

GRANDPARENTS PARENTING OF THEIR GRANDCHILDREN ON EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE ALPHA GENERATION ERA

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Abstract

This research aimed to determine the grandparents' parenting style towards their grandchildren, strategies to improve education and knowledge, and grandparents' obstacles in parenting alpha-generation grandchildren. This research is descriptive qualitative. This research used direct interviews and questionnaires with the grandparents of students in SDN 02 Bubakan, Tulakan District. This research consists of 10 samples of grandparents who take care of grandchildren because their parents work in the city. The results showed that 60% of grandparents care for female grandchildren, and the remaining 40% care for male grandchildren. Grandparents' parenting patterns are authoritarian (4 respondents) and democratic (4 respondents). From these parenting patterns, there are four strategies implemented by grandparents: help improve their grandchildren's education and knowledge, supply their grandchildren's spiritual needs, and supply their grandchildren's physical needs. Grandparents also face three obstacles. First, there are problems with communication between grandparents and grandchildren (25%). Second, there is different knowledge between grandparents and their grandchildren (30%). Third, grandparents experience obstacles in technological development (45%).

Keywords: *Alpha Generation, Grand Parents Parenting Style, Parenting Style*

Introduction

Coined by sociologist Mark McCrindle (2019), the term "Alpha Generation" refers to children born from 2011 to 2025. They are the generation that is most familiar with digital technology today. As the most influential generation in human life, Alpha Generation is known as the most instrumental generation in human life as it consists of young people who can change the economic cycle of the world by acquiring knowledge through experimentation, cooperative learning, and problem-solving activities. They are highly educated and more familiar with technology than Generation Z (Jukic & Skojo, 2021). Although technology has evolved in previous generations, Generation Alpha is part of an unintentional experiment worldwide, as they are in front of screens and laptops at a very young age. Recent research has also found that they have better visual and cognitive abilities in hand-eye coordination due to playing digital games (Bediou et al., 2018).

Despite these qualities, there are also problems to be aware of. These problems stem from three main factors: the individual, the environment, and the family. Generation Alpha is used to interacting through social media and gadgets. It is easy for them to access information and connect with others, but conversely, they are less accustomed to socializing in person (Twenge, 2017). Exposure to information that has been processed and easily obtained makes them less accustomed to thinking critically and creatively. This can result in difficulties in solving problems and innovating in the future. This phenomenon changes every part of their lives. It affects their perception of the world, friendships, relationships, toys, and even their mentality. They can learn anywhere without having to go to school. Not surprisingly, many experts argue that this generation is brighter than the previous generation. Even if the Alpha generation has not yet entered school, experts can already predict the challenges they will face (Apriyanti, 2019). Exposure to harmful content on the internet, such as violence, pornography, and cyberbullying, can jeopardize the mental health of Alpha Generation children. The impact of harmful content has the potential to cause anxiety, depression, and sleep problems (Livingstone & Kirkin, 2016). On the other hand, the lack of attention and affection from parents caused by busy working parents or children preoccupied with their gadgets can hurt

children's development and growth. Baumrind (1996) stated in his research that suboptimal parenting can cause children to experience behavioral problems, difficulties in thinking, and difficulties in socializing.

Family conditions in Indonesia vary greatly. Not a few pairs of parents work and leave the house, so childcare is replaced by other people, known as maids or babysitters (Riyani et al., 2017). There are family elements that can play a role and are more meaningful in filling the void of a figure who must play a role in helping children interact, namely grandparents. Grandparents who play a role in caring for their grandchildren can help children more easily control their emotions and reduce the risk of depression and anxiety (Sunarno & Saputra, 2019). They care for their grandchildren instead of their parents, who work to make ends meet. Psychologically, grandparents give their full attention to their grandchildren because they have become part of them.

Although early psychological theories have emphasized the need for maternal care, more recent research in psychology, sociology, and economics shows that parenting by others does not always have a negative impact (Del Boca et al., 2018). While many studies have analyzed parental and formal childcare's effects, the influence of other family members, such as grandparents, has received little attention. Different parenting patterns between parents and grandparents positively and negatively impact children. The positive impact is that children feel loved, responsible, independent, disciplined, and confident. The negative effect is that children become spoiled and can rebel if their wishes are not fulfilled. They always fight back and do whatever they want. Grandparents and parents have different life experiences and backgrounds (Dunifon, 2013).

Based on this introduction, alpha generation has essential capabilities in technological development. The role of grandparents in replacing parental care is a challenge for the development of alpha-generation grandchildren. Based on this, this study aims to determine how grandparents' parenting patterns, strategies, and constraints on alpha-generation grandchildren affect the development of their knowledge and education.

