School-Parent Partnerships in Learning at Raudhatul Athfal

Muzakki[1], Rodhatul Jennah[1], Aghnaita[1], Neela Afifah[1], Nada, Meylani[1]Ervina[1]

[1]Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, IAIN Palangkaraya, Indonesia

✉ muzakki@iain-PalangkaRaya.ac.id *

Abstract

Partnerships are an integral part of the triad of education, which includes the school, family, and community. Establishing strong partnerships with parents is crucial for every school, as effective collaboration between schools and parents significantly contributes to the achievement of educational goals. However, many schools still lack sufficient awareness regarding the importance of cultivating meaningful partnerships with parents. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the existing forms of partnerships between schools and parents in the learning process at Raudhatul Athfal and to identify the strategies employed in fostering these partnerships. This research adopts a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with seven informants, comprising principals, teachers, and parents. Additionally, observations were conducted on learning activities and interactions between schools and parents. All data were thematically analyzed using the Miles & Huberman Interactive Analysis Model technique. The findings reveal that: (i) there are five forms of school-parent partnerships in learning at Raudhatul Athfal, namely communication, parenting, volunteer activities, home visits, and study guidance; and (ii) four strategies are employed in building these partnerships, namely building emotional relationships, two-way communication, holding parenting activities, and home visits.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education refers to educational institutions designed to facilitate the holistic growth and development of young children, emphasizing the development of all aspects of their personalities (Nurachadijat & Selvia, 2023; Nurdin, 2021; Rizqiyyatunnisa & Mahdi, 2021). According to Law Number 20 of 2003 of the Republic of Indonesia concerning the National Education System, Article 1, Section 14: "Early childhood education is an effort directed at children from birth to six years of age, carried out through the provision of educational stimulation to support their physical and spiritual growth and development, thereby preparing them for further education."

The primary objective of early childhood education is to provide an environment conducive to the holistic and optimal growth and development of children, in alignment with the applicable values and norms of society. Early childhood education institutions are expected to foster the full potential of children, including their intellectual and cognitive abilities, social and emotional development, physical-motor skills, religious and moral values according to their faith, as well as mastery of knowledge and skills appropriate to their developmental stage (Mayer et al., 2024; Alderton et al., 2024).

Education and learning for children should be continuous and well- structured. To ensure the implementation of high-quality learning—the first key component of quality early childhood education—early childhood education institutions must establish partnerships with parents. These partnerships, which represent a second critical element, are essential for optimizing children's growth, development, and school readiness (Chiva-Bartoll et al., 2021; Mardani et al., 2024; Pilarz et al., 2024). A partnership is an equitable relationship in which all participants respect each other's knowledge and contribute meaningfully. According to the Directorate of Family Education Development, school-parent partnerships are part of the tricenter of education (Sujarwo et al., 2021; Jeti et al., 2021; Fauziah, & Kusumawardani, 2019). The concept of the tricenter of education was introduced by Ki Hajar Dewantara, emphasizing collaboration between educational institutions, families, and communities. This collaboration is built on principles of cooperation, mutual trust and respect, and the willingness to contribute towards fostering an educational environment that supports student character and achievement.

The establishment of school-parent partnerships necessitates active family involvement. Categorize six forms of family involvement; 1) Parenting, where schools assist parents/guardians in child-rearing and emphasize the importance of replicating the educational experiences at school within the home environment, 2) Communication, where schools engage parents through two-way communication, such as notification letters, contact books, meetings, electronic messages, and phone calls, fostering a relationship in which schools and teachers exchange information, 3) Volunteering, where schools enlist the support of parents in their children's education, 4) Learning at home, where parents guide and monitor children's work at home, with schools providing materials to assist, 5) Decision-making, which involves families in school operations such as curriculum and budget planning, though this is often school-dominated, 6) Collaboration with the community, where schools offer coordination services and resources for families and work together with external groups (Ihmeideh et al., 2020).

METHODS

This research employs a qualitative methodology using a descriptive qualitative research approach. The qualitative method involves studying phenomena in a natural setting to explain existing problems and is conducted through a variety of methods (Brennen, 2021; Elizabeth, 2016). Descriptive data is used to provide a written or verbal account of the subject being observed, which is then organized into narrative sentences or paragraphs (Febriani et al., 2022; Zen et al., 2022). The data collection for this research involved gathering information on how schools and parents form partnerships in learning and exploring strategies for building school-parent partnerships at Raudhatul Athfal Al-Muslimun Nurul Islam Palangka Raya.

