors shaping the literacy environment at home is parental parenting style. In this study, the term "positive parenting" aligns with the concept of authoritative parenting in Diana Baumrind's theory, which emphasizes high responsiveness, open communication, emotional support, and the enforcement of consistent boundaries without violence. Conversely, "negative parenting" refers to characteristics of parenting with low responsiveness, harsh or coercive discipline (approaching authoritarian), minimal involvement in literacy activities, non-dialogical communication, and limited language stimulation at home. This definition categorizes positive and negative parenting based on a well-established and measurable theoretical framework of parenting.

Various studies have shown that parenting practices are closely related to language and literacy development in children. Recent international longitudinal studies (2024–2025) confirm that the quality of parent-child interactions significantly predicts vocabulary development and early reading comprehension. In Indonesia, recent research also confirms that family literacy activities such as reading books aloud, discussing story content, and providing reading materials at home, are positively correlated with children's receptive and expressive language skills (Amalia et al., 2025). Furthermore, home-school collaboration has proven to strengthen early literacy stimulation (Shaleh et al., 2022).

However, there remains a research gap that needs further clarification. First, most research in Indonesia treats parenting styles as a general variable without a clear theoretical classification based on parenting typologies, making comparisons across categories untested. Second, existing studies generally measure only one or two aspects of literacy, without simultaneously analyzing the three important domains, understanding language, expressing language, and literacy readiness, and without reporting effect sizes to assess the substantive strength of differences. Third, studies on parenting and literacy in Indonesia tend to focus on urban areas on Java Island or large cities, leaving the representation of Eastern Indonesian contexts underexplored.

In this context, the research at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten in Bajawa, Ngada Regency (East Nusa Tenggara) is crucial for several reasons. First, this area has distinct social, cultural, and literacy access characteristics compared to large urban areas, so the dynamics of parenting and family literacy practices may reveal unique patterns. Second, there is no empirical data based on comparative analysis specifically examining differences in children's literacy skills based on parenting categories in early childhood education settings in Ngada. Third, this study not only tests statistical significance but also calculates effect sizes to understand the practical strength of differences, providing a more

comprehensive picture compared to the correlation studies commonly conducted in Indonesia.

Preliminary observations in October–November 2025 at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten through discussions with class teachers and observations in three Group B classes revealed variations in children’s literacy skills, particularly in vocabulary, storytelling confidence, and letter recognition consistency. Information from teachers and informal communication with parents indicated variations in parenting practices at home, including a lack of shared reading habits and less responsive communication. These initial findings underscore the urgency of structured empirical research to understand the comparative relationship between parenting styles and literacy skills in the local context.

Thus, this research introduces novelty in three main aspects: (1) the use of a clear parenting classification based on parenting theory, (2) a comparative analysis of three literacy domains simultaneously with reporting effect sizes, and (3) a focus on the Eastern Indonesian context, which remains underrepresented in empirical studies. The results are expected to enrich the literature on family literacy and parenting theory, as well as provide evidence-based recommendations for schools and parents to strengthen home-school collaboration and create a supportive, sustainable literacy environment.

## Method

This study is a non-experimental research employing a cross-sectional design. This design was chosen because it aims to observe and analyze the impact of parenting styles on children’s literacy skills at a specific point in time, without manipulation or direct intervention. Data were collected to identify the relationship between the two variables, which were not influenced by experiments or treatments.

The population for this study consists of early childhood children from Group A, and Groups 1 to 5 at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten, Bajawa District, East Nusa Tenggara, totaling 73 children. The sample for the study includes 50 children.

Table 1. Literacy Skill Instrument

No	Literacy Aspect	Literacy Description
1	Understanding Language	a) Understanding multiple instructions simultaneously b) Repeating more complex sentences c) Understanding the rules in a game
2	Expressing Language	a) Naming groups of pictures with the same letter sounds b) Continuing a story/fable they have heard c) Demonstrating understanding of concepts in a storybook
3	Literacy Readiness	a) Naming known letters b) Naming groups of pictures with the same initial sound/letter c) Writing numbers 1–10

The research instruments include a literacy assessment sheet and a parenting style questionnaire. The instrument used to measure early childhood literacy is presented in Table 1. The aspects of literacy measured include understanding language, expressing language, and literacy readiness (Laksana et al., 2024).