Method

This research is descriptive qualitative. Data collection was carried out using interviews and questionnaires. The population in this study comprises grandparents of students attending SDN 02 Bubakan, Tulakan sub-district, who care for their grandchildren because their parents work outside the city. With an average age of 67 years and 60% of grandparents taking care of granddaughters, the number of grandparents studied was 10 in the questionnaire and 4 in the interview. The questionnaire has fifteen closed-ended questions about parenting patterns and five open-ended questions in the interview with classification: strategies carried out by grandparents and obstacles experienced. After all the data were collected, the data were analyzed using the following procedures: reading and counting respondents' answers during interviews, counting respondents' answers on Google Forms, classifying answers, discussing the findings, and summarizing the results of interviews and questionnaires.

Finding and Discussion

Grandparents' Parenting Style Towards Their Grandchildren Based on three aspects of parenting: primitive, authoritarian, and democratic, the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Grandparents' Parenting Style Towards Their Grandchildren

Parenting Pattern	Total	Percentage (%)
Primitive	2	20
Authoritarian	4	40
Democratic	4	40
Total	10	100%

As described in Table 1, two grandparents raised their grandchildren with primitive parenting. This could be due to the parenting patterns applied by their parents, so they tend to rely on parenting patterns passed down from generation to generation. Further results showed that four grandparents applied authoritarian and democratic parenting. With increasing levels of education and welfare, many parents of the Alpha generation work in the city to meet the needs of their children and leave their children to be cared for by grandparents. Authoritarian parenting is the grandparents' responsibility to ensure their grandchildren's commitment and discipline. In addition, democratic parenting is applied by grandparents to provide opportunities for their grandchildren to express their opinions and be involved in family decision-making. Parents are the first school where grandparents raise their grandchildren, so they must act as parents to fulfill children's needs (Apriyanti, 2021), (Mitasari & Apriyanti, 2021).

Strategies that Grandparents Use to Improve the Knowledge and Education of Alpha Generation Grandchildren

Each individual, especially grandparents, has a way of implementing their strategies. They are based on the four grandparents interviewed, which is seen from how grandparents prepare their grandchildren at home, starting from educational, knowledge, mental, and physical needs, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Strategies that Grandparents Use to Improve the Knowledge and Education of Alpha Generation Grandchildren

Education	Knowledge	Spiritual Needs	Physical Needs
Grandparents play a role in preparing their grandchildren for school activities. They prepare school supplies, provide lunch, and give pocket money before their grandchildren leave for school. This fulfills a practical need and teaches the value of responsibility and preparedness for daily routines.	Grandparents encourage participation in household chores such as cleaning the house, which teaches the values of cleanliness and responsibility. They also support grandchildren's extracurricular activities, which can develop children's talents and interests. Gardening activities are also introduced, providing lessons about nature and patience.	Grandparents understand the importance of religious education in shaping their grandchildren's character and moral values. By including their grandchildren in activities at Taman Pendidikan Al-Qur'an (TPA), they ensure that religious education is obtained in formal schools and through informal education. This helps strengthen the child's spiritual foundation and provides a deeper understanding of religious teachings.	Grandparents buy the necessary school supplies, ensuring grandchildren have everything they need to learn well. More importantly, they provide nutritious food to support their grandchildren's growth and development. This shows grandparents' understanding of the importance of good nutrition in helping their grandchildren's physical and cognitive development.

As described in Table 2, in the educational aspect, grandparents prepare grandchildren for school activities, organize supplies, and provide pocket money while teaching responsibility. They also contribute to grandchildren's practical knowledge by involving them in household chores, extracurricular activities, and gardening, helping develop their skills and

interests. To fulfill spiritual needs, grandparents encourage participation in religious education, such as attending activities at the Qur'anic Education Park (TPA), to strengthen the grandchildren's spiritual foundation. Meanwhile, physical needs are met by providing school supplies and nutritious food.

Obstacles Faced by Grandparents Parenting Their Alpha Generation Grandchildren

The interviews' results identified the obstacles faced by grandparents caring for their alpha-generation grandchildren based on different characteristics, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Obstacles Faced by Grandparents Parenting Their Alpha Generation

Grandchildren	
	Percentage (%)
Communication	25%
Knowledge	30%
Technology	45%
Total	100%

As explained in Table 3, 25% of the obstacles experienced by grandparents in caring for their grandchildren are related to communication. Grandparents tend to use elements of tradition in communication, as is commonly found in East Java. Several criteria were used when using Javanese. With this use, intercultural communication is very influential on socialization. When using Javanese, several criteria must be considered based on its use and influenced by the development of modern technology. Constraints in technological development reach 45%. Grandparents born around 1967 and living in rural areas still lack understanding of technology that can help them get the information they need. This is a challenge for grandparents to be more careful when supervising their grandchildren when utilizing technology. It is often found that when grandparents do not understand what technology their grandchildren are using, they are indifferent and do not provide rules—causing the grandchildren to become dependent and take advantage of the situation.

