



Behavioural Adaptation and Learning Independence in Early Childhood: A Mesosystem Case Study of Home–School Collaboration

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Abstract: This study aims to describe the behavioural adaptation process and the enhancement of learning independence in early childhood through a mesosystem collaboration strategy between the home and school environments. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design, this research observed a 4–5-year-old child (Subject T) at KB Anggrek Landungsari who exhibited behavioural disparities: verbally active and dependent at home, yet passive, mute (temporary selective mutism), and disengaged during Student Worksheet (LKS) activities at school. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with teachers and parents, and anecdotal record documentation, analysed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that the child's passivity when facing worksheets was not a cognitive delay, but rather a manifestation of emotional dysregulation and anxiety resulting from the transition from an over-servicing home parenting style to the school's demand for independence. Through the teacher's proactive verbal scaffolding intervention validating confusion and modelling help-seeking phrases, the child's anxiety was reduced, allowing executive brain functions to optimally resume for independent task completion. Simultaneously, integrated communication within the mesosystem prompted adjustments in parental responses at home to diminish over-indulgent behaviours. This study concludes that early childhood learning independence in school tasks is not solely determined by cognitive ability, but is the result of emotion regulation sociocultural mediated through the synergy between home and school microsystems.

Keywords: *Home-School Collaboration, Emotion Regulation, Verbal Scaffolding*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis proses adaptasi perilaku dan peningkatan kemandirian belajar anak usia dini melalui strategi kolaborasi mesosistem antara lingkungan rumah dan sekolah. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus deskriptif, penelitian ini mengamati seorang anak usia 4–5 tahun (Subjek T) di KB Anggrek Landungsari yang menunjukkan disparitas perilaku: aktif secara verbal dan dependen di rumah, namun pasif, membisu (*selective mutism* temporer), dan menghentikan aktivitas pengerjaan Lembar Kerja Siswa (LKS) di sekolah. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan guru dan orang tua, serta dokumentasi catatan anekdot yang dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pasivitas anak saat menghadapi LKS bukanlah bentuk keterlambatan kognitif, melainkan manifestasi dari ketidaksiapan regulasi emosi dan kecemasan akibat transisi dari pola pengasuhan rumah yang cenderung "meladeni" menuju tuntutan kemandirian sekolah. Melalui intervensi *scaffolding* verbal "jemput bola" oleh guru dengan memvalidasi kebingungan dan memberikan model artikulasi kalimat bantuan, tingkat kecemasan anak dapat direduksi sehingga fungsi eksekutif otaknya kembali optimal untuk menyelesaikan tugas secara mandiri. Di saat yang sama, komunikasi terpadu pada tataran mesosistem mendorong penyesuaian respons orang tua di rumah untuk mengurangi pola pamanjaan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kemandirian belajar anak pada tugas sekolah bukan semata-mata ditentukan oleh kemampuan kognitif, melainkan hasil dari regulasi emosi yang dimediasi secara sosiokultural melalui sinergi antara mikrosistem rumah dan sekolah.

Kata Kunci: *Kolaborasi Rumah-Sekolah, Pengaturan Emosi, Scaffolding Verbal*

INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional development is a fundamental component of early childhood development because it supports children's ability to interact with others, regulate emotions, and respond appropriately to social situations (Elan, Sumardi, 2022; Rahmayunita, 2026; Rahiem, 2023). However, young children are still developing the capacity to regulate emotions independently. They may respond to frustration through crying, tantrums, or difficulty expressing their needs verbally, particularly when facing unfamiliar or

demanding situations (Maulinda & Muslihin, 2020). At the same time, early childhood is a critical period for developing independence, including the ability to initiate activities, communicate needs, make simple decisions, and complete age-appropriate tasks with decreasing adult assistance (Nawangsasi & Kurniawati, 2022).. These competencies do not develop independently of the child's social environment but are shaped through repeated interactions with caregivers and educators.

The development of emotional regulation and independence is particularly influenced by the two primary environments in which young children interact: the home and the school. These environments may provide different patterns of interaction, expectations, and forms of adult assistance. At home, children may receive extensive assistance in completing daily activities, whereas school settings typically require greater self-reliance and participation in structured activities. Differences in adult responses and behavioral expectations across these settings may create challenges for children as they adapt to school routines. Therefore, children's behavioral adaptation should be understood not only as an individual developmental process but also as a process shaped by interactions between the environments in which they participate (Kafita Ni'ma Taurina, 2017).

