

Building a Generation of Strong Character in Kuta Baro Village through Positive Parenting Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The family plays a central role in shaping children's character through daily interaction, role modelling, communication, and discipline. However, limited parental knowledge of empathetic communication, emotional regulation, positive reinforcement, and nonviolent discipline may reduce the effectiveness of parenting practices. This lecturer-led community service program aimed to strengthen the knowledge and practical skills of parents and primary caregivers in Kuta Baro Village in implementing positive parenting strategies to support children's character development. The program involved 30 participants and employed a participatory educational approach consisting of needs assessment, interactive presentations, group discussions, case-based learning, parent-child communication simulations, and reflection on existing parenting practices. The materials focused on child development, effective family communication, parental emotional regulation, positive behavioural reinforcement, role modelling, and consistent nonviolent discipline. Program evaluation was conducted using pre- and post-activity assessments, participant observation, and analysis of parenting action plans. The mean assessment score increased from 61.8 before the program to 85.6 after the program, indicating a 38.5% improvement in participants' understanding. Participants also demonstrated greater ability to identify less adaptive parenting practices, formulate constructive responses to children's behaviour, apply logical consequences, and develop parenting strategies appropriate to their family contexts. The program further increased participants' awareness of the importance of consistency, emotional responsiveness, and parental example in fostering discipline, independence, responsibility, empathy, and social concern. These findings demonstrate that participatory positive parenting education can serve as an effective community empowerment strategy for strengthening parental capacity and supporting children's character development in Kuta Baro Village. Continuous mentoring and a parent learning forum are recommended to sustain the program's outcomes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children's character development is a continuous process shaped by interactions among the family, school, and broader social environment. Character refers to values, attitudes, habits, and behavioural dispositions reflected in how children think, regulate emotions, make decisions, fulfil responsibilities, and interact with others. Discipline, independence, honesty, responsibility, empathy, and social concern are not formed merely through verbal instruction. These qualities develop through habituation, consistent guidance, positive reinforcement, and the examples children observe in their daily lives. The family is the first and most influential educational environment in children's development. Before entering formal education, children learn how to communicate, manage emotions, resolve disagreements, follow rules, and treat others through everyday interactions with parents and other family members. Parents therefore function not only as caregivers but also as primary educators and behavioural models. The quality of parent-child relationships directly influences children's emotional security, moral understanding, social competence, and behavioural development.

Parenting practices include the ways parents provide affection, establish boundaries, supervise children, respond to emotional needs, communicate expectations, and apply consequences. Research conducted in Indonesia indicates that parenting practices contribute significantly to children's character development, although children's personalities and broader social environments also play important roles (Asbari et al., 2019). This finding confirms that character education cannot be assigned exclusively to schools because the family is the primary setting in which values are repeatedly demonstrated and practised. One approach that can strengthen the family's educational role is positive parenting. Positive parenting is an approach that prioritises children's developmental needs and best interests through affection, emotional responsiveness, empathetic communication, clear boundaries, positive reinforcement, parental role modelling, and nonviolent discipline. Positive parenting should not be understood as permissive parenting or the absence of parental authority. Parents remain responsible for establishing rules and behavioural expectations, but they exercise authority in an educational, proportionate, and respectful manner.

Empathetic communication is a central component of positive parenting. It refers to parents' ability to listen to, recognise, and understand children's feelings and needs while continuing to provide clear behavioural guidance. Parents are encouraged to distinguish between accepting children's emotions and accepting inappropriate behaviour. A child may be allowed to express disappointment or anger, but the parent must still explain that hitting, insulting others, or damaging objects is unacceptable. This approach helps children develop emotional awareness, self-control, and constructive problem-solving skills.

