

## The Development of Children's Learning Assistance Strategy in The Covid-19 Pandemic with a Positive Deviance Approach

Wiwini Hendriani  
Faculty of Psychology,  
Universitas Airlangga

wiwin.hendriani@psikologi.unair.ac.id

Rudi Cahyono  
Faculty of Psychology,  
Universitas Airlangga

rudi.cahyono@psikologi.unair.ac.id

Herdina Indrijati  
Faculty of Psychology,  
Universitas Airlangga

herdina.indrijati@psikologi.unair.ac.id

### Abstract

This study aims to assist parents in developing effective learning support strategies for their children's distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Employing an action research approach with a positive deviance perspective, this study leverages the knowledge and experiences of positive deviant parents who have successfully implemented adaptive assistance strategies. The participants comprised parents of elementary school students engaged in full-time remote learning. Data collection encompassed interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and the use of a Google Form for document submission. Thematic analysis techniques were applied for data analysis. The obtained results are summarized in the form of a set of effective learning support strategies that can be implemented at home, based on successful parental practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. These strategies address four specific challenges and yield positive outcomes for both parents and children.

**Keywords:** *Learning assistance strategy, parent involvement in education, positive deviance, distance learning.*

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### Introduction

The involvement of parents plays a crucial role in ensuring children's educational success (Ferara & Ferara, 2005; Wortham, 2013). Parental engagement in education has been found to contribute significantly to children's cognitive and overall developmental tasks (Park, Byun, & Kim, 2011). The ways in which parents assist their children in learning and the various forms of support they provide serve as tangible expressions of this involvement. The motivation behind this research stems from numerous accounts of challenges encountered by parents in supporting their children's learning at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Undertaking remote schooling presents a considerable challenge for both parents and children, often leading to heightened stress levels (Setyaningsih, 2020). The lack of prior experience with distance or online learning exacerbates the difficulties, despite the reliance on technology for

home-based education (Purwanto, Pramono, Asbari, Santoso, Wijayanti, Hyun, & Putri, 2020). Parents, especially those with elementary school-age children, must invest additional time and effort in providing assistance. This is due to the partial dependence of elementary school-aged children on the support of adults in their vicinity (Purwanto, et al., 2020). Consequently, parents must offer guidance and foster collaboration to facilitate optimal learning for their children.

Drawing from previous research findings, parental involvement in learning assistance extends beyond helping children grasp subject material. It encompasses managing structured daily routines for children (Szabo, Richling, Embry, Biglan, & Wilson, 2020), providing examples of psychological management and self-regulation (Coyne, Gould, Grimaldi, Wilson, Baffuto, & Biglan, 2020), balancing outdoor physical activity (Dunton, Do, & Wang, 2020), fostering positive social interactions through alternative means (Bartlett, Griffin, & Thompson, 2020), enhancing understanding of the pandemic (Einspieler & Marschik, 2020), and managing children's emotions during learning (Bartlett et al., 2020; Szabo et al., 2020). These tasks significantly increase parental responsibilities. Many parents have reported challenges such as balancing work commitments, supporting children's studies, and acting as substitute teachers at home. Difficulties are compounded when parents have limited understanding of the subject material and lack resources for engaging learning activities at home, leading to parental stress (Limbers, McCollum, & Greenwood, 2020; Yulianingsih, Suhanadji, Nugroho, & Mustakim, 2020; Hendriani, Nur, & Daulay, 2020).

Untackled difficulties in parental learning assistance may have long-term consequences, including children's inability to meet learning goals, lack of discipline, and the development of maladaptive behavior patterns. Numerous media reports have highlighted instances of violence in the context of child learning assistance due to the overwhelming psychological burden experienced by parents (Hendriani et al., 2020). These challenging learning environments also place psychological strain on children, leading to increased anxiety and negative emotions that can hinder their personal development.