This perspective is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development, particularly the concept of the mesosystem, which refers to the relationships between two or more microsystems in which a child actively participates. The interaction between the home and school can therefore constitute an important developmental context. Consistent communication between parents and teachers may facilitate continuity in expectations, adult responses, and strategies for supporting children's emotional and behavioural development. Conversely, discrepancies between home and school practices may make it more difficult for children to adjust to different behavioural demands. Home-school collaboration is consequently important not merely as a form of parental involvement but as a mechanism for creating continuity across children's developmental environments.

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of parenting practices in supporting children's social-emotional development. Parental support, emotional closeness, effective family communication, and appropriate responses to children's needs contribute to the development of

emotional and behavioural competencies (Marzuki et al., 2025). Other studies have shown that teachers can foster children's independence through guided routines, opportunities for initiative, confidence-building activities, and reflective communication based on children's individual characteristics and learning needs ('Azizah Muthi' Nuryatmawati, 2020). Similarly, habituation-based learning strategies have been identified as an important approach for developing independence in early childhood (Adelia et al., 2025).

However, much of the existing literature examines emotional regulation and independence separately or focuses on either the home or school context. Limited attention has been given to how coordination between these two environments supports children's behavioural adaptation, particularly when children experience different levels of assistance and behavioural expectations at home and school (Pratiwi, 2024).. Furthermore, research examining concrete home-school strategies for supporting children in shifting from crying or behavioural withdrawal toward verbal expression of needs and emotions remains limited (Desy Nurfitriani, Kristiana Maryani, 2023).

This gap is particularly relevant to cases in which children demonstrate different behavioural patterns across home and school settings. A child may appear verbally active and highly dependent on adults at home but become passive, reluctant to communicate, or less engaged when confronted with independent tasks at school. Such differences suggest that difficulties in school participation may not necessarily indicate limited cognitive competence but may reflect challenges in emotional regulation and adaptation to different environmental expectations. Examining how teachers and parents coordinate their responses in such situations can provide a more contextual understanding of the development of independence in early childhood.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of home-school collaboration in supporting behavioural adaptation and learning independence in early childhood from a mesosystem perspective. Specifically, the study describes the strategies employed by teachers and parents to support children's emotional regulation and independence, examines how communication between home and school is coordinated, and identifies observable changes in children's behavioural and verbal responses during school activities. Through a descriptive case study, this research seeks to contribute empirical insight into how continuity between home and school

environments can support young children's adaptation, emotional regulation, and emerging independence

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design to examine behavioral adaptation and learning independence in the context of home–school collaboration. Participants were selected through purposive sampling and consisted of one 4–5-year-old child (T), the child's classroom teacher, and T's parent. T was selected based on observed tendencies to express needs and emotions primarily through crying and difficulties in demonstrating independence during school activities. The study was conducted on May 15, 2025, at KB Anggrek Landungsari. Data were collected through participatory observation of T's classroom activities, in-depth interviews with the teacher and parent, and documentation, including field notes, photographs, and relevant school records. The researcher served as the primary instrument, supported by observation and interview protocols and documentation guidelines. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data credibility was established through source and technique triangulation by comparing evidence from observations, interviews, and documentation across the child, teacher, and parent.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Result

Field data at KB Anggrek Landungsari were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews, aimed at directly examining behavioral adaptation and the level of independence in an early childhood subject, initialed T (hereafter anonymized to safeguard participant privacy and comply with research ethics). Data were gathered through interviews with the subject's parents, in-depth post-activity interviews with the Class A teacher, and documentation consisting of photographs and anecdotal records of the child's activities during task completion. The chronological summary presented in the following table illustrates the transition in the child's responses, from a pattern of dependency toward verbal communication and independent behavior

Initial Behavioral Dynamics of the Participant: A Portrait of the Home–School Disparity

Table 1

Profile of Behavioral Dynamics and Intervention for Subject T

Behavioral Indicator	Home's Condition	School's Condition	Form of Collaborative Intervention
Communication Pattern	Verbally active and communicative (talkative)	Passive, restricted communication, tends toward silence Discontinues activity while completing worksheets (LKS) if not approached by the teacher	Teacher-initiated “proactive”, verbal scaffolding approach
Task Independence	High dependency, consistently full assistance		Provision verbal prompting without asking over the task
Emotional Regulation	Display explosive emotional outbursts, such as tantrum or hysterical crying when confused or denied	Displays confusion trough silence and passivity	Adjustment of parental responses at home to avoid immediately “accommodating” the child’s demands

