



# Fostering Emotional Harmony in Children within Extended Families: Parental Roles in Stimulating Early Childhood Social-Emotional Intelligence

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## Abstract

*This article examines the role of parents in stimulating the social-emotional development of children aged 4–6 years raised in extended families in Desa Kemaduh, Nganjuk Regency. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the contributions of parents and extended family members to the social-emotional development of children at this age. Using a qualitative approach and case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and field documentation, which were then analyzed using the interactive data analysis model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The validity of the data was verified through triangulation techniques and time. The findings of this study indicate that parents play roles as caregivers, companions, motivators, and role models. Children in extended families also demonstrate positive social-emotional development, as seen in the increased self-confidence/independence, courage to socialize, and the ability to show empathy, responsibility, and good communication skills. Continuous support from the extended family enables children to manage their emotions in a healthy way and learn to express their feelings appropriately.*

**Keywords:** *parental role, social-emotional development, extended family*

## 1. Introduction

In Indonesia, the extended family structure remains highly relevant, especially in rural areas. Within an extended family, the responsibility of raising children does not rest solely on biological parents but also involves the active roles of other family members. Kemaduh Village, located in Nganjuk Regency, serves as a concrete example of this caregiving model within a rural environment.

Social-emotional development in early childhood is a crucial foundation for shaping children's future character and social competence (Maghfiroh dkk., 2019). Children aged between 4 and 6 are in a developmental crisis stage, where they begin to form their self-identity, understand their emotions, and learn to adapt to their social surroundings. The ability to recognize and manage emotions, interact with others, and demonstrate empathy are all key aspects of healthy social-emotional development (Fitriyanti dkk., 2022). The caregiving environment plays a pivotal role in optimizing this growth and development (Melita dkk., 2022).

Amidst the transformation of modern family structures, the existence of extended families remains a common phenomenon in rural Indonesian communities, including in Kemaduh Village, Nganjuk Regency. In extended family environments, children are not only cared for by their biological parents but also by other family members who are actively involved in daily caregiving. The caregiving pattern within this extended family context is

collective and multigenerational, thereby broadening the child's interactions with various adult figures and peers.

This phenomenon is worth further investigation, as the caregiving dynamics in extended families possess unique characteristics that can significantly influence children's social-emotional development. The intergenerational interactions that occur within extended families offer opportunities for children to learn social values such as respect, sharing, and healthy emotional expression. However, there is still a lack of studies that specifically explore how parental roles within extended families contribute to the development of early childhood social-emotional dimensions.

To better understand this phenomenon, the study employs Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Tsaaniatun et al., 2023), which emphasizes the significance of the microsystem environment, including the family, in shaping individual development. Within this framework, parents as primary figures in the microsystem have a direct influence on children's emotional responses and behaviors. In addition, according to Hurlock's (1993) theory of social-emotional development, children raised in emotionally stable and nurturing environments tend to develop better social skills. Estafianto (2023) also highlights the importance of parents' emotional roles in shaping children's social intelligence through warm communication and role modeling.

Based on this theoretical foundation, this study aims to explore the role of parents in stimulating the social-emotional development of children aged 4–6 years who live in extended families in Kemaduh Village, Nganjuk Regency. Specifically, the research seeks to understand how parents carry out their roles as caregivers, companions, motivators, and role models in daily life, and how interactions within the extended family contribute to the development of empathy, emotional regulation, independence and responsibility, as well as children's social skills.

Using a qualitative approach with a case study design, this study intends to provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of parental caregiving dynamics within extended families and their impact on children's social-emotional development. It is expected that the results of this study will contribute not only to the advancement of early childhood education knowledge but also serve as a practical reference for parents and caregivers in creating emotionally supportive family environments.

## 2. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory case study design aimed at thoroughly investigating the role of parents in stimulating the social-emotional development of children within the context of extended families in Kemaduh Village, Nganjuk Regency. The research subjects include parents who care for children aged 4–6 years raised in extended families, while the informants are parents who are directly involved in the caregiving process within these extended families.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The interviews aimed to explore caregiving practices and caregivers' perspectives on children's social-emotional development. Observation focused on children's behavior in social and emotional interactions, while documentation was used to support the observational data through both visual and narrative means (Moleong, 2018).

Data were analyzed using the interactive analysis technique proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through technique and time triangulation to maintain objectivity and ensure that the findings are scientifically accountable.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result

This study reveals that parents in extended families play a highly significant role in supporting the social-emotional development of children. Based on findings from interviews and observations, parental roles are categorized into several key functions that influence children's social-emotional development, including caregiver, companion, motivator, and role model. Furthermore, the social-emotional development of children in extended families is reflected in several main aspects, including social interaction, empathy, communication, emotional regulation, independence and responsibility, as well as social skills.

