



The Influence of Parents' Socioeconomic Status on Early Childhood Language Development

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ABSTRACT

Parents' socioeconomic status is indirectly related to children's language development. Families with a lower socioeconomic status tend to prioritize meeting basic family needs, which may result in less attention being given to their child's language development. This study aims to investigate the impact of parents' socioeconomic status on the language development of young children. The research method used is descriptive quantitative. The data collection technique involved distributing questionnaires via Google Forms, using a Likert scale to measure the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on early childhood language development. The results of this study found that the socioeconomic status of parents has a significant impact on children's language development. Children with higher socioeconomic status parents tend to have better language development compared to children with low socioeconomic status parents. This is because children from middle-to-upper middle families tend to have better access to books, technology devices, educational toys, and additional educational that can stimulate language development. In addition, parents who have higher education are more able to provide quality language stimulation to their children. This study provides an understanding for parents as well as the community about how the socioeconomic status of parents can affect early childhood language development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Young children who receive insufficient stimulation for language development may face long-term effects, such as lower cognitive and academic progress and behavioral problems due to a lack of behavioral stimulation and experience (Madya et al., 2019). Children with poor language development, as noted by Wang (2023), are likely to be more reserved, shy, and less active. Additionally, Yang et al., (2021) state that children with inadequate language development tend to have lower school readiness and are at risk of academic challenges. From these expert opinions, it can be concluded that children with poor language development may experience adverse effects on their socio-emotional and cognitive development, as well as academic issues that affect their school readiness.

As the next generation, early childhood plays a critical role in ensuring the future of the nation. Therefore, they must be well-prepared to take on their responsibilities. To achieve this, children need broad opportunities to grow and develop optimally. (Musyarofah, 2017; Pujianti, 2022; Yusra et al., 2020), explain that early childhood is a crucial period for laying the foundation for developing physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional, self-concept, discipline, independence, artistic, moral, and religious values. Among these aspects of development, language development is particularly essential for children.

Language plays a vital role as a communication tool in daily life. Through language, (Arnianti, 2019; Hoerudin, 2023) individuals can express ideas, thoughts, feelings, or information to others, whether in symbolic, spoken, or written forms. According to Gunarsa & Gunarsa (2008), language development involves the growth of verbal skills, influenced by both the maturation of speech organs and the environment. Language development is one of the fundamental skills that children must acquire, in line with their developmental stages. (Arnianti, 2019; Udjir & Watini, 2022) note that language allows children to communicate their intentions, goals, thoughts, and feelings to others. In addition to being a key determinant of future success, language development is crucial because it helps children build their social skills. According to (Heryani et al., 2020; Wardhana, 2013), communication or language use is a developmental stage that requires the attention of educators and parents.

Efforts to develop the six aspects of child development, especially language, involve the roles of teachers, families, and communities. The family, as the smallest unit of society, plays a significant role in educating children, particularly parents, as noted by (Badri et al., 2014; Syahyoseva, 2023; Tamam, 2018). The role of parents in education is crucial because education begins within the family, and parents are the first educators (Apriyanti, 2019; Brantasari, 2022; Tamam, 2018). This is because children first learn language from their family or caregivers.

Bredekamp and Copple, as cited in (Annisa et al., 2023; Salamah & Supriyadi, 2021), explain that language development is influenced by a child's environment. Interaction with more mature speakers, such as adults, plays a crucial role in enhancing a child's communication skills. Storytelling, according to Etnawati (2022), is considered one form of early childhood language ability. Through storytelling, children express language, develop thinking skills, and interact with others. A child's language skills, as (Etnawati, 2022) notes, can be assessed by their ability to tell stories. Therefore, a child's growth and development must always be monitored, especially in education, to ensure their optimal progress.

Early childhood education (ECE) refers to the educational level before elementary school, aimed at children from birth to six years old, providing educational stimulation to support their physical and mental growth (Agustina et al., 2022; Siswanto et al., 2019; Sokhibah & Dewi, 2015). From these perspectives, it is clear that early education aims to equip children

with life skills and help them develop their full potential, particularly in language. According to (Agustina et al., 2022; Azwarna & Mayar, 2019; Yenti, 2021), the goal of early childhood education is to stimulate children's potential so they become individuals who are faithful, pious, morally upright, healthy, knowledgeable, capable, critical, creative, independent, confident, and responsible citizens.

