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Collaborative Guidance Practices in Ece: Parents and Teachers as Partners

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Abstract

Parents' and teachers' collaboration is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of effective early childhood education (ECE), particularly in the implementation of guidance practices that foster children's holistic development. Guidance in ECE emphasizes understanding and supportive teaching rather than punitive discipline, positioning both teachers and parents as key facilitators of children's growth. This study investigates how partnerships between parents and teachers are built and sustained within collaborative guidance programs in kindergartens using Epstein's Framework of parental involvement. This qualitative study involved semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents, and principals from three kindergartens in Serang, Indonesia, and data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Findings reveal three key themes: (1) partnerships are grounded in mutual trust, structured communication, and shared responsibility; (2) collaborative guidance practices reflect several dimensions of parental involvement, with parenting and communicating emerging as the most dominant forms, particularly within personal-social guidance activities; and (3) challenges such as limited parental time, unequal participation, minimum training, and sociocultural hierarchy hinder sustained collaboration. The study contributes novel insight into how guidance services can be co-constructed by families and educators in ECE settings. Practically, the findings highlight the need for structured communication systems, capacity-building programs, and institutional support to strengthen parent–teacher partnerships in implementing guidance practices.

Keywords: *Collaborative Guidance; Home-School Partnership; Parental Involvement; Parent Teacher Collaboration.*

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Introduction

Parental involvement is recognized as a key determinant of children's success in various aspects of development, such as academic achievement, social competence, and emotional well-being (Higgins & Katsipataki, 2015; Devlieghere et al., 2022). In early childhood education, partnership between home and school plays a crucial role because the early childhood period, also known as the 'golden age,' is the most formative stage in human development. When teachers and parents work together, they can create a consistent environment that supports a child's growth both at home and at school, ensuring continuity of care and optimal learning experiences for the child (Epstein, 2010; Syomwene, 2022; Mashudi et al., 2025). The ability of children can be identified by age, but age itself is greatly influenced by experience. Ideally, age is directly proportional to children's experience so that it can contribute to the maturity and readiness of children to attend higher education levels. Readiness and maturity appear in the ability to integrate the experience that has been with the experience to be learned (Hendriawan et al., 2021).

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Within this developmental context, guidance serves as a pedagogical approach that focuses on teaching, modeling, and understanding rather than punishing (Gartrell, 2011). Guidance aims to help young children develop self-regulation, empathy, and positive social behavior; these skills are essential for lifelong learning and wellbeing (Ozbay et al., 2021). Research emphasizes that guidance and psychological counseling services at the preschool level help children identify their strengths, cope with challenges, and develop healthy relationships with peers and adults (Ozbay et al., 2021; Gençoğlu et al., 2019).

In Indonesian early education institution such as kindergartens, guidance is not a separate activity but is embedded within daily interactions, routines, and curricular experiences designed by teachers (Alizamar et al., 2018). The integration of guidance within the kindergarten curriculum aims to create balanced growth across personal-social, academic, and career domains, positioning guidance as a preventive and developmental service rather than a curative intervention (Hadiarni & Shaqhira, 2023; Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025).

As the child's first educators, parents influence not only early learning outcomes but also children's attitudes, self-concept, and social well-being (Syomwene, 2022). Studies reveal that when parents engage in guidance-oriented programs, children exhibit improved independence, emotional regulation, and social adaptability (Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; Jannati & Hamandia, 2024).

From the teacher's perspective, guidance cannot operate in isolation; instead, it requires parental collaboration to maintain consistency in behavioral expectations and reinforcement strategies (Ashyrnepesov et al., 2020; Hui, 2003). Likewise, parents depend on teachers' professional expertise to interpret children's developmental cues and adapt appropriate guidance practices at home (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025). However, the success of such school guidance service programs often depends on the degree of collaboration between home and school. In many cases, communication between home and school is limited to information exchange rather than genuine collaboration (Anjani & Mashudi, 2024 ; Lestari & Prima, 2020; Yanita Sari & Kosasih, 2019; Saesti et al., 2016).

There are very limited studies related to family-school collaboration within the framework of guidance and counseling, especially in the Indonesian ECE context, even though the integration is aligned with the developmental and preventive orientation of early childhood guidance (Islamiyah et al., 2020; Prayoga et al., 2023). Collaborative guidance practices in ECE are guidance programs initiated due to the lack of structural positions for guidance and counseling teachers at the ECE level in Indonesia, such as kindergartens (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025). Therefore, the guidance services provided in collaborative guidance programs emphasize the roles of teachers and parents as parties who have a very significant influence on children's growth and development in their early years.

