



## Parental Psychoeducation Program as an Effort for Early Detection and Management of Language Delay in Early Childhood

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### Abstract

Language delay in early childhood is a prevalent developmental concern that may affect children's communication, literacy, and long-term academic outcomes. Strengthening parents' understanding of early language milestones and appropriate intervention strategies is therefore essential. This community service program aimed to enhance parental literacy regarding the early detection and management of language delay through a structured psychoeducation session involving 14 parents of young children. The intervention was delivered in a single face-to-face meeting consisting of four stages: pretest assessment, psychoeducation, facilitated discussion, and posttest evaluation. The material covered fundamental concepts of receptive and expressive language development, indicators of language delay, and practical home-based stimulation strategies. A descriptive quantitative analysis was conducted by comparing pretest and posttest scores to measure changes in parental knowledge. The results showed a clear improvement in participants' understanding after the session, indicating that the psychoeducational program effectively strengthened parents' awareness of early language development and initial intervention principles. These findings highlight the importance of parent-focused psychoeducation as a strategic effort to support early detection and timely management of language delay in early childhood.

#### Keywords:

Language delay, early childhood, parental psychoeducation, early detection, language development

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental conceptual ability that enables individuals to understand and convey messages in the communication process. Terminologically, speech refers to the verbal and motor production of sounds, whereas language concerns how these sounds are used, given meaning, and organized to perform communicative functions. In this process, the ability to comprehend messages is known as receptive language, while the ability to express messages appropriately is referred to as expressive language (McLaughlin, 2011). Children's language development generally progresses through predictable stages, starting from understanding and producing single words to combining words into sentences. By the age of four, most typically developing children have become proficient users of their native language (Eun et al., 2014).

Language delay occurs when children do not achieve expected receptive or expressive milestones appropriate for their age (Feldman, 2005). Globally, an estimated 58% of children exhibit early signs of delayed language development (McQuiston & Kloczko, 2011). This condition may indicate broader developmental issues or present as an isolated delay, such as specific language impairment, where cognitive and behavioral domains remain within normal limits (Simms, 2007).

Children with language delay commonly show symptoms such as limited vocabulary, difficulty understanding language structures, delayed word or sentence production, grammatical errors, and challenges in comprehending instructions or gestures (Weiss & Paul, 2010). The impact extends beyond communication skills, influencing emotional development, behavior, literacy, and later reading and writing abilities. Therefore, early intervention is essential to minimize potential long-term developmental risks (Law et al., 2000).

Various language intervention approaches have been developed to address language delay. Interventions are typically delivered individually through step-by-step learning involving repetition, modelling, joint attention, and vocabulary stimulation using structured activities (Morgan et al., 2019). Techniques such as recasting, elicited imitation, and modelling are frequently applied to enhance grammatical proficiency and verbal production (Fey & Proctor-Williams, 2000). Repetition and object-naming activities have demonstrated effectiveness in stimulating language production, both in children with language delays and in individuals recovering from neurological conditions such as aphasia (Ischemic Stroke, 2020; Partan & Marler, 2005).

In recent years, multimodal approaches have become increasingly prominent in language therapy. This modality integrates various sensory channels—visual, tactile, computer-based technology, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), gestures, and graphic symbols—to support communication abilities (Pierce et al., 2019). Compared to single-modality methods, multimodal interventions provide richer stimulation by allowing children to respond through multiple sensory pathways (Shalihah et al., 2018). Evidence shows that multimodal therapy can improve speech production in children with autism (Brady et al., 2015) and enhance

communication effectiveness more broadly (Mirenda, 2003; Farzana et al., 2021). However, studies on aphasia patients report mixed findings, suggesting no singular superior method and highlighting the need for continued integration of diverse intervention strategies (Pierce, 2021).

Technology-based language therapies, particularly those designed for Arabic, have also expanded, although most studies focus on adult aphasia patients and are rarely applied to young children with language delays (Elsherbeny et al., 2023; Elhakeem et al., 2021; Osman, 2014; Faraj, 2011; Sami, 2013). Existing research tends to compare the effectiveness of different therapeutic methods rather than examine combined interventions within family and early childhood education contexts.

Beyond clinical interventions, literature consistently emphasizes the critical role of parents in supporting children's language development. Parent involvement through psychoeducation has been shown to enhance their capacity to provide home-based language stimulation, recognize early signs of delay, and determine appropriate follow-up actions (Law et al., 2000; Rescorla, 2011). In early childhood education settings, parents' understanding plays a pivotal role, as daily communication at home significantly impacts children's foundational language development.

Responding to these needs, this community service program aims to strengthen parents' literacy regarding early detection and early handling of language delay through a structured psychoeducation initiative conducted at PAUD Bintang-Bintang. The program is designed to equip parents with the knowledge to identify signs of delay, understand the importance of early intervention, and implement appropriate stimulation strategies to optimize children's language development.

## **METHOD**

This community service program was implemented at PAUD Bintang-Bintang in Sedayu, Bantul, Yogyakarta, involving 14 parents (both fathers and mothers) of early childhood learners. Participant selection was conducted in coordination with the school, based on the identified need to strengthen parents' literacy regarding language development, particularly early detection and early management of language delay. All activities were conducted in a single structured yet interactive face-to-face session.

