

Social emotional development in early childhood: The use of books as a bridge between parents and teachers

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Abstract

This study aims to describe how communication books are used to improve preschoolers' social-emotional skills through collaboration between parents and teachers. The communication book functions as a daily communication medium between teachers and parents, containing records of children's behavioral development, follow-up actions, and guidance for stimulation activities that can be implemented at home. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach with parents at Al-Ihsan Kindergarten Plus, Purwakarta as participants. Data were collected through interviews and observations and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results show that communication books help ensure consistency between home and school, positively influencing emotional regulation, social interaction, cooperation, empathy, participation in group activities, and independence. Therefore, communication books are an effective tool for supporting early childhood social-emotional development.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotional and social development is one of the key elements in a child's early growth phase. Social and emotional skills serve as the foundation for children to socialize, regulate their emotions, build relationships, and adapt to both learning and social environments. Yusuf (2019), notes that positive emotional and social development helps children build character, empathy, and problem-solving skills from an early age. This statement aligns with Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014, which emphasizes that social-emotional development is one of the essential competencies that need to be stimulated in young children.

However, in reality, not all children demonstrate ideal social-emotional progress. Some children still face challenges in communicating, expressing emotions, collaborating, and managing their feelings. This situation often makes it difficult for teachers and parents to provide consistent support. In this context, the communication book serves as a crucial channel of communication between teachers and parents. Suhartono (2020), explains that the communication book acts as a tool for conveying information about a child's development, strengthening collaboration between school and home, and ensuring continuity in the education received.

The importance of using a communication notebook is growing, as effective communication between teachers and parents has been shown to have a significant impact on children's social and emotional development. Epstein (2011), notes that parental involvement through structured communication can foster positive attitudes, a sense of security, and more appropriate social behavior in children. When information regarding a child's behavior, emotions, and responses during school hours is clearly conveyed through the communication notebook, parents can provide appropriate support at home, thereby ensuring more consistent social and emotional stimulation.

Furthermore, the communication notebook offers various benefits. In an educational context, this tool ensures that parenting and teaching methods at home align with school activities. From the perspective of child development, consistent communication between teachers and parents helps children feel more cared for, receive emotional support, and learn to better regulate themselves. In line with the views of Sari & Lestari (2021), collaboration between parents and teachers through effective communication channels can enhance emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills in young children.

A communication notebook is a written communication tool between the school and parents that serves to convey information regarding a child's learning activities, behavioral progress, and collaboration between teachers and families. Suhartono (2020), states that a communication notebook is a two-way communication medium that plays a role in strengthening the relationship between teachers and parents in a regular and organized manner. Through the communication notebook, teachers can provide notes on a child's progress, while parents have the opportunity to offer feedback or additional information regarding the child's situation at home.

The communication notebook serves as a written communication tool between educational institutions and parents, aimed at conveying information about a child's learning activities, behavioral progress, and collaboration between teachers and families. According to Suhartono (2020), the communication notebook is a two-way communication tool designed to strengthen the relationship between teachers and parents in a routine and organized manner. Through the communication notebook, teachers can provide reports on a child's development, while parents can offer feedback or additional information regarding the child's situation at home.

In addition to serving as a communication tool, the communication book also functions as a record of a child's development. Ardiyanti N (2020), notes that the communication book is a crucial document for teachers to monitor a child's progress over time, as each entry reflects the child's behavioral patterns, abilities, and needs.

Numerous studies on the use of communication books in early childhood education settings reveal that this tool plays a crucial role in bridging communication between educators and parents. Early research highlights the primary functions of the communication book as a medium for conveying daily information,

documenting activities, and monitoring children's behavior. Septiani (2022), found that communication journals significantly contribute to increasing parental involvement, as the information provided by teachers serves as a bridge for addressing children's behavior and development at home. These findings align with Masruri (2017) report, which indicates that routine entries in communication journals help teachers and parents understand children's learning patterns and social interactions more consistently.

With technological advancements, recent research has assessed the shift of the communication book from a conventional print format to a more interactive digital format. Novita & Wulandari (2020), through the use of the ClassDojo app at Rabbani Early Childhood Education Center in South Jakarta, revealed that digital media accelerates.