##### 3.1.1 Parental Roles in Stimulating Children's Social-Emotional Development

Parents play a significant role in stimulating and shaping children's social-emotional development within extended family settings. In this context, parental roles can be identified across four major and in-depth functions.

As caregivers, parents are responsible for fulfilling children's basic needs, both physical and emotional. Parents consistently meet children's fundamental needs, such as providing meals, bathing, rest, and daily supervision. This collective caregiving pattern creates a sense of security and emotional stability for children. The presence of attentive adult figures fosters a warm environment that encourages children to feel loved and accepted. The children exhibit emotional stability and a positive ability to form social relationships.

Parents also act as companions in the lives of their children, accompanying them in daily activities and providing space to explore the social world. As facilitators, parents demonstrate openness in guiding children through various emotional situations. When children feel disappointed, scared, or sad, they are given the space to express their feelings and are guided patiently. This form of companionship does not only occur during formal activities but also during everyday moments such as playtime or peer conflicts. As a result, children become more confident in expressing their emotions and are able to demonstrate empathy and concern for others.

As motivators, parents provide their children with positive encouragement to interact with others and build their self-confidence. Through words of affirmation and emotional support, parents motivate their children to keep progressing. Motivation is given gradually, in accordance with the child's emotional readiness. Children who were initially shy begin to exhibit behavioral changes, such as confidently greeting others, speaking up, and actively engaging in social interactions. This support plays an essential role in building children's courage and self-esteem.

Parents serve as role models by demonstrating the expected social behaviors for their children. Children in extended families imitate the social behaviors they observe from the adults around them. Values such as politeness, empathy, and mutual cooperation are absorbed by the children through the real-life examples modeled by their parents in daily life. Children

become accustomed to greeting others, helping their parents, and showing care for those around them. Such role modeling shapes the children's social character and strengthens their understanding of social norms in the community.

### 3.1.2 Social-Emotional Development of Children in Extended Families

The next findings relate to the social-emotional development of children living in extended families. Within large families, children have the opportunity to interact with a variety of family members, such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts, all of whom have a significant influence on their social-emotional growth.

Children in extended families tend to show stronger social interaction skills. They benefit from regular contact with older family members, which enriches their social experiences. These interactions are not limited to peers but include meaningful intergenerational exchanges.

Children growing up in extended families also tend to develop a stronger sense of empathy and concern for others. Influenced by other family members, they learn to understand others' emotions and demonstrate care and compassion.

Children in extended families demonstrate more advanced communication skills. They learn to interact effectively and empathetically with both adults and peers. They also learn to express their feelings appropriately, both verbally and nonverbally, such as through body language.

Moreover, children raised in extended families appear to be more emotionally regulated. They can express feelings such as anger, disappointment, or anxiety in more controlled and constructive ways. This learning is strongly influenced by how parents and other family members manage their emotions in everyday life.

## 3.2 Discussion

### 3.2.1 Parental Roles in Stimulating Children's Social-Emotional Development

The findings of this study indicate that the role of parents within the context of an extended family is a key factor in the social-emotional development of early childhood. Although caregiving is shared with other family members, parents remain the primary foundation in shaping children's character, emotional bonds, and social skills. This parental role is manifested in four core functions: as caregivers, companions, motivators, and role models.

#### 1. Parents as Caregivers

The caregiving role demonstrates that children's physical and emotional needs are met with attentiveness and care. This responsive parenting style aligns with Hurlock's (1993) view that positive early childhood parenting fosters a sense of security, self-confidence, and readiness to form social relationships. In extended families, this role is even more strengthened, as children receive consistent care and attention from multiple adult figures. Supported by Estafianto's (2023) view, which states that the role of parents in caregiving is not limited to fulfilling physical needs, but also includes shaping values, character, and emotional closeness.

## 2. Parents as Companions

In their role as emotional companions, parents and caregivers are directly involved when children experience emotional situations such as sadness, anger, or confusion. Children are guided to recognize and manage their emotions in a healthy manner. This is consistent with Goleman's concept of Emotional Intelligence (as cited in Chintya, 2024), which emphasizes that the ability to understand and regulate emotions is essential to forming social relationships. These findings are also supported by Bronfenbrenner's theory (in Tsaaniatun et al., 2023), which highlights the significance of interactions within the microsystem—namely, the immediate family environment—as a major factor in shaping children's behavior.

## 3. Parents as Motivators

The emotional motivation provided by parents in extended families has been shown to increase children's self-confidence. Children become more willing to try new things, greet others, and even speak in front of groups. This encouragement functions as reinforcement, as explained in Skinner's behaviorist theory (in Melita et al., 2022), where praise or verbal support following a positive action strengthens that behavior.