Implementation of Grandparents' Parenting Patterns Toward Their Grandchildren

Some parenting styles proposed by Braumrid (Santrock, 2007) are divided into three categories: authoritarian, primitive, and democratic. An authoritarian is a caregiver who seeks to shape, control, and evaluate individual behavior based on absolute standards and values about obedience, respect for authority, and no give-and-take in verbal communication. Democratic, which is a caregiver who directs individuals rationally, is problem-oriented, values give-and-take communication, explains the rationale for each request, disciplines but uses power when necessary, expects children to obey adults but also teaches children to be independent and self-directed, respects each other, and reinforces standards of behavior. Permissive parenting is divided into neglectful or uncaring parenting and indulgent parenting. Neglectful parenting is when the caregiver does not care and tends to permit the individual to act as they wish without any rules or consequences for the action. Indulgent parenting is when the perpetrator overindulges the child, and they are involved but have no control. The Alpha generation presents its challenges for parents and their parenting styles. Parenting grandparents who are not familiar with technology is a challenge because not only do they have to teach, but they also have to learn according to the development of the times. Diana Baumrind introduced four parenting styles based on two aspects of parenting behavior: control and warmth. Parental control refers to how parents control their children's behavior, from controlling to setting few rules and demands. The warmth provided is based on how it is done in the parenting process (Apriyanti, 2019).

Research that has been conducted shows grandparents tend to use authoritarian and democratic parenting.

“Saya memberikan aturan untuk mereka, setelah pulang sekolah untuk beristirahat, tidur kemudian bermain dengan batasan waktu yang telah saya tetapkan. Jika mereka melakukan kesalahan saya akan menghukumnya sesuai kesepakatan berdasarkan tingkatan kesalahan yang dilakukan.”

Based on the above statement, which is supported by Dunifon's (2013) theory, which emphasizes that the ability of grandparents to adapt to various parenting styles is often influenced by factors such as frequency of contact with grandchildren, family dynamics, and cultural context, grandchildren cared for by grandparents will acquire skills that reflect their personalities and can be adapted to each grandparent's parenting approach. This customization supports healthy child development while fostering a stronger bond between grandparents and grandchildren. Children can have strong social skills and stable emotional support as they grow with the help of harmonious relationships and flexible parenting.

Strategies that Grandparents Use to Improve the Knowledge and Education of Alpha Generation Grandchildren

Based on the research that has been conducted, it can be concluded that there are four strategies that grandparents use to improve the knowledge and education of alpha-generation grandchildren: teaching, learning, spiritual needs, and physical needs. These strategies can be carried out differently for each grandparent, according to the application's provisions and effectiveness. Strategies in education can be implemented by supporting their grandchildren when they go to school and after school.

“Biasanya sebelum cucu saya ke sekolah saya menyiapkan sepatu, tas, buku, bekal, seragam, dan mengantar cucu saya ke sekolah.”

Education is prioritized to improve the cognitive abilities of grandchildren, thus preparing them for higher levels. Informal education, which is not obtained in formal education, influences how grandchildren adapt to the community environment. Usually, grandparents give directions to their grandchildren to help with simple household chores; this is done to foster their sense of responsibility and discipline. The application of habits and rules that foster a sense of responsibility can be made in various ways: washing their clothes after they eat, washing cutlery, sweeping, cleaning their beds, and helping in their grandpa's garden.

The spiritual needs of grandchildren determine the personality development of the individual. In research on grandparents, who explained that:

“Cucu saya mengaji di TPA dekat rumah, dengan durasi satu minggu tiga kali pertemuan.”

The Quran at TPA provides essential spiritual and emotional support. This activity helps instill moral and ethical values in everyday life (Abu Bakar et al., 2020). (2020). They can learn together with friends with the help of teachers so that their understanding is broader. Friends can influence understanding because, when they experience difficulties, they can ask and exchange ideas about their knowledge. In the alpha generation, which has known technology since birth, it is a challenge for a teacher to improve teaching methods that are not boring, mainly in increasing understanding of religion, which is the foundation of life in this world. Finding exciting methods of teaching religion increases students' knowledge of how to be more focused and consistent in their views on religion.