Although the importance of guidance in ECE and the necessity of parent-teacher collaboration have been widely recognized in both policy and scholarly discourse, the practical integration of these two dimensions remains limited. Prior studies in Indonesia and other contexts have predominantly focused on the implementation of guidance services by teachers (Rasmani et al., 2019; Alizamar et al., 2018; Çevik, 2017; Varela et al., 2016) or on parental involvement in children's learning activities (Amini, 2018; Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018; Devlieghere et al., 2022; Syomwene, 2022; Sulistyaningrum et al., 2025). However, few studies have examined how teachers and parents jointly construct and enact guidance practices as a form of collaborative partnership. Most guidance programs in kindergartens are still teacher-centered, while parental involvement tends to be fragmented and event-based rather than sustained and dialogical (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025). As a result, the conceptual and practical dimensions of collaborative guidance remain underexplored. The absence of structured frameworks and shared understanding between parent and teacher contributes to inconsistent guidance practices and missed opportunities to reinforce children's learning and behavior across settings.

This study aims to explore how partnerships between parent and teacher are developed and enacted in collaborative guidance programs in kindergarten settings. Specifically, by using theoretical framework from Joyce Epstein's six types of parental involvement (2010) it seeks to uncover the ways teachers and parents initiate, sustain, and experience collaboration in guidance activities, and how such interactions influence children's developmental outcomes. Hence, there are three main research questions that should be addressed: (1) How are partnerships between parents and teachers initiated and sustained in kindergarten guidance programs? (2) What forms of collaboration are practiced? (3) What are the perceived benefits and challenges by both parents and teachers?. By analyzing these, the study intends to provide empirical insight into the operationalization of the partnership-based guidance model within the Indonesian ECE context, contributing to the design of more integrated and participatory models of guidance.

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Method

This study was conducted using a qualitative exploratory design to investigate how partnerships between parents and teachers are initiated, developed, and sustained within the framework of collaborative guidance programs in kindergarten. The qualitative approach was selected to gain a deeper understanding of participants' lived experiences and the contextual dynamics shaping parent-teacher partnership or home-school collaboration. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires, both of which allowed flexibility for participants to express their perspectives while ensuring coverage of key dimensions of parental involvement based on Epstein's six types of parental involvement (2010).

The research was conducted in three kindergartens located in Serang, Banten Province, Indonesia, which represent both public and private early childhood education settings, including TK Farras Muzada, TK Negeri Satap Tembong, and TK Karya Mandiri. These institutions were purposefully selected to provide diverse insights into the practices and challenges of partnership-based guidance in different organizational contexts. The participants consisted of five teachers, nine parents, and three school principals, representing each site/kindergarten. Teachers and principals were selected based on their active involvement in the design or implementation of guidance programs, while parents were identified as those who had participated in school guidance activities or maintained regular communication with teachers regarding children's development.

Table 1. List of Research Participants

Site	Participants		
	Teacher	**Principal**	**Parent**
TK Farras Muzada	T1 (H), T2 (MF)	Head1 (LSD)	P1 (N), P2 (SR), P3 (DN)
TK N Satap Tembong	T3 (NH), T4 (S)	Head2 (AS)	P4 (F), P5 (SS), P6 (T)
TK Karya Mandiri	T5 (ER)	Head3 (U)	P7 (ID), P8 (MA), P9 (AT)

In this study, the data collection process utilized multiple qualitative sources to ensure triangulation and trustworthiness. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to explore their perceptions, experiences, and practices related to collaborative guidance. Interview questions addressed themes such as partnership initiation, communication patterns, shared responsibilities, and perceived benefits and challenges. An open-ended questionnaire, adapted from Joyce Epstein's (2010) typology of parental involvement, was distributed to both teachers and parents to capture broader perspectives and written reflections.

Document review complemented the interviews, including analysis of guidance curriculum matrices, program implementation plans, communication logs, and documentation of parent-teacher meetings or joint activities. These documents provided contextual evidence on how collaborative guidance was planned and practiced at each kindergarten.

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the research process in accordance with the principles of informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respect for participants' rights. Anonymity and confidentiality were protected by replacing participants' names with codes (e.g., T1, P3, Head1).

