

# IMPROVING INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN THROUGH EDUCATIONAL GAME TOOLS

Dini Wahdiyati, Said Romadlan<sup>\*</sup>, Mukhlish Muhammad Maududi, Zulfahmi Yasir Yunan

Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA Jl. Limau II No.2, RT.3/RW.3, Kramat Pela, Kec. Kby. Baru, City, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta 12130, Indonesia

Email: saidromadlan@uhamka.ac.id

#### Abstract

The era of disruption caused fundamental changes in society, including in the pattern of family communication and the education system. Parents are busy with their work, while children have to study at school, causing interpersonal communication between parents and children to become less intense. In fact, interpersonal communication between parents and children plays an important role in children's success in learning, reducing stress, and determining children's future. Therefore, it is necessary to revitalize interpersonal communication between parents and children's communication between parents and children by utilizing Educational Game Tools. This communication between parents and children through a fun educational game approach as well as to reduce the pressure on children due to the burden of learning at school to partners, namely Cahaya Ria Kindergarten, in Ciledug, Tangerang. The results of this program show that the educational game approach is able to build interpersonal communication between parents and children overcome learning pressure at school, and is able to reduce children's dependence on the use of gadgets.

Keywords: Interpersonal Communication, Educational Game Tools, Cahaya Ria Kindergarten

# **INTRODUCTION**

Current societal development has entered what is called the Era of Disruption 4.0. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), disruption means being uprooted. The term disruption was popularized by Clayton Christensen, in the context of how to win a competition. Disruption in the everyday sense is change, but not just change, but fundamental or basic change triggered by a technological revolution that targets all gaps in human life (Christensen et al., 2018). One of the main factors causing disruption is digitalization. Digitalization is the process of changing various information from analog format to digital format so that it is easy to use (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016).

The impact of this era of disruption targets all gaps and areas of human life, including the family. The impact of the era of disruption on the family includes the emergence of a moral and ethical crisis, problems of disorientation of family functions, and problems of the spread of secularization and liberalization of life (Alam et al., 2023). On the other hand, the era of disruption also affects the education model or system that is applied. The impacts of the era of disruption on the field of education include the commercialization of education, the dangers of cyberspace, and the emergence of dependency. However, there are also advantages or opportunities that can be utilized with the era of disruption such as the ease and effectiveness of education (Cholil, 2019).

In general, the era of disruption which is marked by the use of information and communication technology has an impact on various aspects such as being reluctant to socialize physically and preferring online meetings, increasing fraud, cyber crime, including cyber bullying, the development of negative content, slander and defamation, alienating close ones (family), wasting time, and decreasing a person's learning achievement and work ability (Syahputra et al., 2023). Apart from that, the era of disruption also affects communication patterns within the family. There is a communication gap due to generational differences between digital native children and digital migrant parents which hinders family communication, making family communication ineffective (Junaidi et al., 2022).

Therefore, efforts are needed to overcome the negative impacts of this era of disruption, especially on families, especially children because they are considered the most vulnerable to the impacts of the era of disruption. So far, there have been various efforts to overcome the impact of the era of disruption on families, including relying on the role of parents as teachers, educators and companions for the children in the family (Boiliu, 2020). Other efforts are through managing stress due to the burden of school assignments (Alawiyah, 2020), through character education (Anggraini, 2022), and instilling local wisdom values (Surodiana, 2020).

This partnership program offers a solution to overcome the impact of the era of disruption on families, especially on the relationship between parents and children through revitalizing interpersonal communication using Educational Game Tools (Alat Permainan Edukasi/APE). Interpersonal Communication is communication between people face to face, directly both verbally and nonverbally (Mulyana, 2017). According to Joseph A. Devito, defining Interpersonal Communication as communication that takes place between two people who have a permanent and clear relationship (Devito, 2011). The main function of Interpersonal Communication is to establish interpersonal relationships. One example of Interpersonal Communication is communication between parents and children, which functions to establish interpersonal relationships between parents and children.