In education, parents' socioeconomic status is a contributing factor to a child's academic success. (Jatmiko, 2017; Sotarduga, 2021) suggest that a favorable economic situation positively affects the availability of learning resources that facilitate a child's education, including the development of language skills. Parental socioeconomic status, including family income, plays an essential role in meeting children's primary, secondary, and tertiary needs, including their educational needs. Moreover, as Arace et al., (2018), point out, parents with limited knowledge significantly affect their children's development, particularly their education. Families with lower educational backgrounds tend to focus more on meeting primary needs, whereas families with higher educational backgrounds are more likely to set a positive example in promoting a better quality of life.

Atika & Rasyid (2018), state that socioeconomic status is determined by an individual's ability to meet daily needs based on their income, which, in turn, affects their social standing. Atika & Rasyid (2018) describes socioeconomic status as a grouping of people based on similarities in occupation, education, and income. Syahyoseva (2023) defines socioeconomic status as an individual's capacity to meet their needs, influenced by income, education, and family size. From these expert opinions, it can be concluded that socioeconomic status is a measure of an individual's standing in society, based on factors such as economics, education, and occupation, which also include rights, duties, and privileges. To meet a child's educational needs, family income must be managed well, as a parent's earnings play a vital role in fulfilling family members' needs.

This aligns with research conducted by (Atika & Rasyid, 2018; Syahyoseva, 2023), which found that parents' socioeconomic status significantly affects the socio-emotional development of early childhood in kindergartens. During preliminary observations at Kasih Bunda Kindergarten in Kemiling, Bandar Lampung, the researcher observed similar findings, noticing differences in language development between children from higher and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds had limited vocabulary to express their ideas and emotions, struggled to answer questions clearly, and used unstructured sentences. However, (Manda & Suardi, 2016) found no significant correlation between parents' socioeconomic status and students' academic performance. Given these mixed results and the views of experts, the researcher felt it necessary to conduct a study on the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on early childhood language development, as previous studies have not specifically addressed this topic.

This study aims to determine the influence of parents' socioeconomic status on early childhood language development. Additionally, it is hoped that this research will contribute to our understanding of the factors influencing children's development, raise awareness of the importance of language development, and encourage further research on this topic.

2. METHODS

This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach aimed at determining the influence or relationship between parents' socioeconomic status as the independent variable (X) and early childhood language development as the dependent variable (Y). This type of research was chosen to test the theories presented in the study. The research was conducted at Kasih

Bunda Kindergarten in Kemiling, Bandar Lampung. The population of this study consisted of parents and children aged 5-6 years at the kindergarten. The sampling technique used was random sampling. Data collection methods included interviews, documentation, and questionnaires. The collected data were then analyzed using simple linear regression analysis to determine the extent of the impact of parents' socioeconomic status on children's language development. The research design is outlined as follows in **Figure 1**:

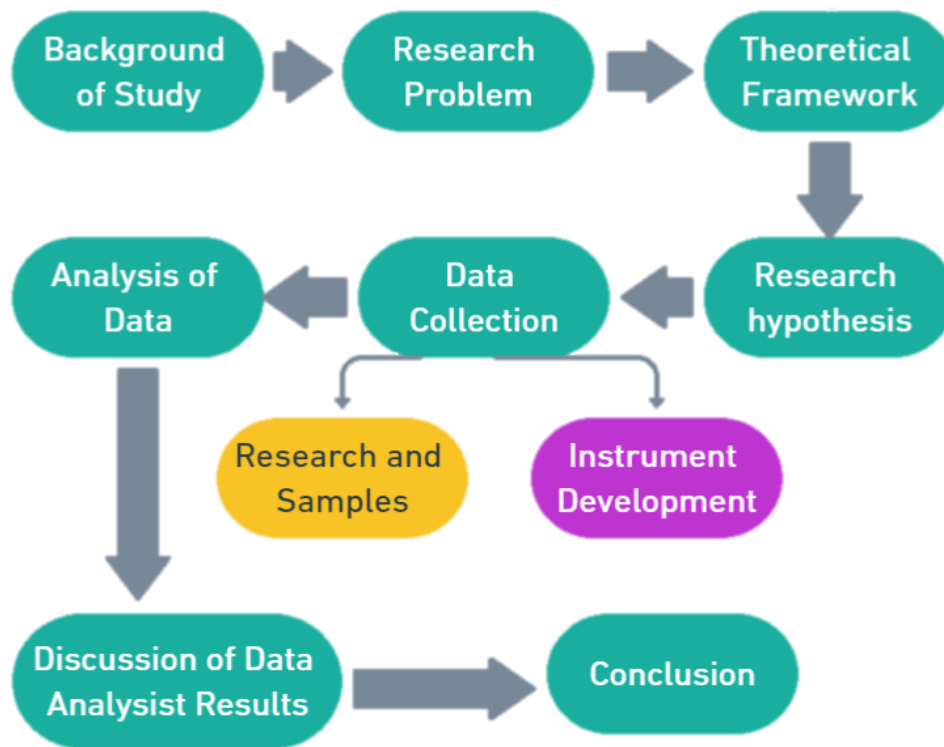


Figure 1. The research design (source: Riyadi, 2023)

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the influence of family socioeconomic status on early childhood language development. Data was collected from 40 respondents with various economic backgrounds, the majority of whom came from lower-middle-income families. **Table 1** below shows the distribution of parental income and children's language development scores.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of parents' income and children's language scores

Variabel	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Minimum	Maximum
Parents' income	40	2.000.000	1.000.000	500.000	4.500.000
Children's language scores	40	10,5	3,2	4	18

From the table above, it is noted that the average parents' income is Rp 2,000,000 per month, with a range between Rp 500,000 and Rp 4,500,000. This suggests that most children come from lower-middle-income families. It can also be observed that there is a considerable variation in both parents' income and children's language development scores. Most of the children in the sample come from low-income families, yet there is significant variation in their language development scores.

The following **Table 2** explains the results of a simple linear regression analysis that aims to test the influence of parental income on children's language development scores and find out how much parental income contributes to children's language development scores.

Table 2. Simple linear regression results

Parameter	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-Value
Intercept	7,5000	1,050	7,143	0,000
Parents' income	2,5e-06	1,05e-06	2,381	0,021

In **Table 2**, the regression coefficient of 2.5e-06 indicates that for every increase in parents' income by Rp 1,000,000, the child's language development score increases by 2.5 points. This highlights that parents' income has a positive and significant effect on children's language development. The p-value of 0.021 indicates that parents' income has a statistically significant influence at the 0.05 significance level. This means that family socioeconomic status significantly affects early childhood language development.

Furthermore, **Table 3** explains distribution of children's language development scores in a research sample grouped based on parents' income levels. This table aims to identify whether there is a significant difference in the average score of children's language development between income groups.

Table 3. Distribution of language scores based on parents' income

Parents' income (Rp)	Number of Children	Average Language Score
< Rp 1.500.000	15	8,3
Rp 1.500.000 - Rp 2.500.000	12	10,5
> Rp 2.500.000	13	13,2

In **Table 3**, it can be seen that children from families with higher incomes (above Rp 2,500,000) have higher average language scores (13.2) compared to children from lower-income families (8.3).

The results of the study indicate that parents' socioeconomic status has a significant impact on the language development of young children. Several factors explain why parental income affects children's language skills, including (1) the influence of income on access to educational resources. Family income plays a crucial role in determining a child's access to educational resources. Families with higher socioeconomic status have greater financial capacity to provide resources that support children's language development. For example, access to books and educational technology: higher income enables parents to purchase more storybooks, educational games, and other learning materials. Parents in higher-income groups are also generally able to provide technological devices such as tablets, computers, and educational apps, which children can use for independent language learning. As researched by Yustyalatifa et al., (2022) that the use of technological devices can improve children's language development. In contrast, children from lower-income families often have limited access to technology, which restricts their ability to use it as a learning tool.