Research data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process involved manual coding of interview transcripts, open-ended responses, and document notes to identify recurring ideas and underlying meanings. The analysis proceeded through iterative phases of familiarization, coding, theme development, review, and interpretation. Reflexive analysis emphasized the researcher's active role in the meaning-making process, allowing continuous reflection on assumptions and contextual influences throughout the analytical stages. The emergent themes were then synthesized to capture the shared and contrasting experiences of teachers and parents regarding their partnership practices within kindergarten guidance programs.

Result and Discussion

This study explored how partnerships between parents and teachers are initiated, enacted, and sustained in collaborative guidance programs implemented in three kindergartens in Serang, Indonesia. A total of 17 participants were involved, including five teachers, nine parents, and three school principals, each directly engaged in guidance-related activities or parent–teacher communication programs. Teachers and principals were selected based on their role in designing and managing guidance programs, while parents were invited based on their prior involvement in school activities or parent meetings. Participants prefer anonymity due to sensitive data.

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Data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), emphasizing researcher reflexivity and iterative meaning-making. All interview transcripts and questionnaire responses were manually coded through multiple readings to identify recurrent ideas and patterns. Initial codes were then categorized into broader themes, which were reviewed and refined through cross-case comparison. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained a reflexive journal to record emerging insights, assumptions, and contextual interpretations, ensuring that data interpretation remained grounded and transparent.

Data analysis results revealed four major themes that characterize the nature of collaboration between parents and teachers in kindergarten guidance programs: (1) essentials of partnership in the ECE context, (2) forms of collaboration, (3) perceived benefits of partnership, and (4) challenges in sustaining collaborative partnership.

Essentials of partnership in the ECE context

Legally, Indonesian law has emphasized the importance of parental involvement in children's education at every level of schooling. This is demonstrated by the release of a series of technical guidelines for family involvement in the provision of education in early childhood education (PAUD), elementary schools, secondary schools, and special schools. These technical guidelines represent the implementation of policies under the legal umbrella of Permendikbud No. 30 of 2017 and Permendikbud No. 127 of 2017, which emphasize that the success of a child's education depends on family involvement.

As the element in the ecosystem closest to the child, parents have numerous opportunities through daily interaction and communication. The forms and methods of interaction with children within the family will influence the development of good character and a culture of achievement. The interactions children receive from their families will be beneficial and form the foundation for their subsequent development in the broader environment, especially at school and in the community (Permendikbud No. 127 of 2017). Of all levels of schooling, early childhood education places significantly higher demands on parental involvement than other levels (Erdreich, 2023). This is because early childhood is at a lower age and independence level than students in elementary and secondary schools.

A number of studies have recorded empirical efforts related to the form of parental involvement in early childhood education, the frequency and intensity of parental involvement, and the division of roles between parents and educators in early childhood care (Daniel, 2015). There are research results that emphasize determinant factors that can support the active involvement of parents in their children's education as well as key elements for establishing and maintaining a robust collaborative partnership between parents and teachers, and between home and school environment.

Epstein’s (2004) theory of overlapping spheres of influence conceptualizes these partnerships as a dynamic interaction between family, school, and community contexts that collectively shape children’s learning and development. Within this framework, six interrelated types of involvement, which are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community, serve as essential mechanisms for fostering meaningful partnerships that enhance children’s educational outcomes and well-being.

Studies conducted in diverse cultural contexts reaffirm this multidimensional nature of parental involvement. Ahmed (2021) found that transformational leadership and teacher attitudes play critical roles in mobilizing parental engagement in rural schools, echoing Epstein’s notion that institutional support structures determine the depth and quality of collaboration. Further, Chappel (2021) emphasized that equitable and culturally responsive communication practices are vital for preventing exclusionary dynamics in home and school relations. Similarly, Devlieghere et al. (2022) cautioned that parental involvement must be reconceptualized beyond normative expectations of compliance, advocating for a more dialogical and empowering approach.

In African contexts, Syomwene (2022) demonstrated that structured parental empowerment and engagement strategies, which are embedded in early childhood curricula, can significantly enhance children’s self-concept, motivation, and achievement. Complementarily, Segoe (2019) showed that schools’ communication openness and respect-based interactions strengthen parents’ perception of equality and efficacy within the partnership, reinforcing the moral and social capital foundations of collaborative engagement. Collectively, these findings show that authentic and sustained parental involvement arises from systemic collaboration among teachers, families, and communities, mediated by reciprocal trust, inclusive communication, and shared pedagogical goals.