Research instruments refer to the tools used to collect data. In this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument, meaning the quality of the data collected was largely dependent on the researcher's actions and decisions. The research instruments

included observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and documentation guidelines. Data sources were divided into two categories: primary and secondary. Primary data were obtained from seven informants, including two teachers and five parents of students. Secondary data consisted of information provided by the Head of Raudhatul Athfal Al-Muslimun Nurul Islam Palangka Raya, documents related to school-parent partnerships, and photographs taken during the research process. All data were thematically analyzed using the Miles & Huberman Interactive Analysis Model technique.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the partnership between schools and parents at Raudhatul Athfal plays a crucial role in supporting children's learning processes. Based on interviews and observations, two main themes emerged: the existing forms of partnership and the strategies employed to strengthen these relationships. This section will provide a detailed analysis of the five identified forms of partnership and the four primary strategies implemented by schools to collaborate with parents in achieving optimal educational outcomes.

Partnership Between Schools and Parents at Raudhatul Athfal

The research results show that collaboration between schools and parents at Raudhatul Athfal includes various forms of strategic partnerships, designed to strengthen support for the student learning process holistically. There are five forms of partnership between schools and parents in learning at Raudhatul Athfal, namely communication, parenting, volunteer activities, home visits, and study guidance. To make it clearer, the five forms of partnership can be seen in Figure 1 below:
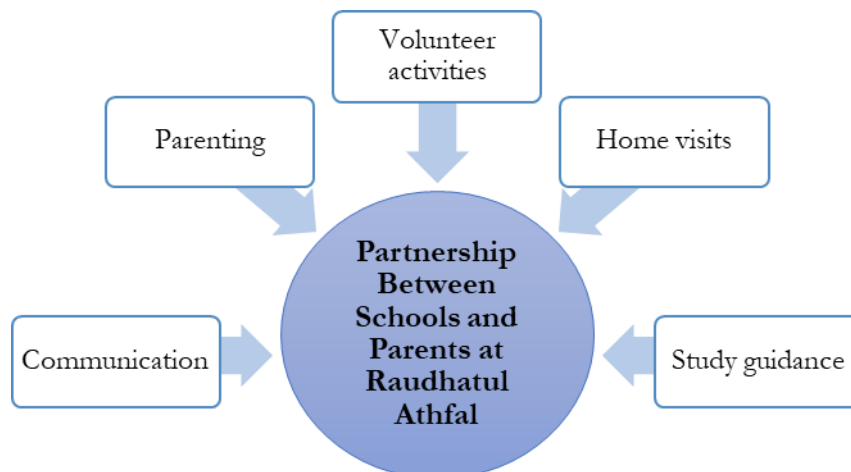

Figure 1. The Scheme

Based on the results of research through observation, interviews, and documentation, it is known that communication between the school and parents at Raudhatul Athfal has been well established. This communication is carried out directly when meeting at school and via telephone or *WhatsApp* group media. This is in line with the statement by the Directorate of Family Education Development, which states that one form of partnership between schools and parents is communication (Yotyodying et al., 2020; Uhm & Choi, 2022). This two-way communication aims to obtain mutual information regarding the child's development. Communication is the process of exchanging information or messages between the sender and recipient of the message, which aims to ensure that both parties understand each other (Le & Campbell, 2022; Li et al., 2024). An interview excerpt from a teacher at Raudhatul Athfal highlights this;

…We regularly communicate with parents via the WhatsApp group, especially when we need to provide news about their children's learning progress. This helps us to stay coordinated (I- 1).

The second form of partnership is parenting. Through observations, interviews, and documentation, it was found that parenting activities were held every two months at Raudhatul Athfal. This activity includes meetings between teachers and parents in the classroom or school hall, with a focus on student learning progress as well as opportunities for teachers and parents to exchange information about how to educate and care for children. According to the Directorate of Family Education Development, parenting is an important form of school-parent partnership (Råde, 2020). This activity is designed to help parents increase awareness about children's education and development to create a conducive learning environment. One parent in an interview stated;

…Parenting meetings are very useful. We can ask teachers about how to support our children's learning at home (I-4).

Zinsser et al. (2021) define parenting as a series of decisions related to children's socialization, where parents or caregivers take various actions to ensure that children can become responsible members of society (Abaied et al., 2022).

The third form of partnership is volunteer activities. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, volunteer activities at Raudhatul Athfal are carried out at certain moments, such as when students or their parents experience disaster, during natural disaster relief, or in charity activities at orphanages on the 1st of Muharram (Hamzah, 2020). In line with the statement of the Directorate of Family Education Development (Uhm & Choi, 2022), volunteer activities are an important part of the school-parent partnership. This activity allows all parties involved to contribute to supporting the progress of children's education. Volunteering is a proactive action that requires a greater and long-term commitment of time and effort (Kragt & Holtrop, 2019). A teacher from Raudhatul Athfal explained in an interview;

…Volunteering activities allow parents and students to get involved in meaningful ways, such as helping at an orphanage. This is a good way to teach the importance of giving to others (I- 2).