Positive parenting also requires parental emotional regulation. Parents often face stress arising from economic pressures, household responsibilities, work demands, and children's challenging behaviour. When anger and frustration are not managed properly, parents may respond through shouting, threats, negative labelling, humiliation, or excessive punishment. Such responses may produce temporary obedience but do not necessarily help children understand responsibility or regulate their own behaviour. In contrast, calm and measured responses allow parents to maintain boundaries without damaging children's emotional security and self-esteem. Evidence-based parenting interventions have been recommended as strategies for strengthening parent-child relationships and reducing harsh disciplinary practices. The World Health Organization (2022) emphasises that parenting interventions can improve positive parenting skills, prevent child maltreatment, reduce emotional and behavioural problems, and create safer family environments. These interventions are relevant not only for families experiencing serious problems but also as preventive and promotive measures for improving the overall quality of family relationships. Prime et

al. (2023) found that parenting interventions emphasising sensitivity, responsiveness, positive interaction, and non-harsh discipline have the potential to improve children's cognitive and language development. Similarly, Bosqui et al. (2024) reported that parenting and family interventions implemented in low- and middle-income countries may support children's and adolescents' mental health and psychosocial well-being. Such programs can also be implemented by trained community-based facilitators, provided that the materials and methods are appropriately adapted to participants' needs and sociocultural conditions. Despite its potential benefits, positive parenting is not always easily understood or accepted within communities. Some parents assume that listening to children's emotions or allowing them to express opinions may weaken parental authority. Others believe that physical or verbal punishment is necessary to ensure immediate obedience. These perspectives reflect a continuing tension between authoritarian discipline and child-centred parenting. Positive parenting does not eliminate parental authority; rather, it encourages parents to exercise authority through consistency, explanation, role modelling, and logical consequences instead of fear and violence.

The implementation of positive parenting must also consider the sociocultural context of the community. In rural communities, parenting is influenced by extended family relationships, religious values, intergenerational traditions, and community norms. Values such as respect for parents, family responsibility, cooperation, mutual assistance, and social concern constitute important resources for character development. However, constructive cultural values must be distinguished from practices that normalise harsh punishment or degrading communication toward children. The increasing use of digital technology has created additional parenting challenges. Parents now encounter various parenting concepts through social media, including *gentle parenting*, democratic parenting, mindful parenting, and positive discipline. Although digital platforms expand access to information, not all available content is scientifically grounded or appropriate to children's developmental stages and family circumstances. Parents may therefore experience confusion when attempting to apply general parenting advice to the realities of their households. Parenting education within communities is also frequently conducted through one-way lectures. Parents receive information regarding their responsibilities but may not be given adequate opportunities to examine their parenting experiences, discuss actual problems, practise communication skills, or develop alternative responses. As a result, participants may understand that shouting or physical punishment is inappropriate but remain uncertain about how to respond when children refuse instructions, neglect responsibilities, fight with siblings, display intense emotions, or use digital devices excessively.

This gap between conceptual understanding and practical parenting skills constituted the primary basis for implementing the lecturer-led community service program in Kuta Baro Village. Initial discussions indicated that parents faced challenges related to emotional control, inconsistent family rules, limited understanding of logical consequences, insufficient recognition of positive behaviour, and uncertainty about responding to children's emotional expressions. These challenges demonstrated the need for a practical educational program that moved beyond the delivery of parenting information.

The program was also implemented because responsibility for children's character development is still frequently placed primarily on schools. Parents may expect teachers to develop discipline, responsibility, politeness, independence, and social concern, while the application of these values at home remains inconsistent. When children encounter different expectations at home and school, the process of character internalisation may become less effective. Strengthening parents' knowledge and skills is therefore essential for building continuity among family, school, and community-based character education. Previous studies have generally examined statistical relationships between parenting styles and children's development. Although such studies provide important evidence, they do not fully explain how parenting knowledge can be transformed into practical skills within rural family contexts. Some community service activities have also focused mainly on seminars and short-term knowledge improvement without sufficiently assessing participants' abilities to analyse parenting situations, practise constructive communication, and formulate follow-up actions. The distinctive contribution of this community service program lies in integrating positive parenting education,

children's character development, and rural community empowerment. Rather than discussing positive parenting solely as a theoretical concept, the lecturer team translated it into practical skills related to empathetic communication, emotional regulation, positive reinforcement, role modelling, and nonviolent discipline. Character values were connected directly to everyday family interactions, such as establishing consistent rules, providing age-appropriate responsibilities, recognising children's emotions, and applying logical consequences.