The second research instrument is the parenting style questionnaire. This instrument focuses on aspects such as emotional support, control and discipline, closeness and communication, and patience (Gross et al., 2015; Riany et al., 2018; Risnawaty et al., 2021; Shaleh et al., 2022). The instrument used to assess parenting styles is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Parenting Style Instrument

No	Parenting Aspect	Description
1	Emotional Support	a) My parents always say positive things when I do something good b) When I'm sad, my parents always hug and comfort me
2	Control and Discipline	a) My parents set clear rules, such as bedtimes and playtimes b) When I do something wrong, my parents tell me in a kind way
3	Closeness and Communication	a) My parents always ask how my day at school was b) When I'm scared, my parents are there to calm me down
4	Patience	a) My parents allow me to choose the toys I like b) I can choose the food I like c) My parents let me play outside with my friends

The research procedure was carried out in several stages. First, the validity of the parenting style questionnaire and the literacy test instruments was developed and tested. Next, a sample that met the criteria was identified and selected. In the data collection phase, the researcher administered the parenting style questionnaire to parents to gather information about the parenting styles practiced at home. Simultaneously, a literacy test was administered to the children to assess their literacy skills.

The literacy test was conducted according to a predetermined procedure, which involved reading and writing tasks designed to meet the standards appropriate for the children's age. After the data collection, the parenting styles were categorized into two groups: positive parenting and negative parenting. The literacy test scores were used as the dependent variable.

Once the data had been collected, it was analyzed using the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric statistical test. This test was chosen because the data was not normally distributed and consisted of two independent groups: one group of children who had received positive parenting and another group who had received negative parenting. The analysis followed three key steps: first, the data was grouped according to the type of parenting the children had experienced; second, the Mann-Whitney U test was applied to

examine differences in literacy skills between the two groups; and third, the U value and p-value were calculated to test the significance of the differences. If the p-value was smaller than the significance level (e.g., 0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant difference in literacy skills between children raised with positive and negative parenting styles.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

The number of children who completed the questionnaire was 50. Based on the parenting method code, the children were grouped as follows: positive parenting (32 children) and negative parenting (18 children). The literacy ability variable was analyzed through: 1) language comprehension, 2) language expression, and 3) literacy.

Descriptively, the group of children receiving positive parenting (n=32) showed higher literacy scores compared to the group with negative parenting (n=18). In the total literacy score, the median for the positive parenting group was 8 (Q1–Q3 = 8–9), while the median for the negative parenting group was 4.5 (Q1–Q3 = 4–5). A similar pattern was observed in each literacy aspect: language comprehension (median 3 vs. 2), language expression (median 3 vs. 1), and literacy (median 3 vs. 1.5), indicating a tendency for better literacy skills in children with positive parenting. The descriptive statistics of literacy ability based on parenting methods are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Literacy Ability Based on Parenting Methods

Variables	Positive (1) n=32 Mean (SD)	Positive Median (Q1– Q3)	Negative (0) n=18 Mean (SD)	Negative Median (Q1– Q3)	Min–Maks
Language Comprehension	2.84 (0.37)	3 (3–3)	1.89 (0.47)	2 (2–2)	1–3
Language Expression	2.56 (0.50)	3 (2–3)	1.39 (0.70)	1 (1–1.5)	1–3
Literacy Readiness	2.62 (0.55)	3 (2–3)	1.67 (0.84)	1.5 (1–2)	1–4
Total Literacy Score	8.00 (1.02)	8 (8–9)	4.83 (1.25)	4.5 (4–5)	3–9

The difference in literacy abilities between the two parenting groups was tested using the nonparametric Mann–Whitney U test (two-tailed) because it compares two independent groups on literacy scores.

Hypotheses:

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant effect/difference in literacy ability between children who receive positive parenting and children who receive negative parenting at TKK Negeri Harapan Bangsa Bajawa.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect/difference in literacy ability between children who receive positive parenting and children who receive negative parenting at TKK Negeri Harapan Bangsa Bajawa.*

Table 4. Mann–Whitney U Test Results (Positive and Negative Parenting).

Literacy Variables	n Positive	n Negative	Positive Media	Negative Median	U	p-value	Size effect r
Total Literacy Score (Average Literacy)	32	18	8	4.5	550.5	$5.70 \times 10^{-8}$	0.768
Language Comprehension	32	18	3	2	522.5	$6.57 \times 10^{-8}$	0.764
Language Expression	32	18	3	1	509.0	$1.91 \times 10^{-6}$	0.674
Literacy Readiness	32	18	3	1.5	476.0	$4.53 \times 10^{-5}$	0.577

Based on Table 4, the test results show that all p-values are  $< 0.05$ , thus  $H_0$  is rejected, and  $H_1$  is accepted. The effect size, measured by the r value, falls within the range of 0.577–0.768, indicating a large effect. This means that the literacy difference between the two groups is not only statistically significant but also practically strong.

The research question posed was: Is there a significant difference in literacy skills between children who receive positive parenting and those who receive negative parenting at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten? The results (Table 2) show that there is a significant difference in literacy skills between children receiving positive and negative parenting. The positive parenting group scored higher on both the total literacy score and the three literacy aspects (understanding language, expressing language, and literacy readiness).

