



## Emotional Intelligence of Early Childhood Parents During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Indonesia

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**Abstract;** *Many cases of violence in early childhood during the Covid-19 epidemic were carried out by their own parents. This is closely related to the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents, which is a reflection of their emotional literacy. This study aims to determine the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents in Indonesia at the time of Covid-19, with a sample of 641 early childhood parents living in the capital city of Jakarta. Data were collected using a questionnaire based on Daniel Goleman's five dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and work together. Analysis techniques used descriptive and inferential quantitative data analysis. The validity of the instruments ranged from 0.323 to 0.603 with a reliability of  $r = 0.625$  to  $0.731$ . The results showed that most of the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic was in the sufficient category (78%). The absence of a correlation between work together with self-awareness ( $F = -0.026$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), self-regulation ( $F = 0.005$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ), and empathy ( $F = 0.002$ ;  $p > 0.005$ ) indicated that parents still need to increase their self-sensitivity and empathy for their children so that they can do positive parenting during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Early Childhood, Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Literacy, Parenting

**Abstrak;** *Banyak kasus kekerasan terjadi pada anak usia dini selama pandemi Covid-19 yang dilakukan oleh orang tuanya sendiri. Hal ini erat kaitannya dengan kecerdasan emosional orang tua anak usia dini, yang merupakan cerminan dari literasi emosi yang mereka miliki. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kecerdasan emosional orang tua anak usia dini di Indonesia pada masa Covid-19, dengan sampel 641 orang tua anak usia dini yang berdomisili di Ibu Kota Jakarta. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan kuesioner berdasarkan lima dimensi kecerdasan emosional Daniel Goleman, yaitu: kesadaran diri, pengaturan diri, motivasi diri, empati, dan kerja sama. Teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis data kuantitatif deskriptif dan inferensial. Validitas instrumen berkisar antara 0,323 hingga 0,603 dengan reliabilitas  $r = 0,625$  hingga  $0,731$ . Hasil penelitian menunjukkan sebagian besar kecerdasan emosional orang tua anak usia dini di Indonesia pada masa pandemi Covid-19 berada pada kategori cukup (78%). Tidak ada hubungan antara dimensi kerja sama dengan kesadaran diri ( $F = -0,026$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ), pengaturan diri ( $F = 0,005$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ), dan empati ( $F = 0,002$ ;  $p > 0,005$ ) menunjukkan bahwa orang tua masih perlu meningkatkan kepekaan diri dan empati kepada anak-anaknya agar bisa melakukan pola asuh positif di masa pandemi Covid-19.*

**Kata kunci:** Covid-19, Anak Usia Dini, Kecerdasan Emosional, Literasi Emosi, Pengasuhan Anak



## Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic is a time of severe crisis that is felt by almost all nations in the world today. The results of research in China that included various populations showed that 22.8% of the population experienced high levels of stress, even 8% of them were residents who did not suffer from this COVID-19 virus (Li, 2020). Meanwhile in Italy, the Covid-19 outbreak has had an impact on changes in their daily lives. Parents of children aged 2-14 years reported that there were many behavioral and emotional problems in their children during the quarantine period (Spinelli et al., 2020). Quarantine is perceived as a very stressful experience for parents as they have to balance various personal, work, and child-rearing lives, without other sources of help (Spinelli et al., 2020). Research in Egypt of 510 adults on the impact of Covid-19 showed that there was an increase in work stress by 34.1%, financial stress by 55.7%, and home stress by 62.7%. Half of them or 53.9% felt horrified and helpless, 66.3% felt worried, although on the other hand feelings of caring for fellow family members increased by 64.7% (El-Zoghby, Soltan, & Salama, 2020).

The psychosocial impact of this pandemic is felt because everyone has to be quarantined at home. The closure of public facilities during the Covid-19 pandemic does not only provide physical or health problems, but also has an impact on psychological conditions, including for children. Children are the ones who are hardest hit by school, lack of outdoor activities, deviant eating patterns and sleeping habits tend to interfere with children's lifestyles (Ghosh, Chatterjee, & Dubey, 2020). In fact, many countries have shown a dramatic increase in cases of domestic or family violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, including in Indonesia. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection recorded that there were three thousand cases of violence against children from January 1 to June 19, 2020 with details: 852 physical violence, 768

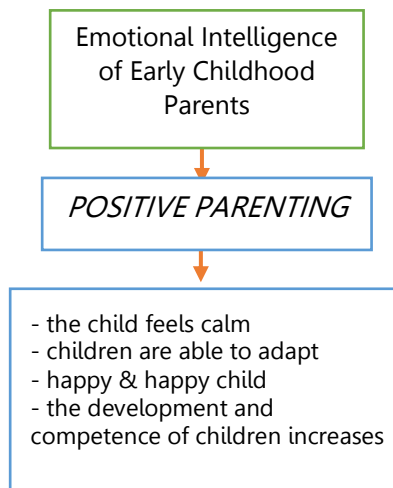
psychological, and 1,848 cases of sexual violence. According to KPPPA, this figure is a high number compared to not before the onset of Covid-19 (Abdi, 2020).