The program also employed a participatory and practice-oriented approach consisting of needs identification, interactive presentations, experience-sharing discussions, case analysis, parent-child communication simulations, reflection, and parenting action plans. Participants were positioned as active learners whose experiences and local knowledge contributed to the learning process. This approach allowed scientific parenting principles to be discussed through situations that were familiar and relevant to families in Kuta Baro Village. Its contextual contribution lies in adapting positive parenting principles to the social values of the village community. Respect for parents, family responsibility, cooperation, and concern for others were not positioned in opposition to children's rights. Instead, these values were used as foundations for developing parenting practices that were warm, firm, consistent, and free from violence. This contextual adaptation was intended to prevent positive parenting from being perceived as an external concept that disregards parental authority and local culture. Accordingly, this lecturer-led community service program aimed to strengthen the knowledge and practical skills of parents and primary caregivers in Kuta Baro Village in implementing positive parenting strategies to support children's character development. The program specifically focused on child development, empathetic communication, parental emotional regulation, positive reinforcement, role modelling, and consistent nonviolent discipline. Through participatory education and practical exercises, the program was expected to enhance parental capacity, strengthen parent-child relationships, and support the development of disciplined, responsible, independent, empathetic, and socially concerned children.

2. METHODS

This lecturer-led community service program employed a participatory educational approach to strengthen parents' knowledge and practical skills in applying positive parenting strategies. A participatory approach was selected because it positions community members as active learners who contribute their experiences, identify problems, discuss possible solutions, practise new skills, and formulate actions relevant to their family contexts. Creswell and Creswell (2023) emphasise that participatory and mixed educational activities can provide a more comprehensive understanding of community needs by integrating structured assessment with participants' experiences.

The program was implemented in Kuta Baro Village and involved 30 parents and primary caregivers who were directly responsible for children's daily care. Participants were recruited voluntarily in coordination with village officials and community representatives. The selection of parents and caregivers was based on their central role in developing children's discipline, responsibility, independence, empathy, and social behaviour through everyday family interactions. Parenting interventions are more effective when they are accessible, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the realities of family life (World Health Organization, 2022).

The implementation consisted of five stages: needs identification, program preparation, educational activities, practical exercises, and evaluation. During the needs-identification stage, the lecturer team conducted informal discussions with village representatives and parents. This stage aimed to identify common parenting challenges, communication patterns, disciplinary practices, and participants' expectations. The identified problems included difficulty controlling parental anger, the use of shouting, inconsistent family rules, limited understanding of logical consequences, insufficient appreciation of children's positive behaviour, sibling conflict, learning routines, and excessive digital-device use.

Needs identification was important because parenting interventions should not be transferred rigidly from one social context to another. The World Health Organization (2022) recommends that parenting interventions be adapted to participants' developmental needs, available resources, delivery settings, and sociocultural contexts. Similarly, Bosqui et al. (2024) found that community-based parenting and family interventions in low- and middle-income countries are influenced by the relevance of the materials, the quality of facilitation, participant engagement, and implementation support.

Based on the identified needs, the lecturer team developed educational materials covering six topics: child development, empathetic communication, parental emotional regulation, positive reinforcement, parental role modelling, and consistent nonviolent discipline. The materials were adapted to participants' educational backgrounds, family experiences, and the social values of Kuta Baro Village. They were delivered using PowerPoint presentations, short case narratives, parenting-situation cards, reflection sheets, assessment questionnaires, and parenting action-plan forms.

The child-development material introduced participants to the relationship between children's developmental stages and their behaviour. Parents were encouraged to distinguish among developmentally expected behaviour, behaviour associated with emotional needs, and behaviour requiring clear boundaries. Prime et al. (2023) explain that responsive parenting interventions can support children's development by encouraging sensitivity, positive interactions, and developmentally appropriate responses.

The empathetic communication material focused on active listening, recognition of children's emotions, clear instructions, and the avoidance of degrading language. Participants learned to distinguish between acknowledging children's feelings and permitting inappropriate behaviour. The emotional-regulation material introduced strategies such as pausing before responding, identifying emotional triggers, controlling tone of voice, and separating children's identity from their problematic behaviour. Parental emotional regulation is important because difficulties in managing anger and frustration may increase the risk of harsh or reactive parenting practices (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022; Lotto et al., 2024).