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Partnerships between home and school were primarily established through shared commitment and reciprocal communication. According to the interview, all teachers agreed that collaboration with parents was "*important to build communication between school and home so parents can monitor their child's development*" (interview excerpt with T1, T2, T3, T4, and T5). Similarly, both principals from TK Faras Muzada and TKN Satap Tembong stated, "*We always start with open discussion between the school, the school's committee, and teachers before planning any program. Everyone can express their thoughts or concerns"* (interview excerpt with Head1 and Head2).

Those statements reflect the significance of mutual trust as the basis of partnership. As one teacher explained, "*We try to be open and transparent with parents. When they feel trusted, they are more willing to join guidance activities*" (interview excerpt with T1). Saglam et al. (2021), found that partnership functions effectively when educators view parents as collaborative partners in fostering children's development. Gençoğlu et al. (2019) similarly emphasized that such partnerships promote consistency between school and home expectations.

Guidance services at the early childhood education level essentially emphasize guidance related to independence and harmony in establishing social relationships with peers, as well as personal guidance, such as fostering self-discipline and understanding instructions. Furthermore, guidance services for kindergarten children need to be provided to meet psychological needs, such as providing affection and a sense of security (Agustin, 2014).

The initial layer of collaboration in guidance programs reflects Epstein's domains of parenting and communicating, where schools help families understand child development and maintain open dialogue. Thus, a shared vision regarding children's education can be the cornerstone of a strong partnership between parents and teachers. Therefore, in early childhood education, it is important for teachers and parents to share an understanding of optimal child growth and development and how to facilitate it. The facilitation process also requires ongoing communication so that the commitment established at the beginning can be maintained until the end of the child's study period at the school.

Forms of collaboration in collaborative guidance practice

The Collaborative Guidance and Counseling Model (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025) is an integrative framework that positions teachers, parents, and school leaders as co-guides in supporting children's holistic development through continuous partnership and shared responsibility. This model emphasizes that guidance and counseling in early childhood education are not limited to individual teacher-led interventions but are collectively constructed through coordinated interactions between school and family contexts.

Collaboration in guidance involves a reciprocal process of communication, reflection, and action aimed at fostering children's socio-emotional growth, moral understanding, and independence. Teachers serve as facilitators and observers of developmental behavior, while parents act as consistent reinforcers of guidance principles at home. This approach bridges the traditionally separate spheres of home and school by embedding guidance activities, such as parent-teacher conferences, joint behavioral planning, and shared reflection sessions, into everyday educational practices (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025).

After carefully analyzing the research data, it was discovered that there were a number of collaborative practices in the implementation of guidance services in kindergartens. These forms of collaboration were then interpreted using Epstein's (2010) six types of parental involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. The practices are also then categorized into three domains of guidance service, which are the personal-social domain, the academic domain, and the career domain. Table 2 shows how collaborative practices are portrayed in every form of guidance activities implemented by parents and teachers of TK Faras Muzada, TKN Satap Tembong, and TK Karya Mandiri.

From Table 2, there are seven common collaborative practices represented in guidance activities implemented in three research sites, including (1) profession-themed learning events, (2) collaborative project days, (3) home-learning reinforcement, (4) progress communication and feedback, (5) family involvement in play, (6) parent-teacher reflection meetings, and (7) home-school guidance projects.

TK Farras Muzada, TKN Satap Tembong, and TK Karya Mandiri sites have implemented a collaborative guidance program since early 2024. The program has been in operation for two years. The guidance activities are integrated with daily, weekly, and semester academic programs. Nevertheless, each kindergarten maintains a document containing a program design that includes a rationale, program vision and mission, a description of student needs for guidance services, guidance service objectives, guidance program

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components, service delivery areas, an action plan, theme and topic development, and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the guidance program. The action plan is then elaborated into a guidance service implementation plan sheet, known as a "Service Implementation Plan/RPL," which can later be used alongside the daily syllabus of learning activities at the kindergarten.