Several studies in the early childhood education sector also indicate that the effectiveness of communication books is significantly influenced by the quality of interaction between teachers and parents. Kotimah (2025) found that when teachers provide comprehensive, constructive, and relevant notes regarding children's behavior, parents typically respond positively and implement follow-up guidance at home. This situation has been shown to lead to improvements in adaptive behavior and several emotional aspects, including children's independence and empathy. However, research conducted by Atmojo (2024), revealed that the use of communication books in the form of apps still faces challenges such as low digital literacy among parents, limited access to devices, and a lack of training for teachers.

Although a number of studies have explored the purpose, format, and implementation of communication notebooks, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the direct relationship between the use of communication notebooks and social-emotional skills in preschool children. Many previous studies have tended to focus on communication elements, developmental documentation, and increasing parental involvement, but there has been little empirical research examining how these written records can influence specific social-emotional indicators such as emotion regulation, cooperation skills, empathy, and conflict resolution skills. International literature referencing Epstein (2011b), theory of school-family partnership suggests that active communication between educators and parents can foster children's social-emotional development; however, these findings remain theoretical and have not yet been specifically linked to the communication notebook as a primary variable.

Thus, recent research in this field indicates that communication books have proven effective as a means of communication and collaboration between teachers and parents, whether in print or digital form. However, there remains a gap in the research regarding the direct and measurable impact of communication books on children's social-emotional skills. This serves as a key rationale for the current study to conduct an empirical investigation into the extent to which the use of communication books can enhance social-emotional skills in early childhood. It is hoped that this study will provide new insights into deepening our understanding of the role of structured communication between home and school in children's social-emotional development.

The purpose of this study is to describe how communication books are used, their role as a tool for collaboration between schools and homes, and their contribution to enhancing the social-emotional skills of young children. This study is expected to contribute to the literature on collaborative approaches in early childhood education and to provide examples of practices that can be applied in the context of daily learning.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method with a descriptive qualitative approach, aiming to provide in-depth insights into parents' use of communication books to support the social-emotional development of young children. The qualitative descriptive approach was chosen for its ability to reveal phenomena naturally and within context through the experiences of the research subjects, where the researcher serves as the primary instrument and the analysis process is conducted inductively (Fadli, 2021). The study was conducted at TK Plus Al-Ihsan in Purwakarta and involved 10 parents of students as well as a classroom teacher as an additional informant. Data were collected through structured interviews, observations, and documentation, then analyzed

through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions following the model of Miles and Huberman and their reliability was tested using source and technique triangulation (Sugiyono, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on a study conducted through observation, interviews, and data collection from ten parents in the Purwakarta subdistrict, it was revealed that the use of the communication book has a significant impact on the development of social-emotional skills in young children. The book serves as the primary communication tool between teachers and parents, aiming to document children's behavioral development daily, provide feedback, and ensure consistency in the parenting process and character development at home. The research findings indicate that the use of the communication book makes a significant contribution to five social-emotional aspects: emotional regulation, social interaction, cooperation, empathy, and independence.

1. Emotional Regulation

Research findings indicate that recording children's emotional behaviors in a communication notebook enhances parents' understanding of the context in which their children's emotions arise at school. This data serves as a foundation for parents to provide appropriate responses at home, whether through verbal guidance, modeling, or positive reinforcement.

Theoretically, these findings align with the concept of emotional learning, which emphasizes the importance of adult involvement in helping children recognize, name, and manage their emotions. Children who receive consistent responses from teachers and parents tend to have better emotional regulation skills, such as the ability to calm down quickly, express feelings verbally, and understand social behavioral boundaries.

Field observations indicate that children whose parents actively respond to teachers' notes demonstrate better emotional stability compared to children who do not receive follow-up at home. This confirms that the development of emotional regulation in young children proceeds effectively through a continuous process of co-regulation between the school environment and the family.

Teachers regularly document how children express and manage their emotions, for example, when facing conflicts, feeling disappointed, crying, or waiting in line. These notes are then followed up by parents at home through providing guidance, setting an example, and using a consistent approach. One parent shared.

Thanks to the teacher's notes, I now understand the factors that cause my child to feel angry or sad at school, so I can provide additional guidance at home (AF, November 2025).

I tried to follow the teacher's approach to calming my child, and it turned out that my child was easier to talk to at home (NR, November 2025).

The analysis results show that children whose parents are responsive to notes from teachers are able to demonstrate better emotional regulation, such as calming down more quickly, being able to ask for help verbally, and understanding behavioral boundaries.