## 4. Parents as Role Models

The role of parents as social models is an inseparable foundation. Children imitate the social behaviors of the adults around them, such as politeness, empathy, and the habit of sharing. Bandura's social learning theory (in Firmansyah, 2022) explains that children learn through observation and imitation of social models. Strengthened by the study of Rahayu and Maulidya (2023), which concluded that consistent role modeling by parents or primary caregivers significantly contributes to the development of children's prosocial behavior. In extended families, the presence of multiple adult figures enriches the number of models observed by children, thereby accelerating the internalization of positive social values.

Extended families also contribute to broadening the scope of children's social interactions. Children living in large family systems are accustomed to dealing with differences in character, age, and communication styles. They learn to adapt, develop social flexibility, and build empathy through daily experiences. This supports Erikson's theory (in Maria, 2018) on the developmental stage of *initiative vs. guilt*, which posits that children given broader social opportunities are more prepared to build healthy social relationships.

The extended family environment offers a natural and conducive space for children to learn to express emotions, resolve conflicts, and build social relationships. With the direct involvement of adult figures in daily activities, children become accustomed to open communication, supportive dialogue, and parenting patterns that foster emotional regulation. Gottman's (1997) concept of *emotional coaching* is also relevant here, emphasizing that parents who act as emotional coaches can help children label and understand their feelings.

Overall, the formation of children's social-emotional development is not solely determined by the physical presence of parents, but also by the quality of interaction consistently built within the family environment. Extended families have proven to be a social system that strengthens and expands parental caregiving, thereby creating a learning space rich in values, emotions, and meaningful social experiences.

### 3.2.2 Social-Emotional Development of Children in Extended Families

#### 1. Social Interaction

Children raised in extended families have broader opportunities to interact with individuals of various ages and personalities, enhancing social skills such as cooperation, sharing, and respect for differences. This finding aligns with Erikson's (1963) theory of *initiative vs. guilt*, which emphasizes the role of a supportive environment in encouraging children's social initiative. It is also supported by Sari and Wulandari (2022), who found that cross-generational interaction strengthens children's social adaptability.

## 2. Empathy and Concern

Empathy in children is fostered not merely through verbal instruction but through consistent modeling of caring behaviors by family members. Children show spontaneous concern, such as offering help or comforting others. This supports Hurlock's (1993) theory of social development and is reinforced by Rahayu and Maulidya (2023), who highlight that consistent role modeling significantly enhances children's empathetic behavior.

## 3. Communication

Children in extended families are accustomed to interacting with various family figures, helping them develop verbal and nonverbal communication skills appropriate to different social contexts. Puspitasari and Nurfadilah (2022) further found that children accustomed to active communication show higher self-confidence and social flexibility.

## 4. Emotional Regulation

Extended family environments provide stable emotional support, enabling children to express and manage their emotions in healthy ways. Parents or caregivers respond with warmth and guidance, helping children understand their feelings constructively. This finding is in line with Goleman's (1995) concept of *Emotional Intelligence* and supported by Fitriyani et al. (2023), who noted that consistent emotional coaching at home improves children's self-regulation and emotional awareness.

## 5. Independence and Responsibility

Children are gradually trained to carry out daily tasks independently, fostering initiative and a sense of responsibility. This supports the principles of Montessori (1949) and Hurlock (1993), who argue that a supportive environment encourages children to develop confidence and self-control. Puspitasari and Nugroho (2022) also observed that children entrusted with age-appropriate responsibilities at home tend to be more courageous in decision-making and better prepared for social challenges.

## 6. Social Skills

Daily interactions with a diverse range of family members nurture social competence such as negotiation, tolerance, and collaboration. Children become more confident in engaging with others outside the home. This aligns with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of *Primary Socialization*, which sees the family as the primary agent in shaping social identity. Findings from Nurfadilah and Sari (2023), and Putri and Lestari (2023), support this, showing that frequent and meaningful family interaction enhances children's social competence and adaptability in broader settings.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study conducted in Kemaduh Village, Nganjuk Regency, it can be concluded that the role of parents within an extended family is crucial in supporting the social-emotional development of early childhood. Parents not only fulfill children's basic needs but also act as companions, motivators, and role models in their daily lives. In extended families, caregiving is shared with other family members, which can provide children with a sense of security, love, and a rich array of stimuli essential for their social and emotional development.

Children raised in extended families in Kemaduh Village show positive social-emotional development. They are able to interact effectively with others, demonstrate empathy, and manage their emotions in a healthy manner. These children also appear more independent and responsible due to their regular involvement in family activities and daily responsibilities. A supportive and communicative extended family environment helps shape children's character, strengthen their social relationships, and foster emotional stability from an early age.

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