Table 2. Collaborative Guidance Practice in Kindergarten

	Guidance Activity	Aim	Epstein's Type of Parental Involvement	Domain of Guidance
1.	Profession-Themed Learning Events	Introducing world-of-work concepts and community roles to children	Volunteering, collaborating with the community	Career guidance
2.	Collaborative Project Days	Developing children 's aspirations and awareness of various professions and their social contribution	Volunteering	Career guidance
3.	Home-Learning Reinforcement	Strengthening early literacy, numeracy, and classroom readiness through consistent practice	Learning at home, communicating	Academic guidance
4.	Progress Communication and Feedback	Maintaining alignment between school assessment and parental understanding of learning	Communicating	Academic guidance
5.	Family Involvement in Play	Fostering empathy and cooperation through co-participation in play-based guidance	Communicating	Personal-social guidance
6.	Parent-Teacher Reflection Meetings	Understanding behavioral issues and developing shared solutions for children's adjustment	Parenting, communicating	Personal-social guidance
7.	Home-School Guidance Projects	Strengthening children's socio-emotional skills, independence, and empathy through consistent home-school reinforcement	Parenting, communicating, and learning at home	Personal-social guidance

From the action plans, we identified how parents and teachers became partners in implementing the guidance strategy through various activities. They collaborate to achieve the guidance service objectives developed based on the results of student needs assessments. The student needs assessment instrument is derived from the kindergarten student competency standards outlined in the ASCA National Standards for Students (2004). Through needs assessment activities, students' actual conditions and their needs for guidance and counseling services provided by the school are obtained (Rasmani et al., 2019; Solihatun et al., 2018).

The collaboration between families and schools that reflects a guidance tradition emphasizes mutual respect, shared problem-solving, and consistent communication aimed at promoting children's social-emotional growth and democratic life skills. Therefore, guidance not viewed as merely a form of discipline, but rather an educative partnership, where teachers and parents altogether construct nurturing environments that encourage children to learn from their mistakes and develop self-regulation through connection, not control (Gartrell, 2011).

Profession-Themed Learning Events implemented as a strategy for a career guidance service that aimed to introduce world-of-work concepts and community roles to children. There are activities held by parents and teachers in TKN Satap Tembong, such as "kelas inspirasi," where a number of parents spoke in their children's classes. They introduced their jobs or occupations, what they do every day, and how they find joy in their work because it benefits others and the environment around them. Another activity is a one-week thematic learning that carries the theme of professions, for example, as carried out at Faras Muzada Kindergarten with the theme "community daily hero" where the one-week learning is directed to discuss various professions that play a role in maintaining the security and safety of the community on a daily basis such as police, security guards, firefighters, emergency medical units, etc. Both activities aligned with Epstein's third and sixth dimensions, which are volunteering and collaborating with the community.

Volunteering refers to parents' active participation in school-based guidance activities. In addition, parents often took part in art performances, school fairs, and thematic events that emphasized social-emotional learning and cooperation. These practices support Epstein's (2010) principle that volunteering creates a sense of shared ownership and community identity. As Gençoğlu et al. (2019) found that when parents participate in school life, they model prosocial behavior for children. Besides facilitating parents to be included in their

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children's education, teachers also coordinate community involvement in children's learning activities. However, as Syomwene (2022) stated, sustained collaboration depends on institutional support, funding, and mutual understanding among all stakeholders.

In Collaborative Project Days, there are a number of guidance activities carried out with the support of parent-teacher partnerships, one of them is "Career Day" which was carried out by all of three kindergartens in this research. Career Day includes a series of activities such as bazaars, carnivals, and career-themed performances. In planning career day activities, parents and teachers work together to prepare many things, such as decorations, materials, children's costumes, and so on. As a follow-up to career day activities, children usually went to visit a fire station or police station to see firsthand how officers work there. Parents are also asked to discuss career themes with their children at home. The immediate social environment, especially interactions with parents and teachers, plays a pivotal role in shaping young children's early career awareness. Through daily observation, children also internalize gender-based distinctions in occupational roles modeled by adults in their surroundings (Hidayat & Ningrum, 2017).

Home-Learning Reinforcement is designed as a strategy for strengthening early literacy, numeracy, and classroom readiness through consistent practice. In school, teachers provide children with homework/tasks, while at home, parents support and monitor their children's learning. This is aligned with the second and fourth types of Epstein's framework, which are communicating and learning at home. Usually, teachers and parents engage through formal meetings, digital communication via WhatsApp, and ongoing message exchanges regarding children's progress. As stated by the teacher from TK Karya Mandiri, "If a child has difficulties, we share it immediately through the group chat so parents can follow up at home." (interview excerpt with T5). These findings mirror Mashudi et al. (2025), who identified that digital communication platforms improve accessibility but need to be complemented with dialogic interaction to achieve genuine partnership. This form of involvement enhances relational continuity between home and school, ensuring that guidance messages are consistently reinforced.