2. Social Interactions

The notebook serves as a tool for documenting a child's social development, including their ability to greet others, speak politely, share, and wait their turn. This information helps parents understand how their child interacts socially at school—aspects that might not have been immediately apparent before.

Research shows that parents who actively discuss teachers' comments with their children at home can help children improve their social behavior. Children become more confident, more adaptable, and show improvements in the quality of their interactions with peers. These findings reinforce the argument that strengthening social skills both at home and at school yields more significant results than when these activities are conducted separately.

Therefore, the communication book serves as a conduit for information that reinforces continuity in the child's social development, while also preventing discrepancies in routines between the home and school environments.

One mother stated:

Whenever a teacher reports on how my child plays or interacts with others, I immediately discuss it with my child at home so that he can learn to be more polite and confident (CC, November 2025).

I realized that my child still likes to fight over toys. At home, I teach him to take turns and share (DS, November 2025).

The interviews revealed that parents felt supported because they could see how their children interacted with teachers and classmates at school. Observations also showed that the children became more confident and found it easier to socialize.

Thus, the notebook serves as a conduit for information that reinforces the continuity of social stimulation for the children and prevents a disconnect between home and school routines.

3. Collaboration

Collaboration indicators have also improved as teachers have documented group activities carried out by the children, such as tidying up toys together, working on class projects, or collaborating during play. These observations encourage parents to engage in similar activities at home, such as cleaning a room together or preparing school supplies.

Children's collaborative skills develop through observations of group activities conducted at school, such as tidying up toys together, completing class projects, and playing cooperatively. These observations serve as a guide for parents to continue fostering cooperative habits at home.

Research findings indicate a positive correlation between the continuity of collaborative activities at school and at home and improvements in children's cooperative skills. Children become more accustomed to sharing roles, following group rules, and helping family members with simple tasks.

Conceptually, these findings support the developmental ecology approach to child development, which emphasizes that social skills develop effectively when there is consistency between the values and practices of different environments. In this context, the communication book serves as a tool to align educational practices between teachers and parents. One father explained.

If the communication notebook notes that my child has been helping with cleanup, I continue this at home so they get used to working together (RH, December 2025).

I've come to realize that cooperation really does need to be practiced. The teacher demonstrates the activity, and I simply continue it at home; as a result, my child is more willing to help. (MI, December 2025).

The findings indicate a continuity between activities at school and at home, resulting in improved collaboration skills among children, both in academic contexts and in social interactions.

4. Empathy

The communication book also includes notes on the child's empathetic behavior, such as helping friends, showing concern when a friend is sad, or being willing to share. Parents then provide reinforcement in the form of appreciation and by modeling caring behavior at home.

Empathy in children is evident in caring actions, helping friends, and the ability to respond to others' emotions. Research shows that teachers' documentation of empathetic behaviors helps parents provide appropriate reinforcement at home, particularly through praise and setting a good example.

Children who receive positive reinforcement for their empathetic actions tend to exhibit similar behavior in other social situations. This finding suggests that the development of empathy does not occur automatically, but through a process of social learning that involves observation, reinforcement, and habituation.

The increased sensitivity of children to the needs of others found in this study underscores the importance of cooperation between teachers and parents in instilling values of caring from an early age. One mother stated:

I found it helpful when the teacher noted that my child was willing to share or comfort a classmate. That helped me know what to praise at home (EL, December 2025).

I was happy when the teacher noted that my child was willing to help a classmate. At home, I praised him so he would feel appreciated (HN, December 2025).

Observations show that children are becoming more sensitive to the needs of others and are able to demonstrate caring behavior.

5. Independence

Independence in young children is evident in their ability to perform personal tasks without assistance, such as eating on their own, putting on shoes, tidying up their belongings, and following instructions. Notes from teachers in the communication book are very helpful for parents in identifying areas of independence that need improvement.

Teachers' notes regarding a child's ability to perform tasks independently such as eating on their own, putting on shoes, tidying up belongings, and following instructions serve as a guide for parents to practice the same independence at home.

Research shows that children who receive regular independence training at home and school experience increased self-confidence and a greater willingness to try new things. These children also adapt more quickly to the demands of daily activities.