On the other hand, after spiritual needs, there are physical needs that grandparents must fulfill for their grandchildren. One of the key strategies identified was to focus on providing nutritious food. Grandparents draw on their traditional culinary knowledge, often emphasizing the importance of balanced, home-cooked meals. A study by Farrow (2014) revealed that grandparents tend to be more flexible in feeding practices, blending family heritage recipes with modern nutritional guidelines. They are also often instrumental in introducing various foods to grandchildren, which can contribute to developing healthy eating habits. Grandparents

use vegetables from their farm for cooking. Using organic fertilizers makes the vegetables healthier and adds to their nutritional value.

Regarding physical activity, grandparents often adopt an approach that combines recreation with exercise. It has been shown that grandparents tend to engage in physical activities with their grandchildren, such as playing in the garden, gardening, or going for walks (Dunifon et al., 2016). This strategy not only fulfills the physical needs of grandchildren but also strengthens emotional bonds and provides opportunities for experiential learning.

The Obstacles Faced by Grandparents Parenting Their Alpha Generation Grandchildren

The difference in knowledge gained between the Alpha generation and grandparents reflects significant social and cultural changes. On the other hand, Alpha generation children, growing up in an era of information and rapid change, have difficulty appreciating the traditional wisdom grandparents offer. Miscommunication can occur due to differences in parenting styles, life experiences, and cultural values (Xu et al., 2019). This phenomenon shows the importance of building balanced, knowledge-based communication to bridge the intergenerational gap. In specific cultural contexts, such as East Java and Indonesia, the complexity of intergenerational communication is further increased by using local languages at certain levels and with specific rules of use. So, communication must be balanced and knowledge-based. Grandparents tend to use elements of tradition in communication, as is often found in East Java. There are several criteria for using Javanese. With this use, intercultural communication is very influential on socialization.

The difference in knowledge acquired between the Alpha generation and grandparents reflects evolving social and cultural changes. They view the expertise and advice of older generations in light of the challenges and realities they face (Buchanan & Rotkirch, 2018). Alpha-generational knowledge can be obtained from informal learning or in the family and community environment. Amid these differences in knowledge, parents are also tasked with monitoring the condition of their grandchildren so that their emotional growth and thinking are well controlled according to the ability of their grandparents to care for them.

The data collection results explain 45% of the obstacles grandparents face in caring for their grandchildren, who are the alpha generation. Therefore, older people tend to experience greater technological stuttering than the teenage generation when dealing with the swift development of communication technology. This condition has negative consequences at the personal level and a broader level. At the individual level, grandparents cannot get more comprehensive information, so the knowledge they understand is only based on actual experience. At a broader level, they will experience difficulties caring for their grandchildren, who tend to understand the use of technology and become obstacles to the supervision provided. The technology gap between grandparents and grandchildren is a significant communication barrier in the care of their grandchildren. The lack of understanding of the use of modern technology by grandparents hinders their interaction with and knowledge of the digital world, which is an integral part of their grandchildren's lives during the rapid development of digital technology (Ivan & Hebblethwaite, 2021).

The digital divide between the Alpha generation and less tech-savvy grandparents can be a significant barrier to understanding children's needs and interests in the context of modern parenting (Nansen et al., 2020). Providing substantial obstacles in the process of raising their grandchildren related to technology, such as the use of devices for learning, entertainment, or social interaction, they do not understand the importance of internet access for modern education. On the other hand, children born into the Alpha generation may think their grandparents are 'behind the times' and unable to understand their world, which requires technological assistance. This also affects their learning and play methods.

Conclusion

This research shows the results of the tendency of grandparents to take care of female grandchildren compared to male grandchildren. This is due to more accessible communication factors and a more flexible cognitive understanding of female grandchildren compared to male grandchildren. Grandparents tend to apply parenting patterns through authoritarian and democratic approaches in a balanced manner. The parenting strategies implemented by grandparents cover four main aspects. First, in educational aspects, they actively support school activities and help with homework. Second, to increase knowledge, grandparents teach responsibility through simple household tasks. Third, spiritual needs can be met by the grandchildren's involvement in religious activities such as reciting the Quran at TPA. Fourth, physical needs can be met by providing nutritious food and physical activities with their grandchildren. Nonetheless, grandparents face three main obstacles in caring for the Alpha generation's grandchildren: communication, different knowledge, and technological developments. Despite these challenges, grandparents have a unique role in instilling traditional values and bridging the generation gap.

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