The findings revealed a clear contextual difference in T's behavioural adaptation across home and school environments, as summarized in Table 1. At home, T was described as verbally active and expressive, but highly dependent on adult assistance in daily activities. When experiencing frustration, confusion, or unmet expectations, T tended to express emotions through crying or tantrums. In contrast, T demonstrated a different behavioural pattern at school. Although T was able to communicate verbally, the child tended to remain silent and passive when encountering difficulties, particularly during learning activities. For example, when working on worksheets, T often stopped the activity and waited rather than asking for assistance. This contrast suggests that T's communication and independence were strongly influenced by the interactional context in which the child was expected to function.

In response to T's passive behaviour at school, the teacher provided individualized verbal scaffolding without taking over the child's task. The teacher proactively approached T, identified the part of the activity that caused difficulty, and encouraged the child to verbalize the problem before continuing the task. As described by the classroom teacher, T initially tended to remain silent when unable to complete a worksheet; therefore, the teacher initiated the interaction by asking which part was difficult and guided T to express the need for assistance. This form of scaffolding positioned the teacher as a facilitator rather than a substitute for the child's action. The support was intended to help T transform a passive response to difficulty into verbal communication and subsequent engagement with the task.

The findings further indicated that supporting T's behavioural adaptation required consistency between the school and home environments. Following communication between the teacher and the parents, the parents were encouraged to gradually reduce the pattern of immediately fulfilling T's requests and instead provide opportunities for T to express needs verbally. Thus, the collaborative response addressed not only T's behaviour at school but also the interactional pattern that occurred at home. Across the two contexts, the emerging finding was that T's dependence was expressed differently: through direct requests for assistance at home and through silence and task withdrawal at school. Verbal prompting, opportunities to articulate needs, and reduced immediate adult assistance were therefore used as complementary strategies to encourage more active participation and the gradual development of independence.

Implementation of Verbal Scaffolding and Mesosystemic Collaboration

In response to T's passive and silent behaviour during classroom activities, the teacher provided individualized verbal scaffolding to support the child's engagement and independence. Rather than reprimanding or forcing T to complete the task, the teacher proactively approached the child, acknowledged the difficulty being experienced, and prompted T to identify and verbally express the part of the task that was unclear. The teacher described this approach as proactively approaching and assisting T, followed by asking which part was difficult and guiding the child to articulate the need for help. This process enabled T to express her/his difficulty verbally before

continuing the activity, indicating that verbal prompting served as a form of support without replacing the child's active involvement in the task.

At the same time, the school initiated communication with T's parents to establish consistency between the home and school environments. Parents were encouraged to gradually reduce the pattern of immediately providing assistance whenever T made a request and instead encourage the child to communicate needs verbally. This collaborative approach reflected an effort to align adult responses across the two primary contexts in which T interacted. The findings therefore indicate that supporting T's behavioural adaptation involved not only teacher–child interaction in the classroom but also coordination between school and family, particularly in encouraging verbal help-seeking and reducing immediate adult accommodation.

Behavioral Transition Following Collaborative Support

Following the implementation of coordinated support, T gradually demonstrated more adaptive responses during learning activities. Verbal prompting from the teacher and more consistent parental responses were accompanied by increased engagement in classroom tasks and reduced passive behavior when difficulties arose. With emotional support and appropriate verbal prompts, T became more willing to communicate difficulties to the teacher rather than responding through silence or emotional outbursts.

The collaborative support also provided T with opportunities to regulate emotions, express needs, and participate more actively in completing tasks. Rather than immediately relying on adults, T was encouraged to verbalize difficulties and continue the activity with appropriate guidance. These observations suggest an emerging shift from immediate dependence toward more active participation, particularly in emotional regulation, verbal help-seeking, and task engagement, although the process should be understood as gradual behavioral adaptation rather than full independence.