In the dynamics of interpersonal relationships between parents and children, tensions sometimes occur which result in interpersonal relationships becoming strained. This can be caused by internal factors such as personal problems or external factors such as environmental conditions or situations or social changes such as the Covid-19 pandemic and so on. For this reason, it is necessary to revitalize or strengthen interpersonal relationships through interpersonal communication between parents and children. Interpersonal Communication has a positive role and function in interpersonal relationships within the family, such as creating harmonization within the family (Awi et al., 2016; Novianti et al., 2017), providing solutions

to conflicts between parents and children (Kusuma, 2017), and developing character early childhood (Handayani, 2016).

The problem faced by partners, namely Cahaya Ria Kindergarten, Ciledug, is that after the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a change in learning from online to offline (face to face) back to what it was before the Covid-19 pandemic. The change in learning patterns from online to offline causes children, teachers and parents to have to adapt again to offline learning patterns. Children have to go to school and do their study assignments at home. Teachers also have to return to school with a workload that must be prepared as well as possible. Parents return to work at the office or at home. Such situations and conditions, directly or indirectly, cause various pressures or stress, including reducing the intensity of interpersonal communication between parents and children in the family.

Therefore, the solution offered to overcome the problems above is to hold a community partnership program in the form of games through Educational Game Tools (EGT). The aim of this program is to reduce stress in children due to a lot of learning tasks, and increase the intensity of interpersonal communication between parents and children. EGT itself has many benefits for children's education and learning, including improving the social emotional development of early childhood (Rakhmawati, 2022), improving the cognitive development of early childhood (Fitriana, 2022), including reducing levels of anxiety and stress in children (Rahayuningrum et al., 2020), and helps improve communication between parents and children (Vidiyanti et al., 2023).

#### **IMPLEMENTATION METHOD**

The implementation of the community partnership program with the Cahaya Ria Kindergarten partner in Ciledug uses methods, namely presentation and practice, while data collection methods use documentation, observation and interviews. The presentation method is used to explain activity material by resource persons regarding Educational Game Tools (EGT) which includes methods, functions, types and benefits. The practical method is used to practice EGT directly, involving parents, children and teachers as facilitators of this activity.

The data collection method uses documentation in the form of documents, photos of activities and documents regarding activity partners. Documentation is data in the form of personal documents, administrative data, periodic documents and mass media news (Eriyanto, 2019). Meanwhile, the observation method in this program is used to directly observe the activities of using EGT by children who are assisted by their parents, especially those related to interpersonal communication that occurs between them. Observation is the activity of directly observing an object to see closely the activities carried out systematically (Kriyantono, 2014). In-depth interviews are basically a kind of discussion between researchers and informants to obtain information (Berger, 2011). The interviews here are used to explore more in-depth information from sources regarding the topic and implementation of this community partnership program.

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Community Partnership Program (Program Kemitraan Masyarakat/PKM) is implemented by the Community Service Team, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. Dr. HAMKA (FISIP UHAMKA) chaired by Dini Wahdiyati, M.IKom. This program was held on March 8-9 2021, at Cahaya Ria Kindergarten, Larangan, Ciledug, Tangerang. As partners for this activity are the students of Cahaya Ria Kindergarten, totaling 16 children from Kindergarten A and Kindergarten B. This activity also involves parents and teachers as game companions and facilitators. Meanwhile, the speakers for this Community Partnership Program were Dini Wahdiyati, M.IKom., as a lecturer in Communication Sciences Department, UHAMKA, and Thamrin Basuki as a craftsman of wooden educational game tools.

In its implementation, the Community Partnership Program uses various types of EGT such as wooden jigsaw puzzles, animal finger puppets, family finger puppets, wooden whistles, and motivational cards. In practice, each EGT has a different way of playing and functioning, especially in relation to efforts to revitalize interpersonal communication between parents and children. The material regarding the forms and methods of EGT games was presented by Thamrin Basuki as a Craftsman of Wooden Educational Game Equipment, while the material regarding the function of EGT which is related to the revitalization of interpersonal communication between parents and children was explained by Dini Wahdiyati, M.IKom., as a lecturer in Communication Sciences Department, UHAMKA.

The following explains the forms, methods of play, and functions of EGT used in this partnership program to develop interpersonal communication between parents and children.

#### a. Puzzle Game

Puzzles are one of the most popular educational game tools (EGT). This puzzle game is played by putting pieces of an image together so that when put together they all form a complete picture. This game requires patience, precision and unity if played together. Puzzle games have the benefit of being able to practice solving problems. This game can be completed in various ways. You can start from the top, bottom, right or left edges, you can also start assembling the pieces that have been found by attaching them to other pieces and then look for the closest relationship to the pieces found previously. It is from this process that children learn to solve problems and make decisions about where to start to complete the puzzle.