However, not all community experiences are negative. While some parents face significant difficulties, others demonstrate commendable adaptability through various strategies for managing responsibilities and effective learning assistance (Motherly, 2020; Susilowati & Azzasyofia, 2020; Hendriani et al., 2020). These diverse observations indicate that the community has the potential to respond positively to the demands placed on parents during the pandemic, with various efforts underway. Against this backdrop, this study aims to assist parents in developing effective learning support strategies for their children's remote schooling by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences among parents who have successfully adapted to this new educational landscape.

According to Whittington (1993) and Mintzberg, Lampel, Quinn & Ghoshal (1996), strategy refers to a high-level plan designed to achieve one or more goals amidst uncertain conditions. The strategies developed through this research differ from existing ones. For instance, UNICEF (Fuller & Brown, 2021) has provided guidelines to empower parents and caregivers in supporting children, including preparing them for a return to school. However, these guidelines may not consistently prove effective for parents with limited time and resources. This could be attributed to their formulation being based on ideal parental conditions, which may not align with the reality in society.

In August 2020, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of Indonesia issued Ministerial Decree of Minister of Education and Culture Number 719/P/2020, which outlined guidelines for curriculum implementation in educational units during special circumstances. The curriculum focuses on essential competencies. Upon its announcement, modules for teachers, parents, and students were made available for download on the ministry's website, serving as valuable resources to assist parents in supporting their children's learning. However, some parents encountered challenges in utilizing these modules due to low levels of literacy (INOVASI, 2021). This further highlights the need for alternative approaches to effectively support parents. Pajarningsih (2003; 2004) emphasizes in her writings on addressing social issues in society that program formulation for the community should consider easily accepted steps that align with the characteristics of the local target community. These insights serve as guiding principles for this study.

## **Method**

### *Design*

This online research follows an action research framework. Greenwood & Levin (2007) outline three key elements of action research. The first element is action, which involves implementing actions aimed at improving the conditions and addressing the existing problems faced by a group of individuals. The second element is research, which encompasses the systematic efforts to achieve problem-solving outcomes through the research process. The third element is participation, wherein the participants actively engage as research partners rather than passive subjects. The participatory nature is a defining characteristic of action research, as researchers collaborate with participants to identify problems, devise solutions, implement them, and reflect on the actions taken.

The approach employed in this action research is positive deviance, which has been utilized to support communities and their members in discovering optimal solutions to various challenges within their environment (CORE, 2003). Positive deviance posits that the solutions to community problems already exist within the community itself, albeit often unrecognized. This approach emphasizes leveraging the existing strengths and resources within the community, rather than relying solely on external assistance or resources. Consequently, the program's sustainability is ensured as the resources necessary for achieving program objectives are inherent within the community (Pajarningsih, 2003; Pajarningsih, 2004). Positive deviance promotes community empowerment by encouraging the exploration and identification of positive and unique behaviors, which in turn fosters the recognition, pursuit, and rediscovery of individual and collective potentials to tackle encountered problems.

### *Participant*

This study included a total of 18 parents with children attending elementary school. The children's ages ranged from Grade 1 (6 years old) to Grade 6 (12 years old). The participants demonstrated a willingness to actively engage in all stages of the positive deviance approach over a period of approximately two months. They voluntarily participated in the research activities, from the initial

stage to the final stage. Prior to their involvement, informed consent was obtained and agreed upon by all participants.

### *Procedure*

The positive deviance approach (Sternin & Marsh, 1998) consists of six stages, which are outlined as follows:

- a. Define: Formulate the problem and its underlying causes, along with the desired behavior or status that should be exhibited as a response to the problem.
- b. Determine: Identify individuals or groups within the community who exhibit the desired behavior or status (referred to as positive deviants).
- c. Discover: Uncover the unique behaviors or practices employed by the positive deviants that enable them to find better solutions compared to other community members.
- d. Design: Develop and implement activities or programs that enable other individuals in the community to adopt the new behaviors and strategies used by the positive deviants to address the identified problems.
- e. Discern: Conduct monitoring and evaluation to collect data on the effectiveness of the designed activities or programs.
- f. Disseminate: Share the success of the activities or programs with other community groups.

In this study, all six stages were conducted entirely online, as presented in Table I.