The positive-reinforcement material emphasised specific praise, recognition of effort, appreciation of responsible behaviour, and encouragement of cooperation. The role-modelling material highlighted that children learn discipline, honesty, empathy, and responsibility by observing adults' behaviour. Asbari et al. (2019) found that parenting practices contribute to children's character development, indicating that parents' communication and behavioural examples are important components of character education.

The discipline material explained the differences among punishment, natural consequences, and logical consequences. Participants were encouraged to apply consequences that were related to the behaviour, proportionate, clearly explained, and free from physical or psychological violence. Positive parenting does not remove parental authority; instead, it encourages parents to exercise authority consistently and educationally. The World Health Organization (2022) identifies nonviolent discipline as an essential element of parenting interventions intended to prevent maltreatment and strengthen parent-child relationships.

The activity began with a pre-activity assessment to identify participants' initial understanding of positive parenting. The lecturer team then delivered the materials through interactive presentations, questions, examples, and experience-sharing discussions. This method was used instead of a one-way lecture because participatory learning enables parents to relate scientific concepts to actual parenting situations. Pandia et al. (2024) showed that community-based parenting education can be effectively delivered when learning methods, materials, and participant access are appropriately designed.

Case-based discussions were conducted in small groups. Participants analysed situations such as children refusing instructions, expressing anger, neglecting responsibilities, fighting with siblings, breaking family agreements, or exceeding digital-device limits. They were asked to identify the possible

causes of the behaviour, the emotions experienced by the parent and child, less adaptive responses, and constructive alternatives consistent with positive parenting principles.

Parent-child communication simulations were subsequently conducted to strengthen practical skills. Participants practised giving clear instructions, recognising emotions, setting boundaries, providing specific appreciation, and applying logical consequences. The lecturer team and other participants provided feedback on tone of voice, clarity, emotional responsiveness, consistency, and the relevance of the proposed consequence. Practice-oriented parenting interventions are important because information alone may not be sufficient to change habitual parenting responses. McAloon and Armstrong (2024) found that structured behavioural parenting interventions can improve parenting competence and several parent and child outcomes.

At the end of the program, participants completed a parenting action plan. They identified one parenting practice to reduce, one positive practice to strengthen, one family rule requiring clarification, and one communication strategy to apply at home. This stage was designed to help participants transform the learning materials into realistic actions suited to their family circumstances.

Program evaluation was conducted using demographic forms, pre- and post-activity questionnaires, participant-observation sheets, case-analysis results, discussion notes, communication simulations, and parenting action plans. The assessment measured six indicators: understanding of child development, empathetic communication, parental emotional regulation, positive reinforcement, parental role modelling, and nonviolent discipline.

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and differences between pre- and post-activity results. Qualitative data obtained from observations, discussions, simulations, and action plans were analysed through data reduction, categorisation, and interpretation. The integration of quantitative and qualitative information was intended to provide a more comprehensive evaluation of changes in participants' understanding, involvement, reflective ability, and practical parenting responses, consistent with the mixed-method principles described by Creswell and Creswell (2023).

Participation in the program was voluntary. Participants were informed about the program objectives, procedures, documentation process, and use of the evaluation results. Personal identities were kept confidential, and the findings were reported collectively. The facilitation process avoided judging participants' previous parenting practices and instead emphasised respectful dialogue, reflection, practical learning, and gradual improvement.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The program was attended by 30 parents and primary caregivers, consisting of 25 women (83.3%) and 5 men (16.7%). The diversity of participants' educational backgrounds, number of children, and parenting experiences enriched discussions on children's emotions, discipline, family responsibilities, sibling conflict, and digital-device use.

The evaluation showed that the average understanding score increased from 61.8 before the activity to 85.6 after the activity, representing an improvement of 23.8 points or 38.5%. As presented in Figure 1, the largest increase occurred in nonviolent discipline, followed by parental emotional regulation and empathetic communication. These descriptive results indicate that the activity strengthened participants' short-term understanding of positive parenting concepts.