According to Thamrin Basuki, this puzzle game can train children's precise eye and hand coordination. The eyes and hands throughout the puzzle mission will be continuously active because the child matches the images of the pieces. This can train accuracy and memory in recognizing various shapes and colors. For kindergarten children, this matching experience may not be easy. The more puzzle pieces there are, the more difficult the matching process will be. So by playing with parents, with father or mother you can share the burden so that the child will be helped and have more fun because they have the support of their parents to complete the puzzle.

Apart from that, this puzzle game also trains children's motor skills because children will move piece by piece without breaking them. In this way, children will do it carefully, controlling their movements and accuracy, including their speed. Children will try to place the puzzle pieces and try to achieve harmonization. According to Dini Wahdiyati, in terms of developing interpersonal relationships and communication, this puzzle game, if played together with parents, can bridge relationships and communication after children's learning at school. Dini Wahdiyati, further explained:

"Children seem to be taken to another realm of communication, not about completing learning assignments from school, but how to complete fun adventure play missions. The coordination created between parents and children will grow and rebuild a more flexible and close relationship. This is quite effective in reducing stress and improving relationships after studying at school".



Figure 1. Conventional Model Wooden Jigsaw Puzzle

b. Animal Finger Puppets and Family Finger Puppets

Other educational game tools (EGT) are animal finger puppets and family finger puppets. Animal finger puppets are played by inserting them into the fingers of the hand. The facilitator can offer various stories that can be acted out by acting out at least two of the many or more stuffed animals. According to Thamrin Basuki, this animal finger puppet game is somewhat different from puzzles where children can play it independently. In this animal finger puppet game, the way to play it relies more on parents or facilitators as storytellers by playing the role of each animal puppet displayed. This animal finger puppet game can be played by acting out the setting of a wisdom story about the animal's friendship, or other interesting themes. "This game can be played by acting out the sounds of different animals as markers of the different characters of the animal figures being played," explained Thamrin.

This animal finger puppet game can also be played involving children as one of the actors. According to Dini Wahdiyati, by involving children as one of the actors in playing with parents, it will be possible to build harmonious and comfortable interpersonal communication between parents and children. "Apart from that, in this animal finger puppet game, moral messages can also be inserted so that children understand moral values without feeling forced or pressured, and it doesn't result in children actually becoming stressed, or feeling judged which can disrupt their mental condition," explained Dini.

Not much different from the animal finger puppet game, the family finger puppet game has a similar way of playing to the animal finger puppet game. In this family finger puppet game, parents or facilitators play finger puppets using the roles of family members consisting of father, mother, children (siblings), grandfather and grandmother. According to Thamrin Basuki, the stories that can be used as topics in family finger puppet games are quite varied, but generally revolve around daily family activities involving the roles of each member. In this game, children can be involved as players who act as children.

According to Dini Wahdiyati, this family finger puppet game has positive benefits for children, because through this family finger puppet game children can learn about the different roles, rights and obligations of each family member. In this way, children can learn to understand their position in the family, the rights and obligations of children as family members, including being able to solve problems within the family. "This game will also be fun and will keep children entertained, carried away in a different atmosphere and free from feelings of pressure after learning from school," explained Dini.



Figure 2. Animal Finger Puppets and Family Finger Puppets

c. Wooden Whistles and Motivational Cards

The next EGT is a wooden whistle, which is a type of toy that makes a sound when blown. Wooden whistles are blown with force by coordinating the muscles around the mouth. Similar to the analogy of sighing when you feel stressed, blowing a whistle is one way to reduce stress in children. According to Thamrin Basuki, using this wooden whistle is very easy and simple, by blowing it the whistle will make a sound. Regarding the use of this wooden whistle, Thamrin Basuki further explained:

"This wooden whistle can also be used as a game by blowing it in such a way, or you can also follow the tune of a song so the sound will also be different. This wooden whistle can also be used in games as a code and for certain purposes, for example when children are studying and they seem bored, feel unable to concentrate, or feel tired while studying, then ask one of them to blow the whistle 3 to 5 times as a code to take a short break, then blow the whistle again as a code to continue studying again".

