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**THE IMPACT OF AUTHORITARIAN AND EMPATHETIC  
COMMUNICATION ON EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD**

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***ABSTRACT***

*This study examines the impact of authoritarian and empathetic communication on the social, emotional, and communication development of young children. Communication is a crucial aspect of parenting and education as it shapes character development, self-confidence, emotional regulation, and children's social interaction skills. This study utilized a literature review approach by analyzing various studies and theories regarding communication patterns in early childhood. The findings indicate that authoritarian communication tends to be one-sided, emphasizing commands, pressure, and strict control, which may cause children to become fearful, less confident, passive, and face obstacles in their socio-emotional development. In contrast, empathetic communication emphasizes understanding children's feelings, active listening, and warm responses, which can enhance children's sense of security, social skills, emotional regulation, and confidence in expressing opinions. Furthermore, empathetic communication helps foster more harmonious relationships among children, parents, and teachers. Therefore, parents and teachers are encouraged to practice empathetic communication alongside consistent discipline to support optimal early childhood development.*

**Keywords:** *authoritarian communication, empathetic communication, early childhood, emotional development, parenting style*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Communication is the process of conveying a message from one person to another to create shared meaning and understanding. In daily life, communication plays a vital role in social interaction, particularly for young children who are in a phase of rapid language, social, and emotional development. The way teachers and parents communicate influences the formation of a child's character, behavior, self-confidence, and ability to interact with their environment. Therefore, appropriate communication is essential to ensure children's development proceeds optimally in both family and school settings.

The family is the child's first educational environment, while school is where children develop social and emotional skills through interactions with teachers and

peers. In the practice of early childhood care and education, various communication styles are employed, including authoritarian and empathetic communication. Authoritarian communication emphasizes rules, control, and children's compliance with adult instructions with little opportunity for discussion. Meanwhile, empathetic communication prioritizes understanding the child's feelings, active listening, and providing warm responses that respect the child's opinions.

The application of these two communication styles has different impacts on early childhood development. Authoritarian communication can indeed make children more disciplined and compliant with rules, but if applied excessively, it can cause children to become fearful, lack self-confidence, struggle to express their opinions, and face obstacles in their social-emotional development. Conversely, empathetic communication fosters a sense of safety and comfort in children, enabling them to speak up more boldly, express emotions effectively, and build more positive social relationships. Several studies also indicate that empathetic communication is more effective in supporting the emotional and social development of young children.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a literature review method using a qualitative descriptive approach. The literature review was conducted by collecting, reading, analyzing, and comparing various sources of literature related to authoritarian communication, empathetic communication, and their impact on the social-emotional development of young children. The data sources in this study were drawn from scientific journals, books, research articles, and academic documents relevant to the research topic. Data collection was conducted by documenting various previous studies from the past five years that discussed communication patterns of parents and teachers with young children.

The literature used was selected based on its relevance to the theme, the clarity of the sources, and its alignment with the research focus. After the data was collected, the researcher identified, classified, and interpreted the research findings. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis, which involves analyzing the content of various literature sources to identify similarities, differences, and relationships between authoritarian communication and empathetic communication regarding emotional regulation, social development, and communication skills in early childhood. The analysis results were then systematically organized to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of these two communication patterns within family environments and early childhood education settings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Communication in English is called "*communication*," which comes from the Latin word "*communicatio*" and is rooted in the word "*communis*," meaning

"common." The word "common" in this context refers to a shared understanding of meaning among the parties involved in the communication. Communication can occur when two or more people involved—for example, in a conversation—share a common understanding of the topic being discussed. However, the use of the same language does not always result in shared meaning. This is because each individual has different intentions and interpretations of the message being conveyed. The message may sometimes be understood well, but at other times it can lead to misunderstandings, depending on the situation and circumstances of the parties involved in the communication process(Masturi, 2010) .

The family serves as the child's primary educational environment in the process of learning about and understanding various aspects of life. If the family's role—particularly that of parents—is not fulfilled effectively, this can impact the child's character development. Therefore, parents bear a significant responsibility in shaping their child's character through guidance, supervision, and mentoring, all carried out through positive interaction and communication within the family environment. Every family has different communication patterns when interacting with children. A communication pattern can be understood as a model or system consisting of various interconnected components aimed at achieving educational goals. Additionally, a communication pattern is a process of conveying messages through specific symbols or signs that carry meaning and aim to influence or change the behavior of others(Sabarua & Mornene, 2020) .

Authoritarian communication is a form of communication that tends to impose the parents' will on the child. In this pattern, parents act as dominant controllers and supervisors of the child's opinions and behavior. Parents typically find it difficult to accept suggestions, are less open to differing opinions, and prioritize their own decisions without involving the child in discussions. When influencing the child, parents often use coercive or threatening approaches. Everything parents say is considered a rule that must be obeyed and cannot be challenged. Communication is one-sided because parents dominate the conversation and rarely give children the opportunity to provide feedback. As a result, the relationship between parents and children tends to be less harmonious, strained, and has the potential to lead to conflict(Sabarua & Mornene, 2020) .