The Mann-Whitney U test results show a meaningful difference in literacy skills between children receiving positive parenting and those receiving negative parenting at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten in Bajawa. In the total literacy score, the positive parenting group had a higher median score (median=8;  $Q_1$ – $Q_3$ =8–9) compared to the negative parenting group (median=4.5;  $Q_1$ – $Q_3$ =4–5), with a significant difference ( $U=550.5$ ;  $p=5.70 \times 10^{-8}$ ). These findings indicate that positive parenting is associated with an overall improvement in early childhood literacy. Moreover, the high effect size ( $r=0.768$ ) reinforces the practical significance of the difference, meaning that positive parenting is not just associated with small differences but with relatively strong changes in literacy in the context of this study's sample.

When viewed by aspect, the positive parenting group showed consistent advantages in understanding language (median=3 vs 2;  $p=6.57 \times 10^{-8}$ ;  $r=0.764$ ), expressing language (median=3 vs 1;  $p=1.91 \times 10^{-6}$ ;  $r=0.674$ ), and literacy readiness (median=3 vs 1.5;  $p=4.53 \times 10^{-5}$ ;  $r=0.577$ ). This pattern underscores that the contribution of positive parenting is comprehensive: children are not only better at receiving/interpreting language information (comprehension) but also more capable of expressing language (oral expression) and showing better literacy readiness. Substantively, this can be understood because positive



parenting practices generally provide warm, responsive, and consistent verbal interactions, offering more frequent support and stimulation for children to communicate, explore words, and practice early reading-writing skills. These conditions create an environment conducive to early literacy growth.

## Discussion

This study found that early childhood children at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten in Bajawa, who were in the positive parenting group, consistently demonstrated higher literacy skills compared to children in the negative parenting group, both in total literacy scores and across the three key aspects (understanding language, expressing language, and literacy readiness). Statistically, the Mann-Whitney U test showed significant differences in all variables ( $p < 0.05$ ), with effect sizes falling in the large category. This pattern indicates that the observed differences are not merely “statistical coincidences,” but rather reflect a tangible gap in literacy performance between the groups. Substantively, these results reinforce the foundational assumption in early childhood education that positive parenting (generally characterized by warmth, responsiveness, two-way communication, emotional support, and consistent stimulation) is more conducive to the development of language skills and literacy readiness than negative parenting (e.g., low responsiveness, minimal stimulation, or overly controlling) (Islamiati & Hendriani, 2025). These findings align with the emergent literacy framework, which views early literacy as the result of accumulated daily language experiences through meaningful interactions (e.g., conversations, symbolic play, listening to stories, engaging with books and texts), rather than solely the product of formal reading and writing practice (Mardiyah et al., 2020; Inten, 2017).

A closer look reveals that the positive parenting group excelled in the aspect of understanding language (comprehension). This indicates that children in this group were more capable of grasping the meaning of utterances, following instructions, and processing verbal information. Language comprehension heavily depends on the quality of language input received by the child: how often the child is spoken to, the richness of vocabulary used by the parents, and how responsive parents are to the child’s speech. In this context, positive parenting tends to provide more responsive interactions, where parents answer children’s questions, expand on their sentences, provide explanations, and facilitate the child’s inquiry and understanding. This mechanism aligns with research findings highlighting the importance of the Home Literacy Environment (HLE) and parental involvement in literacy stimulation at home (Amalia, 2025). For example, a study on HLE and early childhood language skills reported the effective contribution of HLE to language development,



emphasizing that the home literacy environment (availability of reading materials, reading habits, and parent-child literacy interactions) influences language growth (Amalia, 2025).

In the area of expressing language (expression), children in the positive parenting group also showed significant advantages. This aspect generally reflects the child's ability to express ideas, recount experiences, answer questions more elaborately, and use a wider range of vocabulary and sentence structures. Achieving expressive language skills is closely related to having a "safe space" for communication: children need to feel safe to speak without fear of being blamed, interrupted, or belittled. Positive parenting tends to encourage children to speak, be listened to, and be valued, thus increasing opportunities for language practice. This finding is consistent with research synthesizing studies on parenting styles and early childhood language development. For example, a systematic literature review published in *Obsesi* concluded that there is a correlation between parenting styles and early childhood language development, emphasizing that parenting practices affect the quality of interactions and language stimulation opportunities (Islamiati & Hendriani, 2025).