The fourth form of partnership is a home visit. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, home visits are carried out every month or at the peak of thematic activities. During these visits, the teacher visits the home of one of the parents of a willing student, and each visit is attended by a maximum of ten students, with other students visited the following month. This home visit aims to provide learning materials and help students overcome learning difficulties. Apart from that, home visits are also an effort to detect family conditions that may influence the student's learning process. One parent commented in an interview;

…Home visits are very helpful. It allows teachers to understand the environment the children live in and how we can work together to support them (I-3, 6).

The final form of partnership is study guidance. Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, tutoring at Raudhatul Athfal was started at the request of parents who asked for additional tutoring outside school hours. This guidance activity is carried out in class after school hours. Tutoring aims to provide guidance that suits students' needs, talents, interests, and abilities. It is hoped that with this guidance, students can

develop effective learning strategies and overcome academic challenges.

Strategies for Building School and Parent Partnerships in Learning at Raudhatul Athfal

This research identified four main strategies for building school-parent partnerships in Raudhatul Athfal, namely building emotional relationships, two-way communication, holding parenting activities, and home visits. To make it clearer, the four strategies for forming partnerships can be seen in Figure 2 below;
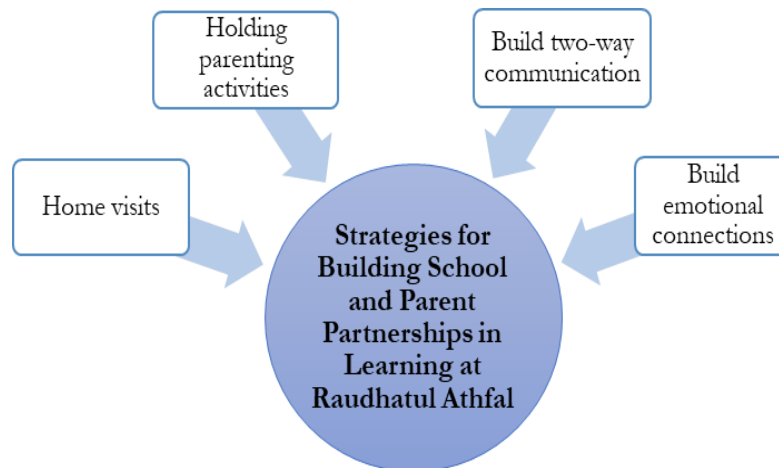

Figure 2. *Strategies for Building School and Parent Partnerships in Learning at Raudhatul Athfal*

The first strategy is to build emotional connections between the school and parents. This is done by sending consistent messages containing positive information related to student development or parenting information. This is in line with Yuniati & Rondo (2021) who state that consistent positive communication can build emotional closeness, which is important for creating open communication between teachers and parents. One teacher stated in an interview;

By regularly sending positive messages, such as updates about the child's progress, we can build stronger emotional connections with parents, which improves our communication (I-5).

The second strategy is to build two-way communication. This communication occurs during meetings at school, by telephone, or via *WhatsApp* groups. It is hoped that this two-way communication can strengthen the partnership relationship between schools and parents, ensuring that both parties are open in discussions regarding children's development at school. In line with the theory presented by et al (2022), two-way communication is reciprocal communication between the communicator and the communicant.

The third strategy is holding parenting activities which are held every two months. This activity aims to build good communication between schools and parents, as well as provide opportunities for parents to learn how to educate children effectively at home.

The final strategy is a home visit, which is carried out regularly every month or at the peak of thematic activities. This visit aims to help parents support their children's learning at home, as well as strengthen the relationship between school and parents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results regarding the forms and strategies of school- parent partnerships in learning at Raudhatul Athfal, the following conclusions can be drawn: There are five forms of school-parent partnerships in learning at Raudhatul Athfal, namely communication, parenting, volunteer activities, home visits, and tutoring. First, the school establishes effective communication with parents, which is conducted either verbally during meetings at school or in writing via telephone and WhatsApp groups. Next, the school organizes parenting activities, typically held once a month or every two months. During these sessions, teachers share information with parents about their children's development and offer suggestions or input on how to educate and stimulate their children's growth. Another form of partnership is the school's involvement of parents in volunteer activities. These include organizing voluntary donations for students who have experienced hardship and visiting them, as well as regularly distributing donations to orphanages during 1 Muharram. The final forms of partnership are home visits and tutoring. During the online learning period, the school routinely visited students' homes to support their learning. Additionally, several parents requested teachers to provide their children with academic guidance outside of regular school hours.

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