Based on the findings of various studies, empathetic communication is considered more effective in supporting early childhood development compared to authoritarian communication. Children who receive empathetic communication tend to have better social skills, greater self-confidence, and the ability to express emotions positively. This aligns with research in Early Childhood Education, which explains that effective and empathetic communication can enhance the quality of interaction between teachers and children, thereby optimizing the development of children's sense of responsibility and social behavior (Fitri & Diana, 2024).

Empathetic communication also provides children with a sense of emotional security. Children feel valued when parents or teachers listen to their opinions without exerting excessive pressure. In the humanistic theory proposed by Carl Rogers, empathetic communication can help individuals develop optimally due to the presence of *unconditional positive regard*. For young children, this is crucial because this period marks the phase of self-concept formation and emotional development.

Meanwhile, authoritarian communication has different effects. This communication style often involves a harsh tone, absolute commands, punishment, and restrictions on the child's freedom. In the short term, authoritarian communication can indeed make children more compliant with rules. However, some studies indicate that this communication style can lead children to feel fearful, lack self-confidence, struggle to express their opinions, and even develop social anxiety. Such communication barriers can diminish a child's courage to actively engage in the learning environment (Khairurizky et al., 2025)

Other research findings also indicate that overly coercive communication makes children more likely to imitate aggressive behaviors exhibited by adults. According to Albert Bandura's social learning theory, young children learn through the process of imitation or modeling of behaviors they observe. Therefore, when children are accustomed to harsh and authoritarian communication, they are likely to imitate these communication patterns in their social interactions with peers (Muzzammil, 2022)

Additionally, empathetic communication has been proven to enhance children's social skills and communication abilities. Teachers who use polite language, maintain eye contact, display warm expressions, and actively listen to children can create a comfortable and enjoyable learning environment. Children become more active in speaking, are more willing to ask questions, and find it easier to collaborate with those around them (Dini & Anggraini, 2022). Research on empathetic communication within parenting styles also indicates that the success of communication is influenced by the emotional closeness between parents and children. When parents are able to understand a child's emotional needs, the child becomes easier to guide without the need for punishment or threats (Nazwa Aliya et al., 2024).

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that empathetic communication is more effective when applied to young children compared to authoritarian communication. Empathetic communication effectively supports children's social, emotional, language, and self-confidence development. Meanwhile, authoritarian communication tends to have negative effects if applied excessively, such as fostering fear, low self-confidence, and barriers to a child's communication skills. Therefore, parents and teachers need to practice warm, open communication that

respects children's feelings so that the developmental process of young children can proceed to its fullest potential.

Communication is a crucial aspect of early childhood education and care. Through communication, teachers and parents can convey rules, values, knowledge, and build emotional bonds with children. In practice, various forms of communication are used, including authoritarian and empathetic communication. These two forms have distinct characteristics and exert different influences on children's development. Authoritarian communication places greater emphasis on obedience, control, and rules that must be followed without much discussion, whereas empathetic communication prioritizes understanding the child's feelings, needs, and perspective. Although both aim to shape children's behavior, their implementation often faces various challenges within family and educational environments.

Challenges in applying authoritarian communication can be seen in its impact on a child's psychological well-being and social-emotional development. Communication patterns that are overly harsh and high-pressure often make children afraid to speak up or express their opinions. Children tend to follow orders out of fear of being scolded or punished, rather than because they understand the reasons behind the rules. This can lead to children becoming less confident, prone to anxiety, and struggling to make decisions independently. In some cases, overly authoritarian communication can also trigger aggressive behavior in children as they mimic the harsh communication styles they observe in their surroundings (Z. F. Fitri & Diana, 2023).

In addition to affecting a child's emotional well-being, authoritarian communication can also hinder the development of a child's social and communication skills. Teachers or parents who are overly dominant typically rely on one-way communication—issuing commands without giving children the opportunity to speak or ask questions. As a result, children become passive, hesitant to express their opinions, and unaccustomed to openly sharing their feelings. In early childhood education settings, this situation can hinder the development of children's social skills, such as the ability to cooperate, discuss, or solve problems with peers. Children who are accustomed to being pressured also tend to find it harder to build healthy social relationships because they fear making mistakes (Erlianasyah, Fidia Kamila, 2023).

Another challenge of authoritarian communication is the emergence of a less warm relationship between children and adults. When communication consists solely of rules and demands, children may feel undervalued or emotionally neglected. A relationship that is too rigid can cause children to keep their distance from teachers and parents, making them reluctant to share the problems or difficulties they are facing. In the long term, this lack of emotional closeness can

affect a child's sense of safety and comfort within both the family and school environments(Muzzammi, 2022) .