Table 1

*Positive Deviance Implementation Stages*

Stages	Steps	Form of Activity
<i>Define</i>	1. Reflect together on the conditions that the participants faced when assisting their children's learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.	Online FGD (1)
	2. Formulate the problem and its causes, along with what behaviors or conditions are then expected to emerge as an appropriate response to the demands of the responsibility for assisting the child's learning.	Online FGD (1)
<i>Determine</i>	3. Determine the individuals or groups in the community who have demonstrated appropriate child learning assistance behavior/strategies (finding individuals or small groups that are referred to as positive deviants).	Online interview
<i>Discover</i>	4. Find the different behaviors or practices, in their strategies of assisting children's learning, from the positive deviant groups that enable them to find better solutions compared to other community members.	An online sharing forum from the positive deviants to the participants.
<i>Design</i>	5. Discuss and jointly formulate a behavior change design/learning assistance strategy and overcome various difficulties in it, based on the findings at the discovery stage.	Online FGD (2)
	6. Implementing behavior change design in learning assistance, according to the agreed timeframe.	Research participants' self-implementation and filling out positive practice notes during a mutually agreed time (minimum 2 weeks)
<i>Discern</i>	7. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the behavior change design and the strategy to overcome the problems that are applied.	Online FGD (3)
<i>Disseminate</i>	8. Disseminate successful behavior change to wider community groups	Webinar

### *Data Analysis*

The qualitative data collected in this study were analyzed using a thematic analysis technique. Thematic analysis aims to identify important or interesting patterns, known as themes, within the data, and utilize these themes to explore the research topic or elucidate a specific issue. The researcher followed the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clark (2006), which include: (1) Familiarizing with the data; (2) Generating initial codes; (3) Searching for themes; (4) Reviewing themes; (5) Defining and naming themes, and (6) Producing the report. Themes were primarily derived from the interviews conducted with the participants. It is important to note that this research employed a bottom-up approach to thematic analysis, also known as inductive thematic analysis, which is driven by the participants' data rather than predetermined research questions or theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Result**

In addressing the question of effective learning assistance strategies to be implemented at home based on the positive practices of parents with elementary school-age children during the COVID-19 pandemic, this research has formulated a comprehensive answer. The formulated strategy encompasses a series of steps that parents can take to support their children's learning, particularly when facing recurring challenges. These challenges refer to the various aspects that parents must manage, address, and resolve while providing learning assistance to their children. Inadequate response to these challenges can lead to a range of issues, impacting both the well-being of parents and the continuity of their children's education.

Based on the experiences shared by parents, four categories of challenges in children's learning assistance have been identified. These categories include: (1) Challenges related to learning materials; (2) Challenges associated with children's self-regulation; (3) Challenges concerning communication between parents and children; and (4) Challenges related to parents' self-regulation as learning facilitators for their children.

Table 2  
*Challenges in Learning Assistance*

No.	Challenges	
1	Learning Materials	Helping children understand the learning material
2	Children's Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Helping children to regulate their emotions</li> <li>b. Helping children manage their attention span</li> <li>c. Helping children to be disciplined and have good time management</li> </ul>
3	Communication	Building an open communication between parents and children
4	Parents' Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Regulating parents' own emotions while assisting children's learning</li> <li>b. Having proper time and attention management when fulfilling several roles at the same time</li> </ul>

The following is a detailed explanation of the strategy for resolving each of the four challenges:

*Challenges related to learning materials*

The initial challenge is characterized by significant parental anxiety regarding their children's comprehension of the subject material. This apprehension arises primarily from the fact that the majority of parents lack the teaching experience required to effectively assume the role of a teacher at home. Consequently, children often encounter difficulties in understanding the concepts being explained.

...There are some lessons that I do not understand, do not master. Yes, because I am not a teacher, I have no previous experience in teaching children... (Participant 1/FI-M-14)

...I'm often confused, can't find an easy way to explain things to children... (Participant 3/FI-M15)

...However I am not a teacher. My ability is limited to being able to teach children according to the standards of teachers at school, moreover I don't understand all of the material. Besides that, online study time often coincides with my other schedule of activities, so I also don't have much time to be able to study the school material in detail... (Participant 5/FI-N21)

The challenges faced by parents are further exacerbated when teachers provide limited learning resources, unclear instructions for parental learning assistance, and ambiguous assignment instructions for children.