Factor (2) is the influence of income on parental involvement. Higher income often allows parents to have more flexible time, enroll their children in preschool, and participate in language lessons or tutoring programs. This involvement may include time spent reading together, engaging in learning activities such as playing word games, or discussing daily activities with the child. This is supported by research (Wibowo & Suyadi, 2021) which reveals that playing word games or word guessing can improve children's language development. The most significant impact of family income is the ability to enroll children in quality preschools to develop language skills, particularly in areas such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary enrichment. Good preschools offer a learning environment rich in verbal stimulation, providing many opportunities for children to interact with peers and teachers. Higher income also enables parents to enroll their children in extracurricular activities that support language development, such as art classes, theater, or discussion clubs, all of which foster language growth. These activities give children the opportunity to interact with peers and adults, helping to improve their verbal communication skills and expand their vocabulary. Children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds generally have broader access to these activities, which accelerates their language development. On the other hand, children from low-income families may have limited access to such activities, reducing their opportunities to improve language skills beyond the home and school context.

Based on the research results and discussion above, this study shows that family socioeconomic status has a significant influence on early childhood language development. These findings are in line with previous research, which emphasizes that socioeconomic factors play a key role in children's development, especially in terms of access to educational resources and verbal stimulation at home. The study found that for every Rp 1,000,000 increase in parental income, the child's language development score increased by 2.5 points. This finding supports the theory by (Lecheile et al., 2021), which states that the family's socioeconomic environment affects child development through the resources available to the family. Families with higher incomes tend to have better access to books, educational technology, and time to engage in educational activities with their children, such as reading together or playing educational games. This is consistent with (Syah, 2018), who showed that the higher the parents' socioeconomic status, the greater their ability to meet their children's needs to support language development.

Although the results of this study are consistent with previous studies, there are some significant differences. In this study, parental income only accounted for about 12.5% of the variation in children's language development. This indicates that although family income is important, other factors also play a role in children's language development. Afriliani et al., (2023) stated that the quality of verbal interaction at home, such as daily conversations between parents and children, may have a greater impact than merely socioeconomic status. This suggests that while parental income provides access to resources, how those resources are used in daily interactions at home is more crucial for children's language development.

Weizman & Snow (2020) also found that high-quality verbal stimulation from parents and teachers can help children from low-income families achieve good language development. This shows that socioeconomic status is not always the sole determinant. Factors such as a supportive social and educational environment also play a crucial role in fostering children's language development. In this context, the study highlights the importance of not only family income but also a supportive verbal interaction environment.

These findings provide important insights for expanding language development theories. While family income is important, other factors such as the quality of verbal interaction, access to quality preschools, and daily language stimulation also contribute significantly.

Therefore, expanding or modifying early childhood language development theories should include non-economic factors such as family interaction and preschool environments. This study emphasizes that language development results from the interaction of various social, economic, and environmental factors, which together influence children's language skills.

Overall, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how family socioeconomic status contributes to early childhood language development. However, it is also important to recognize that high-quality verbal interaction and access to supportive educational environments play a crucial role in accelerating language development. Therefore, intervention programs that provide access to educational resources and high-quality verbal stimulation are essential, especially for children from low-income families, to narrow the language development gap.

4. CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that parents' socioeconomic status has a significant influence on the language development of young children. Parental income plays a crucial role in determining children's access to educational resources, parental involvement, access to quality preschools, and extracurricular activities that support children's language development. Children from higher-income families have more opportunities to develop through access to books, educational technology, supportive learning environments, and social interactions that enrich their language skills. In contrast, children from low-income families tend to face barriers to accessing adequate educational resources, which can hinder their language development. Therefore, it is important for the government and educational institutions to provide additional support for low-income families, such as book subsidies, free preschool access, and affordable extracurricular activities, to reduce the language development gap caused by socioeconomic disparities.

5. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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