The program consisted of four main stages. The first stage was the assessment of initial needs through a pretest administered to map participants' baseline knowledge of language development, characteristics of receptive and expressive language delay, and appropriate principles of language stimulation. The pretest instrument was developed in the form of a knowledge questionnaire.

The second stage involved the implementation of psychoeducation, delivered systematically using PowerPoint media. The material covered fundamental concepts of language development, indicators of language delay, the relationship between environmental stimulation and communication development, and recommended

early management strategies for parents. The session was combined with guided discussion, real case examples, and simple demonstrations to strengthen both conceptual understanding and practical application. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their daily communication patterns and identify caregiving practices relevant to supporting children's language growth.

The third stage was a facilitated group discussion, providing space for participants to share experiences, concerns, and additional needs related to their children's language development. This session served to assess the relevance, clarity, and applicability of the delivered material within each family's context.

The fourth stage was the final evaluation through a post-test using the same instrument as the pretest. Comparison of pretest and post-test scores served as an indicator of participants' knowledge improvement after the psycho-education session. Although this activity did not constitute an experimental study, a descriptive quantitative approach was employed to objectively assess program impact by examining changes in knowledge scores.

Data analysis was conducted descriptively by calculating pre–post score differences to illustrate the effectiveness of the program. An increase in scores was interpreted as evidence of enhanced parental literacy in early detection and early management strategies for language delay among young children.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The psychoeducation activity on the early detection and initial management of language delay was conducted in a face-to-face session with a total of 14 participating parents. All participants completed the entire series of activities, including the pretest, material delivery, discussion session, and posttest. Overall, the session proceeded smoothly and demonstrated active participation, as reflected in the number of questions and the high level of engagement during discussions.

The evaluation data indicated an increase in parents' understanding after participating in the psychoeducation session.

**Tabel 1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Result**

Paired Samples T-test

		Statistic		p	Effect Size	
Pretest	Posttest	Wilcoxon W	0.00*	0.0004	Rank biserial correlation	-1.00

Note  $H_{a\mu}$  Measure 1-Measure 2  $\neq 0$

\*4 pair(s) of values were tied

A Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was conducted to examine differences between parents' pretest and posttest scores following the psychoeducation program. The analysis revealed a statistically significant increase in participants' knowledge,  $W = 0.00$ ,  $p = 0.004$ . This result indicates that the psychoeducation session produced a meaningful improvement in parents' understanding of early childhood language development and early indicators of language delay.

The effect size, calculated using the rank-bi-serial correlation, was  $-1.00$ , which reflects a very strong effect of the intervention. This suggests that the

psychoeducation program had a substantial impact on enhancing parental literacy regarding language development.



Figure 1. Presentation of psychoeducational material on early detection of language delay to parents

The increase in pretest–posttest scores indicates that the psychoeducation program played a strategic role in strengthening parents’ literacy regarding language development and language delay in early childhood. This finding aligns with the perspectives of McLaughlin (2011) and Eun et al. (2014), who emphasize that parents’ understanding of receptive and expressive language development is closely associated with the quality of stimulation provided at home. When parents are able to recognize developmental milestones and identify early deviations, the likelihood of effective intervention increases significantly.

The results of this activity are also consistent with studies by Law et al. (2000) and Rescorla (2011), which demonstrate that parent-focused educational interventions can enhance parents’ competence in providing daily communication stimulation. Psychoeducation offers a clearer framework for parents on appropriate stimulation techniques, such as the use of responsive language, object labeling, sentence modeling, and limiting excessive gadget exposure.

Furthermore, the improvement in parental understanding observed in this program supports the findings of Morgan et al. (2019) and Fey and Proctor-Williams (2000), who highlight that structured information delivery—combined with case examples, illustrations, and practice-based explanations—is more effectively received by parents than passive educational approaches. Psychoeducation holds particular advantages as it integrates cognitive components (knowledge), practical understanding, and reflective space that allow participants to connect the material with their everyday caregiving practices.

From a community service perspective, these findings suggest that providing access to evidence-based information can help reduce common misconceptions about language delay, such as the assumptions that “children will eventually speak on their own” or “boys naturally develop speech later.” Accurate understanding enables parents to make informed decisions, including implementing appropriate home-based stimulation or seeking professional assistance when necessary.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of the psychoeducation program effectively enhanced parents' readiness to conduct early detection and to initiate preliminary responses to language delays in young children. This improvement suggests that education-based interventions can bridge existing information gaps that often hinder parents from fulfilling their role as primary supporters of their children's developmental needs. With increased knowledge, parents are better equipped to recognize early indicators of delay, determine appropriate follow-up actions, and collaborate with professional practitioners when necessary. The effectiveness of this program underscores the importance of strengthening parental literacy on child development as a crucial component in preventing language delays from progressing into more complex developmental challenges.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The psychoeducation program should be continued and expanded to ensure that parents receive updated information on language development and acquire fundamental skills to accurately identify early signs of language delay. Stronger collaboration among parents, early childhood educators, and relevant professionals is recommended to ensure that early detection and initial handling of language delays are carried out consistently, cohesively, and in accordance with the child's developmental needs.

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