... Teachers are less active in delivering material which is only done via chat. Explanations of assignments delivered to students are also often unclear ... (Participant 2/FI-M2)

... There are lots of assignments or projects given by the teacher, they vary from one another, and are often not accompanied by sufficient explanation. So we have to look for additional references or instructions on our own from the internet. ... (Participant 4/FI-M12)

... Teachers often give assignments that should be done by themselves, but ask me (parents) to do it too. So I have to help the teacher do his work such as creating class groups, combining photos of all students, and so on. That's what's annoying... Some teachers are also very perfectionists. For example, when there is a difference in thickness or camera angle that is not in accordance with the teacher's wishes, the child's assignment is not accepted... (Participant 18/FI-M24)

In resolving this challenge, there are six strategic steps that parents could do (FGD 3), such as:

- a. Study the content of children's learning materials
- b. Ask children to try and learn independently
- c. Discuss the materials together, which could be done by utilizing quiz exercises
- d. Find additional information and resources from a credible internet source
- e. Teach children to actively make use of accessible learning resources
- f. Communicate and seek feedback from teachers on the learning assistance that has been done at home

### *Challenges related to children's self-regulation*

Challenges related to children's self-regulation include three things: Helping children to regulate emotions, helping children manage their attention span, and helping children be disciplined and have good time management.

...My child often feels bored during zoom, it's hard to build his learning mood, in the end she is often late doing and submitting assignments... (Participant 6/FI-M6)

... My child has become dependent on me and has no responsibility for his school. His studies were not optimal because he felt that his parents would help him later... (Participant 8/FI-M11)

... It's difficult if my child has been invited by friends to play, or when he's too busy playing on his own cellphone. It's very difficult to control his behavior and ask him to learn ... (Participant 17/FI-M21)

The majority of parents observed that, despite the availability of online learning resources, their children still encountered difficulties in actively engaging in the learning process due to inconsistent self-regulation while studying at home. This was evident in fluctuating emotions and motivations, which often led to undisciplined behavior and challenges in maintaining focus. The specific behavior patterns exhibited by the children include: (1) Reluctance to participate in online learning sessions due to perceiving them as boring; (2) Difficulty remaining seated and attentive to grasp the content delivered by teachers and parents; (3) A tendency to rush through tasks or exercises with minimal effort, resulting in suboptimal outcomes; and (4) Engaging in other activities during designated learning time, such as watching YouTube videos, playing games, or being occupied with social interactions while attending online classes.

...My child often can't focus on studying because she's bored, and tends to get distracted easily... (Participant 8/FI-M11)

...It's a challenge when keeping a child's mood. She is sometimes boring and ends up playing alone more than studying. If it is not accompanied, it will eventually become less focused... (Participant 12/FI-M13)

... My child is very addicted to gadgets and has a hard time focusing on studying. Every time he studies, he always wants to be fast, like in a hurry so he can play his cell phone again. ... (Participant 13/F1-M14)

... Sometimes it makes me emotional. It was very difficult for him to sit quietly when taking online classes with the teacher. He's busy doing other things himself and it's hard to be reminded. I often see him also not listening to the teacher's explanation. ... (Participant 15/F1-M25)

These conditions are influenced by children's unpreparedness to face sudden changes in their learning situation, teacher's delivery of material that is often monotonous during online classes, and parents' lack of readiness and creativity in creating various learning activities and in explaining the material to children due to parents' emotions that are not well managed when accompanying their children.