Discussion

The phenomenon of restricted verbal communication and passivity exhibited by Subject T when confronted with worksheets (LKS) at school does not constitute a form of cognitive delay but rather manifests a disparity in caregiving patterns and an imbalance in emotional regulation during the transition between environments. This section examines how the child's anxiety and dependency were redirected toward independence through

collaborative intervention integrated with early childhood developmental theory. Within the framework of Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 2005) the home environment functions as a *safe base* in which the child perceives a sense of control over parental attention through a caregiving pattern that consistently "accommodates" their needs. This habituation to full accommodation gives rise to a pattern of emotional dependency that triggers emotional outbursts (tantrums or hysterical crying) whenever the child's wishes are not immediately fulfilled. Upon transitioning to a school setting that demands independence in completing worksheets, the child experiences anxiety stemming from the absence of this automatic support system, compounded by an as-yet-immature coping mechanism and emotional regulation capacity. Subject T's confusion manifests as a form of temporary selective mutism or passivity (Eisenberg et al., 2019), whereby the child opts for silence and discontinues activity as a defense mechanism against anxiety and fear of making mistakes. The class teacher's success in unpacking Subject T's passivity reflects a precise application of the concepts of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). In the initial condition, Subject T was, in fact, already capable of visually comprehending task instructions, yet encountered difficulty in expressive language needed to articulate confusion. The teacher's "proactive" (*jemput bola*) approach, approaching the child, validating their feelings, and modeling a helping phrase such as "Teacher, I'm confused about this part", functioned as temporary scaffolding. This verbal stimulation successfully reduced the child's anxiety level. As anxiety diminished, the child's executive function returned to optimal operation (Blair, C., & Raver, 2015), allowing attention that had previously been diverted by negative emotion to be redirected toward task completion. The level of teacher assistance was then gradually reduced (faded) as the child's confidence increased.

When compared with prior research, fundamental theoretical and methodological distinctions emerge that underscore the novelty of this study. Conventional research on early childhood independence (Pratama, A. R., 2020) has generally focused on physical intervention or external reward–punishment systems, without examining the role of emotional attachment at home. Meanwhile, research by Rahmawati (2022) explored the use of interactive worksheet media but overlooked the importance of direct verbal mediation by educators when children experience emotional paralysis. The

novelty of this study lies in its integration of the "proactive" (*jemput bola*) verbal scaffolding technique in the classroom with corresponding adjustments in parental responses at home. This research addresses a gap in the literature by demonstrating that children's independent engagement with worksheets is not merely a matter of cognitive capability, but rather the outcome of emotional regulation mediated through sociocultural processes.

The theoretical implications of these findings make an important contribution to Ecology theory from Bronfenbrenner (1979), particularly at the mesosystem level (the interaction between the home and school microsystems). Prior to intervention, a discontinuity existed within the mesosystem, whereby the home applied an indulgent caregiving pattern while the school demanded independence. Through integrated communication established by the school, Subject T's parents began adjusting their responses at home by no longer immediately "accommodating" the child's demands and instead encouraging verbal communication. This mesosystemic synergy provides theoretical evidence that consistency in stimulation across a child's two primary environments can reconstruct emotional habits and accelerate the child's transition from dependency toward adaptive independence.

Practically, the findings of this study offer tactical guidance for early childhood educators in addressing children who display passive or "shutdown" behaviour when completing worksheets. Teachers need not hastily label a silent child as lazy or developmentally delayed. The "proactive" (*jemput bola*) solution demonstrates that instruction accompanied by emotional validation and the modelling of concrete helping phrases is considerably more effective than issuing commands from a distance. A further practical implication concerns the importance of engaging parents as equal partners through simple daily communication, thereby allowing interventions for children's behavioural difficulties at school to be directly aligned with habits practiced at home.

CONSLUSION

This study examined how home–school collaboration supported the emotional regulation and emerging independence of a young child at KB Anggrek Landungsari. The findings indicate that T's behavioral responses varied across contexts: at home, T was verbally expressive but highly dependent on adult assistance, while at school, difficulties were more often

expressed through silence, passivity, and task withdrawal. Verbal scaffolding from the teacher, combined with more consistent parental responses at home, was associated with increased verbal expression of difficulties, greater engagement in learning activities, and reduced immediate dependence on adults. These findings suggest that children's adaptive behavior and emerging independence may be influenced by the interaction between individual responses and the support provided across home and school contexts, consistent with the mesosystem perspective of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. The findings also highlight the practical relevance of verbal scaffolding in supporting children's emotional regulation, verbal help-seeking, and task engagement. However, given the single-case design and limited observation period, the findings should be interpreted contextually rather than generalized broadly. Further research involving multiple participants and longer observation periods is needed to examine whether similar patterns emerge across different children, families, and educational settings.

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