Based on various reviews in the media, the high rate of violence against children during the Corona virus pandemic occurred because many parties did not know good and correct parenting patterns. Children become an outlet for parents who have lost their source of income, are worried about not being able to pay bills, and many are unable to manage their mentality. During this Covid-19 pandemic, the community's economy has decreased drastically so that many parents become stressed and quickly get emotional towards their children or wife (Abdel-Fattah, 2020; Campbell, 2020; Johnson, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic, which represents a massive global health crisis, requires behavior change on a large scale. The role of behavioral and social sciences is needed to help align human behavior with the recommendations of epidemiologists and public health experts. A recent report from WHO stated that health communication has relevance for almost every aspect of health and well-being, including disease prevention, health promotion and quality of life (Bavel et al., 2020). In addition, psychology as a behavioral science emphasizes the importance of parents doing positive parenting during the Covid-19 pandemic so that they are able to support positive child development (Johnson, 2020).

During this Covid-19 pandemic, emotional intelligence is needed for parents of early childhood. Emotional intelligence is defined by Daniel Goleman as individual maturity in understanding one's own emotions (self-awareness), managing emotions (self-regulation), motivating oneself (self-motivation), recognizing other people's emotions (emphaty), and fostering relationships or collaboration (work together) (Livesey, 2017; Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2012; Saklofske & Zeidner, 2006). Various research results show that emotional

intelligence can play a role in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis (Abdel-Fattah, 2020; Fahriza, Rayaginansih, & Agustina, 2020; Restubog, Ocampo, & Wang, 2020a). With good emotional intelligence, parents can also develop children's character. Parents have an important role in developing children's character, both through habituation and by direct example (Cahyaningrum, Sudaryanti, & Purwanto, 2017; Prasanti & Fitriani, 2018; Zaini, 2014). The importance of the role of parents' emotional intelligence on the emotions of early childhood because children's emotional intelligence is basically the same as their parents' emotional intelligence (Turculeț & Tulbure, 2014).



**Figure 1:** The Role of Early Childhood Parents' Emotional Intelligence During the Covid-19 Pandemic

The results show that the emotional intelligence of parents has an effect on the actions they take (Abdel-Fattah, 2020; Teques, Calmeiro, Martins, Duarte, & Holt, 2018). Parents who remain calm, are able to manage stress, are open, flexible and consistent will be able to direct their children's bad behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aims to find out how the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents in Indonesia during the Covid-19 pandemic.

By knowing the emotional intelligence profile of early childhood parents, recommendations can be made regarding

positive parenting which is very much needed during the current Covid-19 pandemic. The concept or framework of thinking in this research can be described as figure 1.

Based on this background, the problems in this study are: 1) How is the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia?; 2) What is the correlation between dimensions in the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents during the Covid-19 pandemic?

### Methodology

The respondents of this study were parents of early childhood living in the city of Jakarta. Responded is considered to represent the condition of parents of early childhood during the Covid-19 situation in other cities in Indonesia. Sampling was done by random sampling. The questionnaire made in the form of a google form was given online to parents of early childhood through the association of early childhood teachers.

The emotional intelligence scale used in this study is based on five dimensions of emotional intelligence according to Daniel Goleman, namely: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and work together (Livesey, 2017; Mayer et al., 2012; Saklofske & Zeidner, 2006; Salovey, & Caruso, 2012). This scale consists of 20 numbered questions with 4 alternative answers, namely: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. The validity test of this scale uses the product moment statistical test by looking at the corrected item-total correlation, while the reliability test uses Cronbach's Alpha (r), with the following results:

**Table 1:** Validity and reliability of parental emotional intelligence instruments the Covid-19 pandemic

Dimension	Validity	Reliability
Self-awareness	Item 1 = 0,366 Item 6 = 0,443 Item 11 =0,461	r=0,646



