

Family Gathering as a Scientific Approach to Parenting Education: Enhancing Parenting Styles and Social Behavior in Children with Intellectual Disabilities at SLB Lentera Bunda, Solok

Titin Sumarni¹, Damri^{1*}, Nurhastuti¹, Rahmahtrisilvia¹

¹ Program Magister Program Studi Pendidikan Khusus Universitas Negeri Padang

Received: May 09, 2025

Revised: July 31, 2025

Accepted: August 25, 2025

Published: August 31, 2025

Corresponding Author:

Damri

damrirjm@fip.unp.ac.id

DOI: [10.29303/jppipa.v11i8.12352](https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v11i8.12352)

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Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of family gathering as a scientific approach to parenting education in improving parenting styles and social behavior among children with intellectual disabilities at SLB Lentera Bunda, Solok. Using a mixed-method design with a one-group pretest-posttest model, the research involved 10 children and 9 parents who participated in two structured family gathering sessions integrating recreational and educational elements. Quantitative data were collected through observation checklists measuring 21 indicators of social behavior, while qualitative data were gathered via in-depth interviews and field documentation. Results showed a significant increase in children's average social behavior score from 12.4 (pretest) to 14.3 (posttest), confirmed by a paired t-test ($p = 0.001$). Thematic analysis revealed a shift in parenting styles from authoritarian to democratic, with parents reporting improved communication, emotional regulation, and collaborative decision-making. The activity fostered a supportive environment for experiential learning, strengthened parent-child interaction, and enhanced social skills in children. Findings confirm that family gathering, when designed educationally, functions as a valid psychosocial intervention. It is recommended as a structured program in special education settings to promote holistic development through family-school collaboration.

Keywords: Family gathering; Intellectual disability; Parenting style; Social behavior

Introduction

The social development of children with intellectual disabilities is a crucial aspect of inclusive and sustainable education, which is not only determined by school interventions but is also greatly influenced by the quality of parenting in the family environment (Cavadini et al., 2025; Lakhani et al., 2024; Madan et al., 2024). Children with intellectual disabilities often face challenges in interacting, empathizing, and building healthy social relationships, which are often exacerbated by parents' lack of understanding of adaptive parenting needs (Alsultan et al., 2025; David et al., 2025; Lakhani et al., 2024). In many contexts, particularly in Special Education Schools (SLB), parents' roles are often limited

to physical accompaniment without being supported by parenting strategies based on child development science (Alsultan et al., 2025; Förster & Schnell, 2025; Marzi et al., 2023). This situation creates a gap between a child's developmental potential and the reality they face, necessitating a collaborative approach that integrates the family and school environments into a holistic educational framework.

Within the framework of Bronfenbrenner (2005) ecological systems theory, child development is understood as the result of dynamic interactions between microsystems (family, school) and mesosystems (relationships between these systems) (Bai et al., 2025; Ragone et al., 2025). When communication between parents and teachers is disrupted or ineffective,

How to Cite:

Sumarni, T., Damri, Nurhastuti, & Rahmahtrisilvia. (2025). Family Gathering as a Scientific Approach to Parenting Education: Enhancing Parenting Styles and Social Behavior in Children with Intellectual Disabilities at SLB Lentera Bunda, Solok. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan IPA*, 11(8), 585–592. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jppipa.v11i8.12352>

the mesosystem becomes weak, which directly impacts the child's social development. This is where the importance of interventions that can strengthen the bridges between these systems lies.

Family gatherings, often perceived as recreational activities, actually have significant potential as informal science-based educational tools, particularly in the context of special needs education. These activities not only create an emotional space for strengthening family bonds but can also be systematically designed as a structured form of social intervention, family gatherings can increase parental involvement, reduce parenting stress, and strengthen emotional support for children with disabilities (David et al., 2025; Ferguson et al., 2025; Ullrich et al., 2025).