In alignment with Epstein's fourth dimension, learning at home, parents described how they applied school guidance strategies within family routines. Teachers confirmed that children whose parents practiced these reinforcement strategies showed stronger independence and emotional control in the classroom. This finding supports Cripps and Zyromski's (2009) assertion that home-based reinforcement of guidance content leads to improved behavioral consistency among children. Hence, parents and teachers could create the same values of education in the children's learning process.

In order to strengthen the previous efforts, progress communication and feedback are implemented to maintain alignment between school assessment and parental understanding of learning. Early childhood guidance cannot be carried out by teachers alone; it requires active parental involvement to ensure that feedback given at school is reinforced at home. Parents' daily observations and affirmations help children internalize learning values and apply them consistently across contexts. When parents and teachers provide congruent feedback, children are more likely to develop positive behavior, social adjustment, and moral understanding, as both learning environments communicate shared expectations (Rasmani et al., 2019). Both home-learning reinforcement and progress communication and feedback serve as a collaborative practice in the academic guidance domain.

In the personal-social domain, family involvement in play serves as a significant collaborative practice that requires robust partnership between parents and teachers. The aim is to foster empathy and cooperation through co-participation in play-based guidance. In each kindergarten, teachers design a play scenario into the Service Implementation Plan or "Rencana Pelaksanaan Layanan/RPL". This RPL reflects the steps of play activity in which children can do together with their parents, such as "Family-Sculpture", "Trust Fall", "Singing Boat", etc. Teachers will model how the interaction between parents and child in the play activity should be conducted, as explained by one teacher, "Parents were not just sitting still and seeing, they also helped us plan and lead the guidance activities, especially during the home-school projects." (interview excerpt with T5). This shows parents joining school events, which can model cooperation and empathy for children as an indirect form of social role modeling. However, there's no evidence of structured co-play sessions specifically designed to target socio-emotional guidance outcomes.

Playing with family is consistently highlighted as a critical component of children's holistic development, particularly for wellbeing, socio-emotional regulation, and learning (Beery, 2020; Ne'matullah et al., 2022; and Prins et al., 2022). Family-based play provides emotional anchoring, allowing children to explore, take risks, and express themselves freely within a safe relational context (Beery, 2020). Hence, teachers in TK Farras Muzada, TKN Satap Tembong and TK Karya Mandiri are well aware of the benefits of play for children and how playing with family can provide many benefits for children. A number of parents

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also expressed positive appreciation regarding this activity, as stated in interviews with parents of students from TK Karya Mandiri and TK Farras Muzada "We are very happy because we were given various activities to play with our children, because usually we don't have time to do them in our routine, our children also really enjoy playing with us" (interview excerpt with P2, P3, P5, P9).

Another activity related to personal-social guidance service is parent-teacher reflection meetings and home-school guidance projects. These activities reflected Epstein's first and second dimensions, that is, parenting and communicating. The aim of parent-teacher reflection meetings is to maintain mutual understanding of behavioral issues and develop shared solutions for children's adjustment. In this meeting, teachers facilitate open discussion and documented behavioral observations, meanwhile parents share child's home behavior and give opinion to co-decide on strategies. As stated by the teacher from TK Farras Muzada, "Every Friday we share reports about learning results and development, so parents know which parts need to be improved." (interview excerpt with T1).

In parenting dimensions, schools support families in understanding children's developmental needs and establishing home environments conducive to children's learning and wellbeing (Epstein et al., 2024). Similarly, Saglam et al. (2021) emphasized that early guidance should be preventive and developmental, which implies an understanding that requires parent awareness and capacity-building. From the interview, parents acknowledged that these parent-teacher reflection meetings increased their confidence in handling children's behavior at home.

Home-school guidance projects are designed to strengthen children's socio-emotional skills, independence, and empathy through consistent home-school reinforcement. In implementing these projects, teachers plan the themes (usually a weekly theme), communicate the project goals to parents, and monitor children's behavioral change. While parents are expected to reinforce guidance themes at home and share children's progress with teachers through instant messaging applications like WhatsApp or online meeting platforms. As stated by the teacher of TKN Satap Tembong, "Previously we used phone calls or student progress books, but as technology developed, we used WhatsApp or Zoom meetings." (interview excerpt with T4). Digital communication platforms improve accessibility but need to be complemented with dialogic interaction to achieve genuine partnership (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Sundari, et al., 2025).