On the other hand, empathetic communication also presents its own challenges in practice. Empathetic communication requires active listening skills, patience, and good emotional control from both teachers and parents. Not everyone can easily understand a child's emotional state, especially when dealing with a child who is having a tantrum, crying, angry, or difficult to manage. In such situations, educators often struggle to remain calm and provide an empathetic response. Sometimes teachers or parents feel emotionally drained, making it easier to raise their voices or scold the child rather than trying to understand the cause of the child's behavior.

In addition, empathetic communication requires more time and attention than authoritarian communication. Teachers need to listen to children's stories, understand their feelings, and provide responses that meet the children's emotional needs. In reality, however, many teachers face time constraints because they must manage many children in a single classroom. The large number of students makes it difficult for teachers to give individual attention to each child. Consequently, the application of empathetic communication cannot always be maximized in daily learning activities(Fitriyani & Kriswanto, 2025) .

The family environment is also one of the challenges in implementing empathetic communication. Every child has a different upbringing. Children who are accustomed to harsh treatment or authoritarian communication at home usually take longer to adjust to a gentler and more open approach at school. Some children may feel confused or distrustful when teachers try to establish warm and attentive communication. Therefore, cooperation between teachers and parents is essential so that the communication style applied to children can be consistent.

Another challenge is the perception that empathetic communication makes children too free or undisciplined. Some parents and teachers still believe that a firm stance must always be accompanied by strict control and punishment to ensure children obey. However, empathetic communication does not mean allowing all of a child's behavior without rules; rather, it involves setting boundaries in a way that respects the child's feelings. Teachers and parents need to understand that discipline can be enforced without resorting to verbal abuse or excessive pressure.

Although both authoritarian and empathetic communication have their own challenges, empathetic communication is considered more effective in building positive relationships between children and adults. Through empathetic communication, children feel safer, valued, and heard, making them more open to expressing their opinions and feelings. Children can also learn to understand their own emotions and those of others through the communication examples set by teachers and parents. However, empathetic communication must still be

accompanied by firmness and consistent rules so that children understand the boundaries of appropriate and correct behavior.

Thus, it can be concluded that the challenges in applying authoritarian and empathetic communication are influenced by emotional factors, the environment, parenting styles, and the communication skills of teachers and parents. Authoritarian communication tends to have a negative impact on children's emotional and social development when applied excessively, whereas empathetic communication requires patience, time, and better skills in understanding children. Therefore, a balance between firmness and empathy is necessary so that the communication process can optimally support early childhood development, both in family and educational settings (Nurannisa et al., 2023).

The fundamental differences between authoritarian and empathetic communication styles in the context of early childhood can be identified through several key dimensions. Understanding these dimensions is crucial for educators and parents alike to evaluate the effectiveness of the interaction patterns applied in daily life. More specifically, the distinctions between these two approaches can be outlined as follows:

a. Direction of Communication

Authoritarian communication is generally one-way, meaning parents or educators only convey commands, prohibitions, and rules to the child without engaging in discussion or involving the child in the decision-making process. In authoritarian families, communication tends to be supported by the absolute authority of adults, so children are rarely invited to engage in dialogue or express their feelings and desires. In contrast, empathetic communication with young children prioritizes warm, responsive, and open two-way communication. Adults not only convey messages but also take the time to listen to the child, provide explanations, and involve the child in age-appropriate decision-making processes. This difference indicates that authoritarian communication is oriented toward compliance, whereas empathetic communication is oriented toward sustaining relationships and mutual understanding (Agus Salim Lamusu, 2025).

b. Language style and message format

In authoritarian communication, adults tend to use language consisting of commands, prohibitions, and threats, such as: "must," "don't," and "if you don't want... there will be consequences." This pattern is often not accompanied by explanations or dialogue, so children only pick up on the message "I must obey" without understanding the logical reasoning behind the rule. Empathetic communication, on the other hand, uses positive language, explains the reasons, and respects the child's feelings. Adults tend to ask open-ended questions, provide brief explanations, and encourage the child to think together, for

example: “What do you think?” or “How did you feel just now?” This style of communication does not disregard boundaries, but conveys rules in a way that respects the child’s emotional subjectivity (Shazia et al., 2025) .

c. The child’s role in the conversation

In authoritarian communication, the child’s role is almost entirely passive: the child is merely commanded, prohibited, and evaluated, without being given space to express opinions, reasons, or complaints. This pattern positions the child as a “recipient” of decisions, not a party entitled to be involved in the social process. In contrast, empathetic communication positions the child as an active speaker who is trusted to express their feelings and needs. The child is given the opportunity to express emotions, ask questions, and even offer simple solutions to their problems, resulting in more balanced and dialogic communication (Aprilliani et al., 2023) .