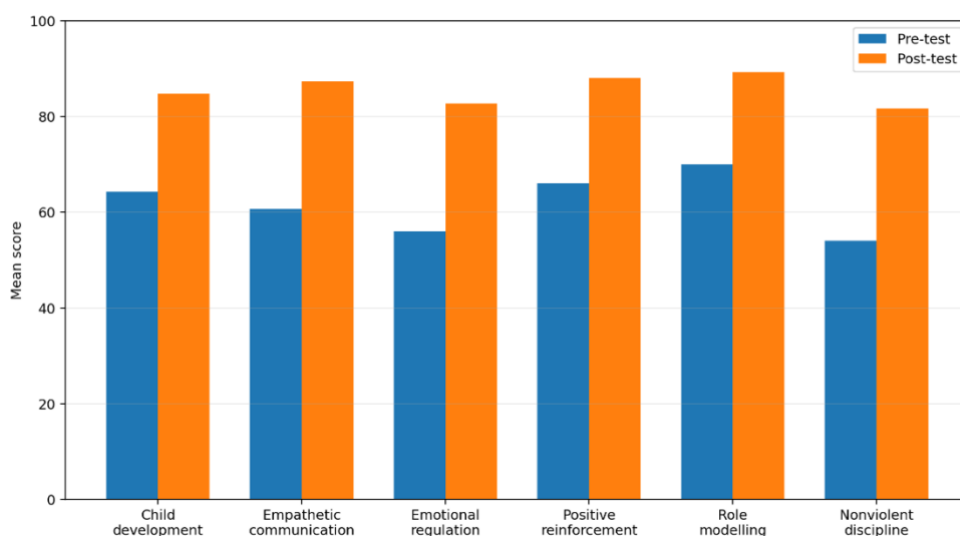


Figure 1. Comparison of pre-test and post-test mean scores.

Practical observations also showed improvement. After the activity, 86.7% of participants were able to formulate clear instructions, 80% acknowledged children's emotions before giving direction, and 83.3% avoided threatening or humiliating language. In addition, 90% identified at least two strategies for regulating emotions before responding to children, while 83.3% correctly distinguished punishment from logical consequences. These outcomes demonstrate that the program supported not only knowledge acquisition but also the development of practical communication and discipline skills. This finding is consistent with recent evidence linking parental emotional regulation and responsive parenting with healthier family interactions (Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022; Lotto et al., 2024).

Participants' written action plans reflected readiness to apply the learning outcomes at home. The most frequently reported commitments were reducing harsh communication (80%), improving emotional regulation (73.3%), applying consistent rules (70%), increasing positive reinforcement (66.7%), and strengthening parent-child relationships (60%), as shown in Figure 2. These commitments indicate that participants could translate the activity materials into specific and realistic behavioural intentions.