These results indicate that children's development of independence occurs through a continuous process of habit formation and is supported by an environment that provides opportunities and instills confidence in children to act independently. Parents acknowledge that teachers' notes help them identify areas that need reinforcement:

The communication notebook said my child still needs help putting on shoes, so I'm practicing with them again at home (NS, December 2025).

After learning what they're practicing at school, I've been doing the same at home. It turns out my child got used to it faster and became more confident, said a parent (WA, December 2025).

The results of the observations showed an increase in independence among children who received consistent reinforcement at home and school, as evidenced by their willingness to try new things, their ability to complete simple tasks, and their growing self-confidence.

Overall, the research findings indicate that the use of the communication book is highly effective in enhancing the social-emotional skills of young children. This tool facilitates structured, purposeful, and continuous communication between teachers and parents, enabling each indicator emotional regulation, social interaction, cooperation, empathy, and independence to be optimally developed through collaboration between school and family.

Discussion

After conducting research with several respondents regarding the highly effective use of communication books in enhancing the social-emotional skills of young children, the results of observations and interviews indicate that parents play a crucial role in:

1. Emotional Regulation

Emotional regulation is one of the key skills in the social and emotional development of young children. Theories of emotional socialization suggest that children's ability to regulate their emotions is shaped through interactions with their parents, particularly based on how parents respond to the emotional expressions demonstrated by their children. Recent research indicates that parents' responses to children's negative emotions have a significant impact on children's ability to manage their emotions as well as on their social functioning (Liu et al., 2024).

Yusuf (2019), emphasizes that consistent emotional support from the family and educational environments plays a crucial role in helping children recognize, understand, and regulate their emotions more effectively. The findings of this study support this theory: children who received consistent feedback from teachers through communication books and were responded to by parents at home showed improvements in their ability to self-soothe, articulate their needs, and understand behavioral boundaries.

Analysis of the data also indicates that children whose parents are responsive to feedback from teachers tend to have better emotional regulation skills, such as calming down more quickly when experiencing negative emotions, being able to ask for help using words, and being more compliant with rules. This reinforces the idea that consistency in environmental responses is a crucial element in the development of emotional regulation in children.

The results of the analysis show that children whose parents are responsive to feedback from teachers demonstrate better emotional regulation, such as calming down more quickly, being able to ask for help verbally, and understanding behavioral boundaries.

2. Social Relationships

The development of social interactions in young children is greatly influenced by the people around them, particularly parents and educators. Bandura (2020), through Social Learning Theory, explains that children adopt social behaviors by observing, imitating, and modeling the actions of the adults around them. On the other hand, Bronfenbrenner & Rosa (2023) demonstrate that the relationship between the home environment and the school environment the two primary microsystems for children directly influences their social development.

According to Lestari, (2022), "the communication book serves as a tool to foster cooperation between teachers and parents, thereby enabling the continuous monitoring and guidance of children's social interactions."

In this study, when parents followed the guidance provided by teachers through the communication book, there was an improvement in the quality of children's social interactions. Children became better at cooperating, were able to resolve minor conflicts, and built good relationships with their peers. The results of the interviews also revealed that parents felt they had a better understanding of how their children interacted at school, enabling them to provide support at home.

These findings support Vygotsky theory, which posits that a child's social development occurs through interaction with their social environment, as well as with the assistance of more competent adults. When parents followed the teacher's instructions via the communication book, the children's interaction patterns improved.

This indicates that collaboration between teachers and parents fosters a continuous social learning environment, enabling children to better collaborate, solve social problems, and develop positive relationships with their peers.

Interview results revealed that parents felt supported by their understanding of how their children interact with teachers and peers. On the other hand, observations showed that children demonstrated increased self-confidence, were able to communicate with peers, and adapted more quickly to their social environment. Therefore, the use of the communication book has proven to strengthen children's social interactions through active parental participation.

3. Collaboration

The findings reveal a clear connection between activities at school and at home. Children who receive support from both environments demonstrate better collaborative skills, such as when playing or completing tasks as a group.

R. Sari (2020), states that “the development of collaboration in children occurs when there is a sustained alignment of planned stimulation between parents and teachers.”

The findings of this study support this theory, which states that the communication book serves as a tool to align activities and rules between school and home.

This demonstrates a continuous connection between school and home, as documented in the communication log. Through the teacher’s entries, parents can develop collaborative activities at home, enabling children to gain ongoing and structured experiences in cooperation. This connection supports children in learning to work together, follow instructions, and complete tasks with others.