Further, the findings regarding literacy readiness (early literacy related to symbols, letters, sounds, and readiness for reading and writing) also revealed significant differences, although the effect size was somewhat lower compared to language comprehension and total scores. This pattern is logical because literacy readiness is not only the result of exposure to spoken language but also involves the child's experiences interacting with written symbols: storybooks, name tags, drawing-writing activities, letter games, and the habit of "reading aloud." Positive parenting is often associated with shared literacy practices, such as reading books together (shared book reading) and engaging in dialogue during reading. Scientific evidence in this area is robust: a meta-analysis of book-sharing interventions shows that reading books together (with supportive interaction) can enhance and accelerate language development in children (Dowdall et al., 2020). This finding explains that the positive parenting group (which is conceptually more likely to engage in warm and responsive interactions) has an advantage in language comprehension and expression, which then contributes to higher total literacy scores (Dowdall et al., 2020). Moreover, the literature on shared reading emphasizes that reading together is not merely "reading a text," but the quality of interactions—such as inferential questions, child responses, and parent elaborations—determines the strengthening of language and literacy skills (Dowdall et al., 2020).

In comparison with other research more specifically focused on "parenting styles," the findings of this study also align with studies linking more adaptive parenting styles (e.g., authoritative parenting—warm yet structured) to better literacy and academic outcomes in children (Baumrind, 1971). A study in *Frontiers in Psychology* found a connection between

parenting styles and pre-academic skills (including literacy), showing a mediating pathway through children's approaches to learning (Xia et al., 2023). Although cultural contexts and educational systems differ, the main message remains relevant: supportive parenting tends to foster better learning dispositions (e.g., perseverance, attention, self-control), which, in turn, strengthen literacy achievements (Xia et al., 2023). Positive parenting is highly correlated with a home environment that is both structured and supportive, providing children not only with richer language stimulation but also the psychological readiness to engage in literacy activities (Xia et al., 2023).

However, it is also important to contextualize these findings, as literature indicates that the relationship between parenting styles and literacy can be influenced by various moderating factors such as parental education, socioeconomic status, availability of reading materials, and family literacy habits (Xia et al., 2023). Some studies report results that are not always significant when these variables are considered together or when different designs and instruments are used. For example, a study in *Jurnal PAUD* (Indonesia) found that simultaneous reading literacy activities and parenting styles did not significantly impact language development ( $p > 0.05$ ) in a specific sample, with a relatively small contribution (Ristiani et al., 2025). Such differences can arise due to variations in the operationalization of variables (how "parenting style" is measured), sample size, the quality of literacy/language assessments, or because the effects of parenting on literacy depend heavily on the specific literacy practices actually carried out (e.g., frequency of shared reading, duration, quality of dialogue during reading) (Ristiani et al., 2025). In other words, the term "parenting style" often serves as an umbrella term; the strongest impact is usually seen when parenting is reflected in concrete behaviors that directly provide literacy input (e.g., parents regularly reading books aloud, stimulating vocabulary, providing opportunities for children to tell stories) (Dowdall et al., 2020).

The findings of this study, showing consistent differences across all three aspects (understanding language, expressing language, literacy readiness), suggest that positive parenting, as identified in the questionnaire, likely represents practices that provide richer stimulation. These findings have clear practical implications for both schools and parents. First, school programs can target strengthening home-school collaboration by educating parents on positive parenting strategies directly related to literacy: fostering meaningful conversations, reading interactive books, asking children for their opinions, and providing a text-rich environment (Mardliyah et al., 2020; Shaleh et al., 2022). This recommendation is supported by literature emphasizing the role of family-based literacy, where parental and family involvement is seen as highly beneficial to children's learning development (Mardliyah et al., 2020; Amalia, 2025). Second, the results showing large effect sizes signal that

interventions focused on positive parenting have the potential for noticeable impact, especially if formulated into structured programs (e.g., parent training, shared reading activity modules, guides for reading dialogue) (Dowdall et al., 2020).

Positive, warm, and responsive parenting tends to create a richer language environment and supports literacy activities, contributing to improvements in language comprehension, expressive language ability, and children's literacy readiness (Dowdall et al., 2020; Islamiati & Hendriani, 2025). The strength of the findings across all literacy aspects provides important contributions to the context of early childhood education, particularly in emphasizing that early literacy is not solely a matter of classroom curriculum, but is also greatly influenced by daily interaction patterns at home (Mardiyah et al., 2020; Shaleh et al., 2022).

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis results, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in literacy skills between children who received positive parenting ( $n = 32$ ) and those who received negative parenting ( $n = 18$ ). The Mann-Whitney U test shows that the positive parenting group has higher total literacy scores compared to the negative parenting group ( $p < 0.05$ ) with a large effect size. These findings confirm that positive parenting is significantly associated with improvements in early childhood literacy in the context of this study. In addition to the total literacy scores, significant differences were also found in the three aspects of literacy: understanding language, expressing language, and literacy readiness. Children in the positive parenting group demonstrated better achievements in all three aspects compared to children in the negative parenting group. Therefore, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) is accepted, indicating a significant difference between positive parenting and the improvement of early childhood literacy at Harapan Bangsa State Kindergarten in Bajawa. The implications of these results suggest that strengthening positive parenting practices, along with home-school collaboration to create a supportive literacy environment, has the potential to support the enhancement of children's literacy from an early age.

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