The strategy that was then carried out by parents based on the good practices of the research participants included four steps (FGD 3), consisting of:

- a. Manage children's emotions in various ways, such as: (1) Arrange a specific time to assist children's learning so they would have enough time to rest with no excessive burden; (2) Give children the opportunity to play for a while before learning. This method is generally taken by parents of children with kinesthetic learning styles; and (3) Give space for children to express their emotions when they are bored, such as by listening to what they complain about, or giving time for children to do things they like in between study schedules.
- b. Prepare tools or aids to maintain children's learning concentration. For example, parents of children with kinesthetic learning style prepare stress balls or paper and writing utensils to help children calm down by moving their hands while listening to lessons.
- c. Use various learning activities to make it less monotonous, so that it helps children to maintain their focus, interest, and concentration.
- d. Provide consistent motivational support while the child is learning. This support can be in the form of an appreciation of the child's positive learning behavior, providing oneself as a study or discussion partner, providing a conducive learning environment for children, and so on.

### *Challenges related to communication between parents and children*

Building and maintaining good communication with children is the third challenge that parents feel is quite difficult to fulfill. Most parents stated that their children were less open to them about the difficulties they faced during online learning activities. Their children tend to be silent and do not complete the task because they don't understand the explanation given by teacher or parents, without wanting to ask further. This also happens outside of the learning activities. Many parents admit that they rarely interact freely with their children because of busy schedules or other factors.

... What made it even more difficult, my child was mostly silent. Does she understand what is explained or not, where is the difficulty, she doesn't want to say even though I have asked her many times ... (Participant 4/FI-M13)

... Sometimes I think, does this child understand or not with my explanation. When I asked him, his answers were always short, just saying that he already understood. But I'm not completely sure because sometimes from the way he does the exercise it's obvious that he doesn't really understand.... (Participant 12/FI-N14)

Strategies that can be taken to respond to this challenge include these following three steps (FGD 3):

- a. Provide stimulation for children to share their learning experiences every day. Parents could do this by telling stories of other children's learning experiences that they know of, sharing their own experiences when faced with similar situations, and so on, before being followed up with questions about the child's learning process.
- b. Give opportunities for children to try to regulate their own learning, then discuss it through small talks in between learning activities, using appropriate vocabulary that could be understood by them.
- c. Pay attention when listening to children's stories and spend more time doing fun activities with children.

### *Challenges related to parents' self-regulation*

In addition to the three previous child-centered challenges, there is one challenge that centered around parents, which is how to manage their own emotions while accompanying children to learn, as well as managing their time and attention to various tasks that must be completed at the same time.

... It's hard for me to divide my time between household chores and other tasks, so my time to accompany my children to study is less than optimal... (Participant 6/FI-M7)

... My child's study time often coincides with my other activities. Finally I often leave her to take care of work. I asked her older sister to accompany her to study... (Participant 5/FI-N21)

Many parents acknowledge the challenges they face when juggling numerous tasks outside of their responsibilities in supporting their children's learning. Consequently, they may grow less patient in providing assistance or explanations for their children's school materials and assignments. This sometimes leads to harsh reactions and scolding towards children who struggle to comprehend the material. Conversely, children occasionally question their parents' understanding of the material, making it harder for them to grasp the lessons. Consequently, these circumstances often trigger negative emotions in parents during their involvement in their children's education.

The intriguing aspect of this fourth challenge lies in its significant influence on parents, which determines the strengths and weaknesses of the other three challenges. When parents possess strong self-regulation skills and can effectively manage their negative emotions, they become better equipped to tackle the remaining challenges. For instance, even when faced with difficult learning materials, parents with good self-regulation skills can respond to this challenge more effectively, along with the other two challenges.

Moreover, based on the findings of the discussion, there are five effective strategies from the perspective of parents (FGD 3) to overcome this challenge. These strategies include:

- a. Promoting cooperation and task division with partners
- b. Enhancing empathy towards children to mitigate occasional negative emotions

- c. Setting realistic targets and expectations for children's learning outcomes
- d. Appreciating even the smallest achievements made by children in their learning process
- e. Allocating time for self-reflection and evaluation of the provided learning assistance based on the child's needs.