This two-way communication strengthened transparency and trust. Teachers observed improvements in children's independence, emotional regulation, and social interaction when parents reinforced guidance themes at home. Parents similarly reported that participation in school guidance activities increased their understanding of children's emotional needs and improved parent–child communication. These results reinforce the argument by Cripps and Zyromski (2009) that parental involvement enhances children's psychological well-being and social adjustment through supportive and authoritative interactions. However, some participants noted that communication occasionally became one-directional, focusing on school updates rather than shared reflection.

The principals of TK Farras Muzada, TKN Satap Tembong, and TK Karya Mandiri also noted that collaborative guidance fostered a culture of shared accountability, where parents felt recognized as active partners rather than passive recipients of school communication. This finding is consistent with the developmental guidance principles outlined by Gençoğlu et al. (2019), who highlighted that family participation contributes to the early identification of behavioral or emotional challenges and strengthens the preventive function of school-based counseling services. Gartrell (2011) emphasizes involving families in classroom events that model conflict resolution, cooperation, and democratic routines.

Ultimately, of the seven forms of collaborative practice between parents and teachers in guidance activities, the most frequently identified partnerships fall under the personal-social guidance domain. A number of studies confirm that kindergarten guidance programs should prioritize developmental interventions in personal–social guidance, particularly in fostering independence, empathy, cooperation, and emotional regulation among young children (Varela et al., 2016; Alizamar et al., 2018; Legowo et al., 2019). Meanwhile, five of the seven collaborative practices in guidance activities reflect the second type in Epstein's parent involvement framework, which is communicating. Therefore, effective partnerships are grounded in mutual trust, shared understanding, and ongoing communication between home and school. These findings affirm Epstein's proposition that schools evolve toward deeper partnership as communication becomes dialogic and activities become shared rather than delegated (Epstein et al., 2024). Strengthening collaborative guidance, therefore, requires deliberate structuring of reflection meetings, co-learning sessions, and longitudinal projects that connect home, school, and community involvement in all developmental domains.

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Perceived Benefits of Partnership and Challenges in Sustaining Collaborative Partnership

The partnership between parents and teachers manifested through both structured and informal collaborative practices. Structured forms included joint implementation of guidance activities, parental involvement in school-based events, and collaborative planning of behavior reinforcement strategies. Informal collaboration occurred through daily conversations, instant messaging, and the exchange of feedback regarding children's home behavior. Based on the results of data analysis, it is known that there are several benefits from partnerships between teachers and parents in carrying out collaborative guidance practices, including:

Enhanced understanding and consistency of child guidance, teachers and parents emphasized that regular communication helped them share behavioral insights and apply consistent strategies across school and home, which is reflected in the interview with a teacher from TK Farras Muzada: "When I share about the child's behavior at school, parents can follow up at home, so the message is the same" (interview excerpt with T2). This reflects the benefit of reciprocal understanding, improving coherence in children's emotional and behavioral development (Syomwene, 2022).

Improved trust and relational bonding, parents described feeling more confident and valued when teachers involved them in discussions beyond problems. As parents in TKN Satap Tembong stated, "I feel respected when the teacher tells me about good things my child does, not only when there's a problem." (interview excerpt with P5, P6, P7). Low-stakes, positive communication builds parental trust and reduces defensive interactions (Chappel & Ratliffe, 2021).

Parent empowerment and learning, teachers noted that parents became more knowledgeable about developmental needs and effective home practices through guidance and communication. As stated by the principal of TK Karya Mandiri, "Some parents used to think guidance was only for children's misbehavior, but now they know it's about learning together." (interview excerpt with Head3). This aligns with Gencoglu (2019) and Cripps & Zyromski (2009), who stressed the educative and preventive benefits of parental guidance.

Children's well-being and academic motivation, parents observed that when school and home collaborated, children showed more enthusiasm for school and smoother social adaptation, confirming Epstein's (1995) notion of partnership as a "shared sphere of influence." As stated by parents in TKN Satap Tembong, "My child becomes more confident in learning about one thing because what is taught at school is also talked about at our home." (interview excerpt with P3, P4, P5)

Despite the benefits, several challenges hindered the sustainability of collaboration. The most prominent issues are listed below. First, limited parental time and digital literacy: many teachers reported that parents struggled to attend scheduled meetings or follow online communication channels due to work schedules or lack of technical access, particularly in public schools, where economic and occupational constraints limited engagement opportunities. Similar barriers were observed by Syomwene (2022), where illiterate or low-income parents found e-communication difficult. This challenge is also reflected in the statement of T4 from TKN Satap Tembong and T5 from TK Karya Mandiri.