The documentation results show continuity between activities at school and at home, thereby improving children’s collaboration skills, both in academic contexts and in social interactions.

4. Empathy

Observations show that children become more sensitive to the needs of others and demonstrate acts of kindness, such as sharing, helping friends, and understanding others’ emotions. Pratiwi (2021), states that “children’s capacity for empathy can develop when parents and educators provide concrete examples and offer similar feedback through regular communication channels such as a communication notebook.”

Communication journals support consistency in these responses, enabling children to better understand empathetic behavior.

Observation results indicate that children are becoming increasingly attuned to the needs of others and are capable of demonstrating caring behavior.

5. Independence

According to (Nasution, 2017; Sa’diyah, 2017, as cited in the article by Wulansuci G, 2023), “Independence is important for young children so that they can lead their lives without relying on others. Independence prepares children for the future, shaping them into high-quality individuals and enabling them to interact with others. Independent children tend to be more positive in their daily lives, achieve more in academic settings, and appear more confident in completing their daily tasks.” This aligns with the views of Nasution and Sa’diyah; however, when observing real-world cases, we as adults must also understand this. It is clear that initially the child was independent; however, due to the earthquake, the child became overwhelmed by excessive anxiety and consistently refused to be separated from their parents.

Increased independence can be observed through a child’s willingness to try new activities, their ability to complete simple tasks, and an increase in self-confidence. Children who receive consistent support from parents and teachers demonstrate higher levels of independence in daily activities. Wulandari (2020), states that “a child’s independence develops when stimulation from school is reinforced by parents through clear and consistent guidance.”

In this study, teachers’ notes in the communication book play a role in helping parents provide the same guidance, thereby optimizing the child’s development of independence. The results of the observations showed an increase in independence among children who received consistent reinforcement at home and school, as evidenced by their willingness to try new things, their ability to complete simple tasks, and their growing self-confidence.

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that the use of the communication book is highly effective in supporting the social-emotional skills of young children. This tool facilitates systematic, focused, and ongoing communication between educators and parents, enabling every aspect emotional regulation, social relationships, collaboration, empathy, and independence to be optimally enhanced through collaboration between educational institutions and families.

The results of this study indicate that regular use of communication notebooks can improve social-emotional skills in young children. This finding answers the research question regarding how effective the

communication book is as a means of communication between parents and teachers. Through observation, interviews, and documentation, it was found that the communication book provides regular updates on the child's behavior, enabling parents to respond with appropriate reinforcement strategies.

Emotional regulation improves as parents understand their children's daily emotional states and provide appropriate guidance (Hapsari & Wiyono, 2021). These findings align with Lickona (1991) character education theory, which emphasizes the importance of consistent parenting in developing children's self-control. Social interaction and collaboration among children develop because parents support the behaviors described in the communication book (Putri & Lestari, 2021). This indicates continuity in education between home and school, a factor rarely measured in previous research.

Children's empathy develops through examples and support in the home environment, as explained by (Handayani, 2022). Children's independence increases through tasks completed at home in accordance with the teacher's notes, which supports the findings of (Arifin, 2018).

The most significant difference between this study and previous research is its focus on the use of the connection book as an integrated tool for daily communication, whereas previous studies placed greater emphasis on overall parental participation. Some limitations of this study include the small sample size and limited location, so generalizations should be made with caution.

The importance of this study lies in the ability of the communication book to create continuity in parenting and character building, making social-emotional education more structured and consistent. These findings support existing literature, reinforce theories of character education and parenting in an Islamic context, and open up possibilities for the development of new theories regarding communication media between home and school.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings, it can be concluded that the use of communication books has proven effective in strengthening social-emotional skills in preschool children. As anticipated in the Introduction, communication books serve as a means of communication that supports the continuity of care between educational institutions and families. The research results indicate that five aspects of children's social-emotional development—emotional regulation, social interaction, cooperation, empathy, and independence—can develop significantly through collaboration between schools and parents.

Future directions for this research include the use of communication books combined with the integration of interactive digital media, which will facilitate communication and enable direct monitoring of children's development. Future research could expand the sample size and study locations to test the validity of these findings, as well as investigate the relationship between the use of the communication book and indicators of children's cognitive and academic development. Thus, the communication book demonstrates significant potential as a tool for social-emotional development and character education for young children.

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