At SLB Lentera Bunda Kota Solok, initial observations indicate that most parents still apply authoritarian or permissive parenting styles due to a lack of knowledge about appropriate parenting strategies for children with intellectual disabilities. This is reflected in the dominance of withdrawn behavior, lack of social initiative, and excessive dependence on parents in the child's daily activities. However, according to Bandura (1991), children learn through observation and direct interaction with their social environment. When parents lack positive and responsive parenting models, children lose the opportunity to absorb adaptive social behaviors. This phenomenon is reinforced by the findings of Shafira et al. (2025), who discovered that democratic parenting is positively correlated with improved collaboration skills, empathy, and effective communication in children with special needs.

Based on this reality, this study proposes family gatherings not merely as ceremonial activities, but as a scientific approach to parenting education designed to collectively and sustainably change parents' mindsets and behaviors. Through a combination of educational activities, reflective discussions, role-playing, and interactive games, family gatherings become social learning spaces where parents gain new insights into adaptive parenting, while children have the opportunity to practice social skills in an inclusive and supportive environment. This approach is also supported by the findings of Kovács et al. (2022), which indicate that parental involvement in school activities consistently contributes to increased self-confidence and social participation among children in special education settings.

Although several studies have discussed the effectiveness of family-based programs, there is still a specific research gap regarding how family gatherings can be used as a science-based intervention to improve parenting patterns and simultaneously improve the social behavior of children with intellectual disabilities.

This study aims to address this gap by empirically examining the contribution of family gatherings as a structured educational medium at SLB Lentera Bunda, Solok. The research focus includes: (1) how family gatherings influence changes in parental parenting styles, (2) their impact on children's social behavior development, and (3) the role of these activities as a sustainable parenting education model. Using a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative data (pre-test and post-test of social behavior) and qualitative data (in-depth interviews and observations), this study is expected to provide strong scientific evidence regarding the effectiveness of family gatherings as an innovative and applicable social intervention strategy.

The findings of this study are expected to not only contribute academically to the fields of special education and developmental psychology, but also serve as a basis for schools and educational policies to integrate family gatherings as part of a curriculum that supports parenting. Thus, this activity can be transformed from a mere social gathering into a science-based intervention that has a real impact on the quality of life of families and children with intellectual disabilities.

Method

This study uses a mixed method approach that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches synergistically (Chotisarn & Phuthong, 2025; Li et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). This approach was chosen to obtain a more complete and in-depth picture of the effectiveness of family gatherings as an educational medium in developing parenting patterns and the social behavior of children with intellectual disabilities. Quantitative data was used to measure changes in children's social behavior before and after the intervention, while qualitative data provided context, meaning, and subjective experiences of parents during the activities.

The quantitative research design used was a one-group pre-test post-test design, which is a quasi-experimental design involving a single group of subjects who were measured before (pre-test) and after (post-test) receiving treatment. The purpose of this design was to assess the extent to which the intervention had an impact on the variables under study, even without a comparison group. The treatment in this study was the implementation of two educational family gathering sessions, held on May 31, 2025, at Tan Kayo Park and June 15, 2025, at Vila Yuke Singkarak. These activities integrated recreational elements with educational sessions such as parent discussions, role-playing, and reflective letter writing, aimed at fostering awareness and behavioral changes in parenting.

The research subjects consisted of 10 children with intellectual disabilities and 9 parents who were the parents of these children. The subjects were selected using purposive sampling, a technique of sampling based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria used included: children enrolled at SLB Lentera Bunda Kota Solok, diagnosed with intellectual disabilities, and willing to participate in the entire family gathering activities with their parents.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: questionnaires, observation, and interviews. Quantitative data was collected using pre-test and post-test questionnaires designed based on indicators of children's social behavior according to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. The instrument consists of 21 statements covering five main aspects of social behavior: (1) social interaction, (2) empathy, (3) self-control, (4) social communication, and (5) social responsibility. Scores are measured using the Guttman scale (0 = cannot, 1 = can), enabling rigorous quantitative analysis of child development.

Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews with nine parents after the family gathering activity was completed. The interviews focused on changes in parents' understanding, attitudes, and parenting practices. In addition, observations were conducted during the activity to record the dynamics of interaction between parents and children, participation in educational sessions, and changes in behavior that were directly observable. Documentation was also carried out using photos, videos, and field notes to enrich the data and support the validity of the research results.