Another form of EGT is a motivation card in the form of an attractive image or visual accompanied by motivational words or sentences. This motivational card is a way to communicate or convey messages using visual language in the form of pictures and writing. The use of motivation cards can be done in the form of a game, for example children are asked to take one of the cards and practice the activity according to the card image.

According to Dini Wahdiyati, children prefer seeing pictures rather than hearing people

talk, so these motivational cards are considered more effective in conveying motivational messages to children. "Many parents use speaking to convey certain messages, for example to learn, but often this speaking method does not work, and children will even feel forced and annoyed because they are being forced. By using this motivation card, children are invited to be able to observe the message in the motivation card, and are invited to understand its contents, then slowly directed to apply it in the children's daily lives," explained Dini.



Figure 3. Wooden Whistle and Motivational Card

In general, the implementation of the Community Partnership Program has had a positive impact on the students of Cahaya Ria Kindergarten, as program partners. As stated by Eva Kristen Muryati, S.Pd., as Head of Cahaya Ria Kindergarten, that after participating in this program the students looked more enthusiastic and happy in participating in the learning process at school. Likewise, parents feel the benefits of this program because they gain new knowledge or perspectives in accompanying their children in learning, namely by using educational game tools introduced in this Community Partnership program.



Figure 4. Children and parents playing various forms of educational game tools (left). Resource persons for the Community Partnership Program, Dini Wahdiyati, M.Ikom., and Thamrin Basuki (right).

Based on observations during the activity, and the results of discussions with the teacher as the program facilitator, as well as the parents of the students who participated in assisting and participating in the activity, this partnership program was able to produce outcomes or outputs, namely first, through this EGT, Cahaya Ria Kindergarten students felt happy and excited, take part in this activity because EGT can help them develop various cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities. Beside that, EGT can also help students overcome pressure or stress after studying and doing school assignments. For parents and children, EGT can help maintain and develop interpersonal relationships and communication between parents and children.

As a learning method, EGT does have positive benefits for both children and parents in various aspects. Previous studies show various benefits of EGT for children, especially young children, such as improving the thinking power of young children, as well as training children's social skills and courage (Zega, 2023). EGT also improves the cognitive abilities of young children (Fitriana, 2022; Syahreni et al., 2024), and increases children's affective and psychomotor intelligence (Sjadjoem, 2021). In other aspects, EGT is also useful for improving the social emotional development of early childhood (Rakhmawati, 2022), and reducing levels of anxiety and stress in children (Rahayuningrum et al., 2020).

Regarding the function and benefits of EGT for building relationships and interpersonal communication between parents and children, study results show that EGT can help improve communication between parents and children (Vidiyanti et al., 2023). Communication and interpersonal relationships between parents and children play an important role in the development of early childhood, therefore interpersonal communication between parents and children for which is through the use of EGT. Interpersonal communication itself has an important role and function in building interpersonal relationships

within the family, including creating harmony within the family (Awi et al., 2016; Novianti et al., 2017), providing solutions to conflicts between parents and children (Kusuma, 2017), and develop the character of early childhood (Handayani, 2016).

# CONCLUSION

The current era of disruption with all kinds of positive and negative impacts requires special strategies to deal with it, especially for parents to continue educating their children to be successful in the future. One strategy is to maintain and build effective communication between parents and children. To build good interpersonal communication between parents and children, this can be done through the use of EGT with various forms and functions.

This Community Partnership Program is an effort to build interpersonal communication between parents and children through EGT. The results of this program show that with this EGT students feel more happy, enthusiastic and happy in participating in this activity because through EGT it can help students overcome pressure or stress after studying and doing school assignments. Apart from being useful for developing cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities. For parents, EGT can help maintain and develop interpersonal relationships and communication between parents and children in the family.

As a suggestion, in the midst of the proliferation of digital and online-based children's games via gadgets, conventional EGT is still needed, especially in an effort to maintain direct relationships and communication between parents and children, as well as reducing the impact of the use of gadgets on children which can cause more problems, negative impacts such as addiction, laziness, and apathy towards the social environment. Therefore, Community partnership programs that utilize EGT still need to be continued, even improved in a more innovative way because they are very beneficial, especially for parents, children, teachers and stakeholders such as EGT craftsmen.

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