Self-regulation	Item 16 = 0,434	r=0,625
	Item 2 = 0,407	
	Item 7 = 0,357	
	Item 12 = 0,423	
Self-motivation	Item 17 = 0,442	r=0,630
	Item 3 = 0,323	
	Item 8 = 0,431	
	Item 13 = 0,480	
Empathy	Item 18 = 0,421	r=0,661
	Item 4 = 0,520	
	Item 9 = 0,465	
	Item 14 = 0,454	
Work-together	Item 19 = 0,382	r=0,731
	Item 5 = 0,430	
	Item 10 = 0,603	
	Item 15 = 0,485	
	Item 20 = 0,579	

<i>Self-awareness</i>	641	1,50	4,00	3,07	0,351
<i>Empathy</i>	641	1,75	4,00	3,03	0,380
<i>Work together</i>	641	1,00	4,00	2,04	0,449
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>641</b>	<b>2,10</b>	<b>3,90</b>	<b>2,82</b>	<b>0,232</b>

The data analysis used in this research is descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics are used to determine the intelligence of parents of early childhood as a whole and to determine each dimension of emotional intelligence, namely: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and work together. Meanwhile, inferential statistics in the form of Pearson correlation analysis to describe the significant relationship between dimensions of emotional intelligence through t-value and p-value.

### Result and Discussion

Based on data from respondents who completed the online questionnaire as many as 641 parents of early childhood, it is known that most of the respondents are women (90.8%), Most of them have high school education (61.3%), most of them work as housewives (66.5%), and most of them have children aged 6 years (46.6%).

The results of descriptive statistical analysis for each dimension and the total of all dimensions can be seen in the following table:

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Calculation Results

Dimension	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
<i>Self-awareness</i>	641	2,00	4,00	3,02	0,321
<i>Self-Regulation</i>	641	1,75	4,00	2,92	0,337

The results of descriptive statistical analysis show that the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents with the "low category" are as follows: self-awareness as many as 56 people (9%), self-regulation as many as 121 people (19%), self-motivation as many as 42 people (7%), empathy as many as 72 people (11%), work together as many as 96 people (15%), and a total of 64 people (10%).

The results of descriptive statistical analysis also show that the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents with the "moderate category" are as follows: self-awareness as many as 509 people (79%), self-regulation as many as 465 people (72%), self-motivation as many as 484 people (75%), empathy as many as 455 people (71%), work together as many as 440 people (69%), and a total of 501 people (78%).

Meanwhile, the emotional intelligence of early childhood parents with the "high" category are as follows: self-awareness as many as 76 people (12%), self-regulation as many as 55 people (9%), self-motivation as many as 155 people (18%), empathy as many as 155 people (18%), work together as many as 105 people (16%) and a total of 76 people (12%).

Based on the results of the study, it was found that most of the emotional intelligence of parents of early childhood during the Covid-19 pandemic was in the moderate category (78%). The self-motivation of early childhood parents during the Covid-19 pandemic shows consistency between the low criteria and the high criteria. Self-motivation is the lowest percentage on low criteria and the highest percentage on high criteria (besides empathy). Parents of early childhood are quite tenacious, unyielding, and able to encourage themselves so that they have



clear targets and goals. The role of parents like this represents a home environment that is able to improve children's literacy skills so that it has a positive impact on their academic abilities (Boonk, Gijsselaers, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018; Fauzia, Nauli, & Purba, 2017; Park, 2008). Parents who are able to encourage themselves tend to be enthusiastic in accompanying their children to study at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Parents are able to carry out positive parenting because parents have confidence in themselves in caring for their children (Johnson, 2020; Stephenson, Parrila, Georgiou, & Kirby, 2008). However, the dominant category is moderate for all dimensions of emotional intelligence, indicating that there are still many parents who need to improve their emotional intelligence. In other words, some other parents still respond to the current situation as a mere distress that interferes with their ability to be supportive caregivers (Spinelli et al., 2020).