Data analysis was conducted separately according to data type. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to describe the average pre-test and post-test scores, as well as a paired sample t-test to determine the significance of the difference between the two measurements. This test was conducted to test the hypothesis that family gatherings have a significant effect on improving children's social behavior. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data triangulation was performed by comparing the results of questionnaires, observations, and interviews to increase the internal validity of the study.

The research instruments used were developed based on relevant theoretical frameworks, particularly Diana Baumrind's parenting style theory (democratic, authoritarian, permissive) to measure changes in parenting styles, and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory to understand the context of children's social development. Observation and interview guidelines

were structured to ensure consistency and depth of data collection.

Result and Discussion

This study reveals significant findings regarding the effectiveness of family gatherings as an educational medium in developing parenting patterns and improving the social behavior of children with intellectual disabilities at SLB Lentera Bunda in Solok City. The research results were comprehensively analyzed using a mixed-method approach, which included quantitative data from pre- and post-tests, as well as qualitative data from in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation during the implementation of the activities.

Improvement in Children's Social Behavior

Quantitative data was obtained through observational questionnaires administered to 10 children with intellectual disabilities, which measured 21 indicators of social behavior based on Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework. Scores were calculated using the Guttman scale (0 = unable, 1 = able), with a maximum total score of 21. Measurements were taken three times: pretest (before intervention), posttest 1 (after the first session), and posttest 2 (after the second family gathering session).

Pretest Scores

Before the intervention, the average social behavior score for children was 12.4, indicating that their social behavior was still in the moderate to low range. Some children showed tendencies to withdraw, difficulty interacting, and a lack of social initiative.

Table 1. Results of Children's Social Behavior Pretest Scores

Child Code	Pre-Test Score	Percentage (%)
AN-01	10	47.61
AN-02	14	66.67
AN-03	8	38.09
AN-04	15	71.42
AN-05	18	85.71
AN-06	13	61.9
AN-07	9	42.85
AN-08	8	38.09
AN-09	17	80.95
AN-10	12	57.14
Average	12.4	59.04

Posttest Scores

After two family gathering sessions, there was a consistent improvement in children's social behavior scores.

Table 2. Children's Posttest Social Behavior Scores

Child Code	Posttest 1	Posttest 2	Percentage Posttest 1 (%)	Percentage Posttest 2 (%)
AN-01	12	14	57.14	66.67
AN-02	14	15	66.67	71.42
AN-03	8	10	38.09	47.61
AN-04	15	17	71.42	80.95
AN-05	18	20	85.71	95.23
AN-06	13	15	61.9	71.42
AN-07	12	14	57.14	66.67
AN-08	10	11	47.61	52.38
AN-09	17	16	80.95	76.19
AN-10	12	14	57.14	66.67
Total	131	143	-	-
Average	13.1	14.3	-	-

Of the 10 children, 9 (90%) experienced an increase in their scores from the pretest to posttest 2, with an average increase of +1.9 points. One child (AN-09) experienced a decrease in score from 17 to 16, although this was still in the high category.

Comparison of Pretest and Posttest

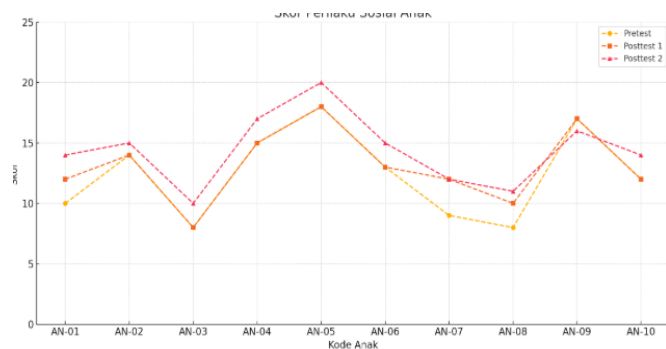
To see the impact of the intervention more clearly, a comparison was made between the pretest and posttest scores.