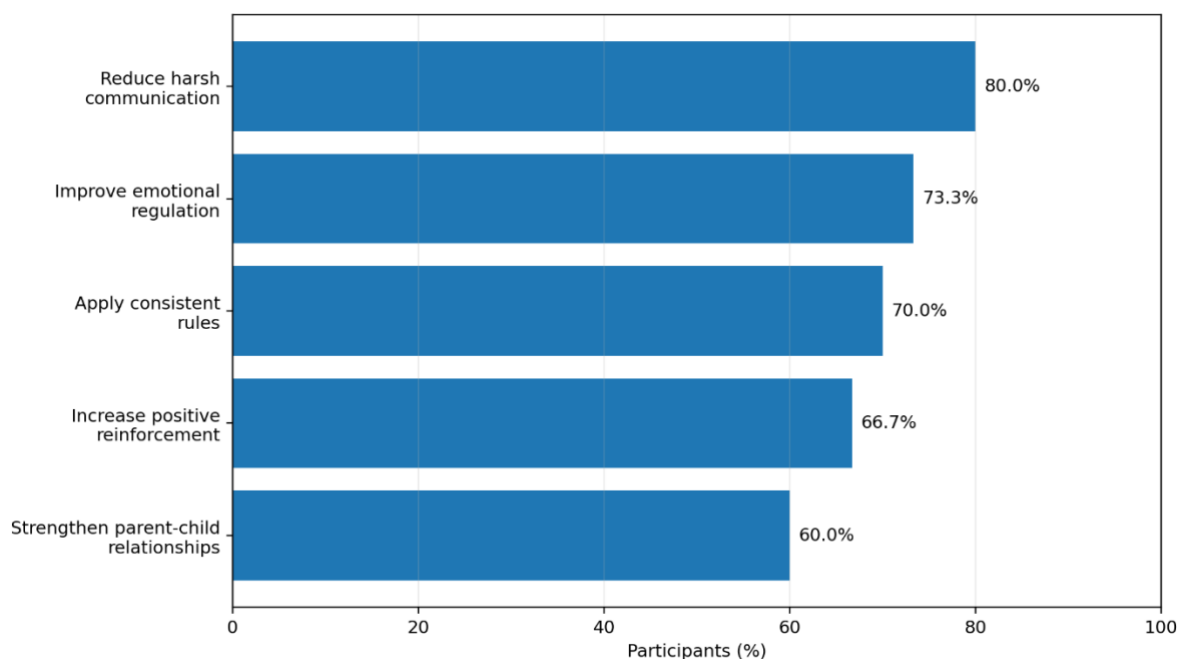


Figure 2. Parenting changes identified in participants' action plans.

Participant engagement was also high throughout the activity. The highest participation occurred during the parenting action plan and case-analysis sessions, while communication simulations initially produced slight hesitation because some participants were unfamiliar with role-play. Figure 3 presents the level of participant engagement in each activity stage.

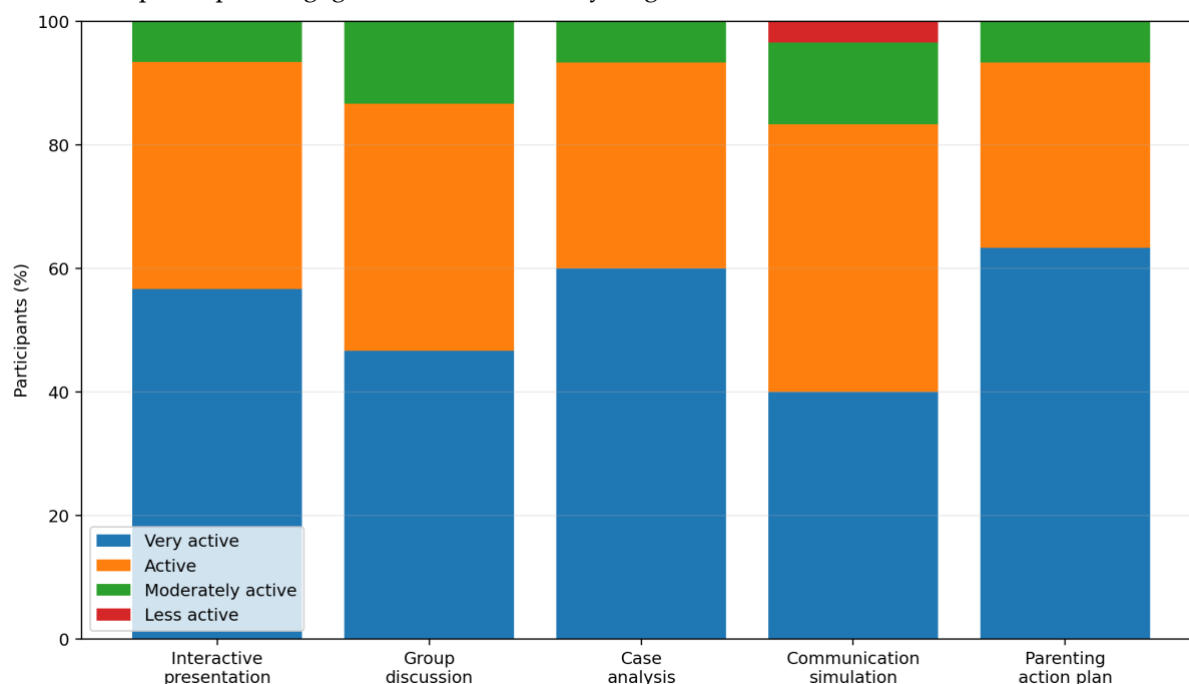


Figure 3. Participant engagement during the program.