d. Responses to a child’s emotions

Authoritarian communication tends to ignore or reprimand a child’s emotions, for example by blaming, scaring, or telling the child “you must not get angry” without acknowledging their feelings. This approach often suppresses emotional expression, causing children to learn to hide their feelings or explode when they cannot control them. In empathetic communication, adults acknowledge and name the child’s emotions, such as saying: “You’re angry because your toy was taken, aren’t you?” By confirming that such feelings are “okay,” adults then help the child manage their emotions in a healthy way, for example by negotiating or resolving the conflict. Such responses foster emotional regulation and empathy in children from an early age (Marianti d., 2025) .

e. Psychological and social impacts on children

Research indicates that authoritarian communication tends to be associated with low self-esteem, reduced empathy, and limited social skills in young children. Children accustomed to a one-way, command-heavy communication environment struggle to develop the ability to understand others’ feelings and interact in an open and assertive manner. Meanwhile, open, responsive, and warm empathetic communication significantly supports the development of empathy, emotional regulation, and social communication skills in young children. Children who are accustomed to feeling heard and valued in adults’ speech tend to be more self-confident, open, and capable of forming healthy social relationships in the early childhood education (PAUD) environment (Dr. Reza Fahlevi, 2022) .

Teachers and parents play a crucial role in determining the communication style used with young children. During early childhood, children are in a phase of rapid language, social, and emotional development;

therefore, the way adults communicate will influence the formation of children's character, behavior, and social interaction skills. Consequently, the selection of an appropriate communication style must be made consciously to ensure children can develop optimally in both family and school environments.

Parents are a child's first educators, so the communication patterns established within the family form the foundation for the child's behavior. Children tend to mimic the way their parents speak, express emotions, and behave in daily life. If parents communicate in a warm, open, and empathetic manner, children will feel safe and find it easier to express their feelings and opinions. Conversely, if communication is too harsh and authoritarian, children may feel afraid, lack self-confidence, and struggle to express themselves. Therefore, parents need to choose a communication style that aligns with the child's emotional needs while still setting boundaries and rules wisely (Z. Z. Fitri & Rachmy Diana, 2023) .

In addition to parents, teachers also play a crucial role in fostering positive communication with young children. Teachers do not merely serve as conveyors of academic content but also as social and emotional guides for children within the school environment. Teachers who employ empathetic communication—such as actively listening to children, using polite language, and offering warm responses—can create a comfortable and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Children will feel valued, making them more willing to speak up, ask questions, and interact with their peers. Positive communication from teachers can also boost children's self-confidence and social skills during the learning process (Anggraini, 2022) .

Collaboration between teachers and parents is a crucial factor in selecting and implementing communication styles for young children. Children require consistency in communication patterns between home and school environments to avoid confusion regarding rules or expected behaviors. When both teachers and parents employ empathetic communication that respects children's feelings, the child's emotional and social development proceeds more effectively. Conversely, significant differences in communication styles between home and school can make it difficult for children to adjust. Therefore, effective communication between teachers and parents is essential to share information regarding the child's development, needs, and personality (Sa'diyah et al., 2025) .

When choosing a communication style, teachers and parents also need to consider the child's age, personality, and emotional state. Not all children respond the same way to the communication they receive. Some children may be more sensitive to tone of voice or pressure, while others require a firmer yet still warm approach. Therefore, empathetic communication combined with

firmness is considered more effective than fully authoritarian communication. Such communication helps children understand rules without feeling pressured or excessively afraid (Kartikasari et al., 2024.) .Thus, it can be concluded that teachers and parents bear a significant responsibility in selecting the appropriate communication style for young children. Warm, open, and empathetic communication can help children develop self-confidence, social skills, and emotional stability. Meanwhile, overly authoritarian communication has the potential to create barriers in a child's psychological and social development if applied excessively. Therefore, teachers and parents need to collaborate in fostering positive communication to ensure the optimal development of young children(Fitriyani & Kriswanto, 2025) .

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that empathetic communication is far more effective in supporting the development of young children compared to authoritarian communication. Reciprocal, warm, and responsive empathetic interactions can enhance self-confidence, social skills, and a child's ability to regulate emotions effectively. On the other hand, authoritarian communication, which tends to be one-sided and coercive, can hinder children's psychological growth, such as the emergence of fear, social anxiety, and aggressive behavior resulting from imitating harsh communication patterns. The advantage of applying empathetic communication lies in the formation of strong emotional bonds and a sense of security for children in expressing themselves.

However, the challenges include the limited time educators have at school and the need for patience and specialized skills to address children's ever-changing emotional states. For further development, consistent communication between the home and school environments is required through close collaboration between teachers and parents, so that children's character can be fully developed in a democratic yet orderly atmosphere.

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