Table 3. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results

Child Code	Pretest	Posttest 2	Difference
AN-01	10	14	4
AN-02	14	15	1
AN-03	8	10	2
AN-04	15	17	2
AN-05	18	20	2
AN-06	13	15	2
AN-07	9	12	3
AN-08	8	11	3
AN-09	17	16	-1
AN-10	12	14	2
Total	124	143	19

Score Comparison Chart

The following chart shows the trend of improvement in children's social behavior scores from the pretest to the posttest 2.

**Figure 1.** Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Results

Statistical Test: Paired Sample t-Test

To test the significance of the difference, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results show in Table 4.

Table 4. Paired Sample t-Test Result

Statistic	Value
t _{count}	4.743
p-value	0.001

Since the p-value is < 0.05 , there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. This means that family gatherings have a real and significant effect on improving the social behavior of children with intellectual disabilities.

Changes in Parenting Styles

Qualitative data was obtained from in-depth interviews with nine parents, direct observation during activities, and documentation (photos, videos, field notes). The findings indicate a transformation in understanding and parenting practices.

Changes in Parenting Styles

Based on observation and interview analysis, there has been a shift from authoritarian and permissive parenting styles toward democratic parenting. This change is evident in the way parents communicate, give instructions, and provide emotional support to their children (Burleson & Kunkel, 2002).

Observational Findings: Joint Activity Simulation

During the family gathering event, five types of educational games were conducted to enhance communication and cooperation between parents and children. These included: ball toss to train concentration and verbal responses; head-ball relay to build team coordination; rope-ball transfer for practicing nonverbal communication and patience; tower building using ropes to encourage problem-solving and teamwork; and

writing names with a rope-tied marker to foster verbal communication and empathy.

Table 5. Changes in Parenting Patterns Before and After the Activity

Parent Code	Parenting Before	Parenting After	Observed Changes
OR-01	Authoritarian	Democratic	More patient, learned to listen to the child
OR-02	Authoritarian	Democratic	Started giving praise and choices
OR-03	Authoritarian	Mixed	More open, but still under some pressure
OR-04	Authoritarian	Democratic	Learned to respect the child's opinion
OR-05	Permissive	Democratic	Started setting clear rules
OR-06	Mixed	Democratic	More consistent and involved the child
OR-07	Authoritarian	Transitioning to Democratic	Learned to manage emotions and create discussion space
OR-08	Permissive	Democratic	Learned to set boundaries gently
OR-09	Democratic	Democratic	Strengthened cooperation and positive affirmation



Figure 2. Role-playing activities by parents



Figure 3. Parents write letters to themselves



Figure 4. One of the parents is reading out the contents of his letter during a family gathering

Figure 2 shows how parents and children collaborated in constructing a tower using ropes, highlighting mutual effort and coordination. In Figure 3, participants attempted to write their group name using a rope-tied marker, which demanded intense focus and joint communication. Figure 4 captures the joyful

moments of parents playing ball relay with their children, radiating a cheerful and engaged atmosphere.

Observations revealed notable behavioral changes among parents after receiving parenting insights. They began to give instructions using a softer tone, supported their messages with positive body language (such as smiling and clapping), gave praise when their child succeeded, and showed greater emotional control when their child encountered failure. These changes suggest an improved quality of interaction and a shift toward more empathetic and constructive parenting approaches.

Interview Findings

The interviews revealed several meaningful reflections from parents regarding their experiences and changes in parenting attitudes. One parent (OR-01) admitted, "I used to always get angry when my child didn't want to participate. Now I'm learning to understand their feelings and give them choices." Another parent (OR-02) expressed appreciation for the program, stating, "This activity is very valuable. If possible, it should be held twice a year. We've become more patient and learned how to love our children better." Meanwhile, a notable behavioral change was shared by another parent (OR-04), who observed, "My child now greets teachers and friends, even though they used to be very shy."

These responses suggest that the intervention had a positive impact not only on parenting approaches but also on the children's social behavior and emotional confidence.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Quantitative and qualitative findings support each other. The improvement in children's social behavior scores (average +1.9) is in line with the change in parenting styles from authoritarian to democratic. Warmer interactions, more open communication, and

positive reinforcement from parents are the main factors driving changes in children's social behavior.