Overall, interactive presentations, case analysis, simulations, peer discussion, and reflection made the activity more relevant than one-way counselling. Participants learned that character development occurs through consistent family practices: discipline through clear rules, responsibility through logical consequences, independence through age-appropriate duties, empathy through attentive listening, and honesty through parental role modelling. The program therefore demonstrates that lecturer-led community service can integrate scientific knowledge, practical training, and local community values to strengthen family capacity. Similar community-based approaches have also been shown to increase the accessibility and relevance of parenting education (Pandia et al., 2024; McAloon & Armstrong, 2024).

Discussion

The improvement in participants' scores and practical responses indicates that positive parenting education is more effective when it combines conceptual explanation with opportunities for practice. The increase from a mean score of 61.8 to 85.6 was supported by participants' ability to formulate clearer instructions, acknowledge children's emotions, and distinguish logical consequences from punishment. This pattern is consistent with McAloon and Armstrong (2024), who found that structured behavioural parenting interventions can improve parenting competence and several parent and child outcomes. It also supports Prime et al. (2023), who emphasised the developmental benefits of responsive, sensitive, and non-harsh parenting practices.

The findings also highlight parental emotional regulation as a central component of positive parenting. Many participants initially reported responding to children while angry, tired, or frustrated, but after the program they were able to identify strategies such as pausing, controlling tone of voice, and delaying discussion until emotions had stabilised. This result is consistent with Zimmer-Gembeck et al. (2022), who reported a meaningful association between parental emotion regulation, parenting behaviour, and child adjustment. Lotto et al. (2024) similarly concluded that emotional and behavioural

dysregulation can increase the risk of harsh parenting, whereas better regulation supports more responsive and flexible parenting.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between parenting and character formation. Participants increasingly recognised that discipline, responsibility, independence, empathy, honesty, and social concern are developed through repeated family interactions rather than through verbal advice alone. Clear rules support discipline, logical consequences promote responsibility, age-appropriate duties strengthen independence, and parental example reinforces honesty and accountability. This interpretation is consistent with Asbari et al. (2019), who identified parenting practices as an important contributor to children's character development.

The participatory delivery model also contributed to the program's effectiveness. Case analysis, communication simulations, peer discussion, and parenting action plans enabled participants to connect scientific concepts with their own family experiences. This supports Pandia et al. (2024), who showed that community-based parenting education becomes more meaningful when the delivery method is accessible and responsive to participants' circumstances. Bosqui et al. (2024) likewise emphasised that the relevance of materials, quality of facilitation, participant engagement, and implementation support influence the outcomes of family interventions in low- and middle-income settings.

The program further demonstrates the importance of cultural adaptation. Positive parenting was introduced not as a rejection of parental authority, but as a way of exercising authority through consistency, explanation, empathy, and nonviolent discipline. Local values such as respect for parents, family responsibility, cooperation, and concern for others were used as foundations for character education. This approach is aligned with the World Health Organization (2022), which recommends that parenting interventions be adapted to sociocultural conditions while maintaining the principles of child protection and nonviolent discipline.

Despite these positive outcomes, the results represent short-term changes in knowledge, reflection, and intended practice. The program involved only 30 participants from one village and did not directly assess long-term changes in family behaviour or children's character. Therefore, follow-up mentoring, parent learning forums, and periodic evaluation are necessary to determine whether the strategies are sustained at home. Future community service programs should also involve fathers, teachers, village health workers, and other caregivers to strengthen consistency across the child's family and social environments.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service program improved parents' understanding and practical readiness to apply empathetic communication, emotional regulation, positive reinforcement, role modelling, and nonviolent discipline. The participatory approach also helped parents connect positive parenting practices with children's discipline, responsibility, independence, empathy, and honesty. Further mentoring and follow-up evaluation are recommended to ensure that these practices are consistently applied at home.

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