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between one dimension of emotional intelligence and another dimension of emotional intelligence. The following is a summary of the results of the analysis of research data, where in yellow is the result of Pearson correlation analysis which describes a significant relationship between the dimensions of emotional intelligence of early childhood parents:

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Each Dimension

No	Dimension	t - value	Sign
1	Self-Awareness : Self-Regulation	0,480	0,000
2	Self-Awareness : Self-Motivation	0,592	0,000
3	Self-Awareness : Empathy	0,483	0,000
4	Self-Awareness : Work together	-0,026	0,506
5	Self-Regulation : Self- Motivation	0,470	0,000

6	Self-Regulation : Empathy	0,423	0,000
7	Self-Regulation : Work together	0,005	0,909
8	Self-Motivation : Empathy	0,522	0,000
9	Self-Motivation : Work together	-0,129	0,001
10	Empathy : Work together	0,002	0,961

Based on the correlation analysis between dimensions, it is known that self-awareness has a relationship with all dimensions, except the work together dimension ( $F = -0.026, p > 0.005$ ). Awareness of early childhood parents towards themselves plays a role in controlling and encouraging themselves in raising children at home during the current Covid-19 pandemic ( $F = 0.480$  with  $p < 0.001$ ;  $F = 0.592$  with  $p < 0.001$ ). By understanding their strengths and weaknesses, parents are able to empathize with their children's needs and feelings during the Covid-19 pandemic ( $F = 0.483, p < 0.001$ ). Meanwhile, the absence of a relationship between parental self-awareness on the work-together dimension indicates that parents of early childhood children tend to be oriented towards activities that they can do with their children, including studying together at home. Learning support from parents plays a major role in increasing learning motivation and in improving various abilities of early childhood such as reading and arithmetic (Choi & Cho, 2020; Niklas, Cohrsen, & Tayler, 2016). Although most of the parents in this study are housewives and have a high school education background, they are parents who are quite enthusiastic about doing learning activities with their children at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. Low income does not prevent them from empowering the environment around them in certain ways so that they are still able to improve children's abilities (Leyva, 2019).

On the other hand, the absence of a relationship between the dimensions of empathy and work together also shows that parents are only oriented to activities and



results without being accompanied by empathy ( $F = 0.002$ ,  $p > 0.005$ ). Plus descriptive statistical data which shows that most or as much as 71% of parents of early childhood only have a moderate sense of empathy. Parents may provide assistance in learning at home for their children during the Covid-19 pandemic, but this is done without understanding and accommodating the child's feelings. For example, they do not understand when children feel bored with the same way of learning every day. This needs to be watched out for, especially if parents only ask their children to do their school assignments every day so that they become angry if their children have not completed their tasks. If this happens every day, it means that parents are less able to provide habituation and role models in developing children's character (Cahyaningrum et al., 2017; Prasanti & Fitriani, 2018; Zaini, 2014). Activities carried out by parents with their children at home should be fun activities so that they can increase children's emotional intelligence (Liau, Liau, Teoh, & Liau, 2003; Nikolajeva, 2013; Turculeț & Tulbure, 2014). Parents need to be more aware that children's emotional intelligence is as important as academic ability, especially during the current Covid-19 pandemic crisis (Abdel-Fattah, 2020; Fahriza et al., 2020; Restubog, Ocampo, & Wang, 2020b). Parents need to be more aware of their attitude that only focuses on themselves and is less able to empathize with their children. Weak emotional intelligence of parents like this can be one of the causes of increased acts of violence against children during the Covid-19 pandemic (Campbell, 2020; Ono, Sachau, Deal, Englert, & Taylor, 2011).

In addition, the results showed that the self-regulation of early childhood parents was correlated with all dimensions of emotional intelligence, except for the work together dimension ( $F = 0.005$ ,  $p > 0.005$ ). This means that self-regulation or emotional control in early childhood parents has succeeded in contributing to parents so that they are quite empathetic to their children

and are able to encourage themselves in raising children at home during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the absence of a correlation between self-regulation and work-together indicates a lack of emotional management during spending time with children at home. Lack of emotional management can cause parents to lack planning in accompanying children to study at home. Whereas in times of crisis like this there are many tools in children's learning that must be adjusted (Underwood et al., 2020). Parents must be creative in finding new ways of learning at home, including using appropriate ICT (information communication and technology) equipment for early childhood (Hesterman, 2013; Leyva, 2019). Through positive parenting, children's energy can be channeled appropriately for the better development of intellectual, emotional, academic and social skills. By adopting positive parenting skills, parental stress can also be reduced. Children can be made tougher, stronger emotionally and better prepared to emerge from the crisis of the pandemic to a successful future life (Johnson, 2020).

## Conclusion

The results of this research on the emotional intelligence of parents of early childhood in Indonesia show that most of the emotional intelligence of parents of early childhood are in the moderate category (78%). Parents are tenacious enough, never give up, and are able to encourage themselves in raising children during this Covid-19 pandemic. However, parents still need to increase their sensitivity to themselves and their children so that they can do more positive parenting during this Covid-19 pandemic.

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