> *"There are parents from underprivileged family groups that do not have smartphones, as well as a WhatsApp or Zoom meetings platform." (interview excerpt with T3 and T4).*
> *"Some parents don't open chat or messages because of their busy work schedule." (interview excerpt with T5).*

Second, Unequal Participation and Power Imbalance, teachers often made decisions about guidance activities without substantial parent input, so that parents noted that school communication often relied on one-way notifications rather than interactive dialogue. As stated by parents from TKN Satap Tembong and TK Karya Mandiri, "Usually, we just need to follow the teacher's instruction because the guidance activities are already planned by them (teachers)" (interview excerpt with P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9). Segoe & Bisschoff (2019), describe this as a hierarchical model where parents are seen as assistants rather than partners.

Third, lack of training and role clarity. Teachers expressed uncertainty about how to conduct structured collaboration and felt unsupported by administrators. As stated by teachers from TK Karya Mandiri, TK Faras Muzada, and TKN Satap Tembong, "We know partnership is important, but there are very limited opportunities to learn about how to guide parents to build an ideal and mutual partnership with families, so we have high hopes for policymakers regarding this matter." (interview excerpt with T1, T3 and T5). Both Gencoglu (2019) and Devlieghere et al. (2022) emphasize that teachers require institutional support to facilitate equitable and inclusive partnerships.

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Fifth, sociocultural barriers and perception gaps: some parents regarded teachers as authority figures and hesitated to share opinions. As stated by parents from TK Karya Mandiri and TKN Satap Tembong, "We just listen to what teachers say because we think that they know better than us." (interview excerpt with P4, P5, P6, P7). This reflects what Segoe & Bisschoff (2019) called perceptual asymmetry, where teachers undervalue parents' experiential knowledge, leading to mistrust. Chan and Ritchie (2016) also emphasized that teachers sometimes operate within a disempowering framework of parental involvement, where parents are positioned as passive participants who are expected to comply with long-standing institutional norms that remain unquestioned

Based on a number of findings that have been presented, this research provides practical and theoretical implications. Practically, the study emphasizes the need for institutional mechanisms that support sustainable parent–teacher partnerships. Schools should provide structured opportunities for collaborative planning, regular reflection meetings, and capacity-building programs for both teachers and parents. Guidance curricula should explicitly include family participation components and utilize accessible communication channels, including digital platforms, to ensure inclusivity and continuity.

Theoretically, the study contributes to enriching the framework of guidance-based pedagogy in early childhood education by positioning parental engagement as an integral rather than auxiliary element. This aligns with Gençoğlu et al. (2019) and Alizamar et al. (2018), who highlight that effective guidance in early education is inherently relational and developmental. When behavioral challenges arise, guidance-based collaboration involves co-creating individualized support plans. Teachers and parents discuss underlying causes, contextual factors, and emotional triggers rather than imposing punishment. Together, they design continuity strategies between home and school (Gartrell, 2011).

While previous studies have independently examined either guidance services in ECE (Alizamar et al., 2018; Rasmani et al., 2019; Ozbay et al., 2021; Gençoğlu et al., 2019) or parental participation in early education curriculum (Syomwene, 2022; Segoe & Bisschoff, 2019; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009), this study bridges the two perspectives by showing how partnership is constructed in action. It extends the understanding of guidance beyond its intra-school function. By foregrounding teachers and parents as partners in implementing collaborative guidance program and service, the study contributes to the emerging discourse on family–school–community collaboration in early childhood education in Indonesia, an area still underrepresented in local research (Mashudi, Hendriawan, Tristyanto, et al., 2025).

Conclusion

This study shows that collaborative guidance in kindergartens is strengthened through mutual trust, structured communication, and shared responsibility between parents and teachers, with parenting and communicating emerging as the dominant forms of involvement based on Epstein's framework. The findings reveal that personal-social guidance provides the strongest space for relational partnership, while academic and career guidance remain more limited and hierarchical. The study's novelty lies in integrating guidance curriculum analysis with parental involvement theory, offering an empirical model of how collaborative guidance operates within Indonesian ECE settings where formal guidance roles are absent. These insights highlight the need for institutional support and capacity-building to enhance equitable parent–teacher collaboration. Future research should further examine the long-term effects of collaborative guidance and incorporate children's perspectives to deepen understanding of how home-school partnerships shape their academic and developmental experiences using Epstein's Framework or other parental involvement models as an analytical lens.

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