This study, titled *Family Gathering as a Scientific Approach to Parenting Education: Enhancing Parenting Styles and Social Behavior in Children with Intellectual Disabilities at SLB Lentera Bunda, Solok*, explores how structured family activities can serve as a meaningful intervention to improve parenting styles and children's social behaviors. The findings provide strong empirical and theoretical evidence that family gatherings, when purposefully designed, can play a transformative role in special education settings.

The significant improvement in children's social behavior — as evidenced by the average score increase from 12.4 (pretest) to 14.3 (posttest 2), and a statistically significant t-test result ($t = 4.743$, $p = 0.001$) — indicates that the intervention had a real impact. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes the importance of the microsystem (especially family) in shaping children's development. The structured interaction between children and parents within a supportive environment provided opportunities for modeling, scaffolding, and responsive feedback — elements critical for social learning, particularly for children with intellectual disabilities.

The improvement in parenting styles — from authoritarian and permissive tendencies toward more democratic approaches — further strengthens the argument that parents play a pivotal role in facilitating or inhibiting social growth. The changes observed (e.g., softer tone of instruction, use of praise, emotional regulation) mirror Baumrind's theory of parenting styles, where democratic parenting is associated with higher levels of social competence and emotional regulation in children. By fostering autonomy while maintaining warmth and structure, democratic parenting provides the optimal climate for children with special needs to thrive socially.

The findings are consistent with prior research on the impact of parental involvement and experiential learning. For example, studies by Jeffrey et al. (2022); Thompson-Walsh et al. (2021); Walker et al. (2016) highlight that parenting workshops and experiential education significantly influence both parenting behavior and child development outcomes, especially in families of children with developmental disorders. Similarly, a study by (Cheng et al., 2025; Jun et al., 2025; Li & Li, 2025) demonstrated that increased parental empathy and involvement through collaborative activities led to better emotional and social adaptation in children with autism spectrum disorder.

What distinguishes the present study is the use of family gathering as a structured yet informal medium. Unlike traditional parenting seminars, the use of games

and collaborative tasks allowed both parents and children to engage actively, facilitating real-time feedback, emotional bonding, and mutual understanding. This supports Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, where social interaction, especially with more capable peers or adults, enhances learning potential — a process clearly visible in how children improved their social responsiveness over the course of the intervention.

The implications are both practical and theoretical. Practically, the study demonstrates that simple, cost-effective interventions like family gatherings can yield measurable developmental benefits for children with intellectual disabilities. Schools, therapists, and parent groups could integrate such activities into regular programming to strengthen family involvement and child outcomes. Theoretically, the study offers a model for integrating experiential learning, ecological systems theory, and parenting education into a coherent intervention framework that can be replicated or adapted across settings.

Furthermore, the alignment of quantitative improvements (behavioral scores) with qualitative insights (parent narratives and observed changes) underscores the importance of a mixed-methods approach in educational and developmental research. It not only validates the findings but also provides a richer, more nuanced understanding of how and why change occurs.

While the results are promising, several limitations should be noted. First, the sample size was relatively small (10 children, 9 parents), which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study lacked a control group, making it difficult to isolate the effect of the intervention from other potential variables. Third, the short duration between sessions may not fully capture the long-term sustainability of the observed changes. There is also potential bias in self-reported interviews, as parents may have provided socially desirable responses.

Future studies should consider a larger, more diverse sample and include a control or comparison group to strengthen causal claims. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to assess whether the changes in parenting styles and child behavior are sustained over time. Additionally, further exploration into the role of fathers, siblings, and extended family in such interventions could offer a more holistic view of family dynamics. Finally, integrating teacher assessments and peer interactions would help triangulate the data and provide deeper insights into children's social development across contexts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study affirms that family gathering-based interventions can serve as a scientifically grounded and culturally appropriate method to enhance both parenting practices and the social behavior of children with intellectual disabilities. It highlights the transformative power of structured parent-child interaction and lays the groundwork for broader, community-based approaches to inclusive education.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all parties who have helped in this research so that this article can be published.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to writing this article.

Funding

No external funding.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict interest.

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