Implementing these strategies brings forth a range of positive effects for both parents and children. Parents recognize that applying these learning assistance strategies enhances their creativity and patience in guiding their children, while also improving the parent-child relationship. Additionally, parents observe an increasing level of cooperation from their children, who gradually exhibit more positive emotions during the learning process, replacing the previous negative emotions.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reveal several significant discoveries that warrant further examination. Firstly, the strategies employed by parents are closely intertwined with the challenges encountered during their assistance in their children's learning. Parents may develop diverse approaches tailored to address specific challenges, aligning with the definition proposed by Whittington (1993) and Mintzberg et al. (1996) that strategies are planned methods to achieve particular goals, such as facilitating effective learning for children during their period of schooling from home. Therefore, these planned approaches are designed to address the various challenges that emerge amidst the uncertain conditions posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As explained by Schmandt and Ward (2000), every evolving situation brings forth challenges that necessitate appropriate responses. In this context, the strategy serves as a deliberate and effective response to these challenges.

The four challenges identified in this study not only stem from learning materials and the conditions of the children, as extensively discussed, but also arise from the parents themselves and their communication with their children. Setyaningsih (2020), in her research, observed that in a pandemic situation where children are required to attend school from home, both parents and children are susceptible to experiencing stress. Given these two potent stressors, parental

self-regulation becomes a challenge that significantly influences the strengths and weaknesses of the effects related to the other challenges.

This finding affirms that the psychological well-being of parents and their management of it have a significant impact on their interactions with their children, subsequently influencing the psychological state of the children themselves (Zimmer-Gembeck, Rudolph, Kerin, & Bohadana-Brown, 2022). The emotional competence exhibited by parents plays a crucial role in shaping their interactions and parenting styles, which in turn shapes the attachment formed between parents and children (Mortazavizadeh, Göllner, & Forstmeier, 2022). When parents can adapt positively to the various challenges they encounter while supporting their children's learning, they are more likely to discover effective ways of managing responsibilities and sharing burdens (Rahmawati, Hastuti, & Simanjuntak, 2022). Even in situations where parents have multiple obligations, they can still provide effective learning assistance to their children. Therefore, in the strategic steps taken to address each challenge, the active involvement of parents in exploring various alternatives becomes a critical factor that determines the success of the implemented strategy.

This notion is also supported by Susilowati & Azzasyofia (2020), Motherly (2020), and Hendriani et al (2020), emphasizing that personal factors in parents, as the primary adult caregivers in child development, play a crucial role in determining their own psychological well-being when fulfilling various roles and responsibilities, including dealing with challenging circumstances. Additionally, the ability to self-regulate positively affects parents' capacity to establish open communication with their children, respond to the demands of helping children grasp complex learning materials, and facilitate better self-management in children. Previous studies have demonstrated the significant role of parental self-regulation in thoughtful and adaptive caregiving practices (Rutherford, Wallace, Laurent, & Mayes, 2015; Schultheis, Mayes, & Rutherford, 2019).

Self-regulation refers to an individual's capacity to modify their behaviors according to internal or societal expectations, standards, ideals, or goals (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Parental self-regulation involves setting educational goals and values, recognizing the need for adopting new

plans or modifying habitual behavioral patterns, problem-solving, overcoming unexpected challenges, and monitoring both their own and their children's behavior (Sanders, 2008).

The strategy devised as a response to the various challenges encountered during learning assistance can be considered comprehensive. It encompasses diverse efforts that not only support children's learning but also foster their self-regulation and behavior, while simultaneously bolstering parents' psychological well-being as mentors. These strategies align with the research findings of Bartlett et al (2020), Coyne et al (2020), Dunto et al (2020), and Szabo et al (2020).

The first strategy identified consists of six effective steps for facilitating children's comprehension of subject matter. These steps necessitate parental initiative, involving studying and gathering additional information about the materials to be taught, engaging children in the process of gathering such information, and optimizing discussions and communication with both children and teachers. The proactive approach of parents in adapting to the changing needs of children amidst the pandemic conditions is vital (Fuller & Brown, 2021; INOVASI, 2021). Failure to pursue these actions can result in educational challenges and hinder the development of children's abilities. During further discussions with parents, it became evident that some of the six steps can be performed simultaneously, as illustrated in Figure 1.

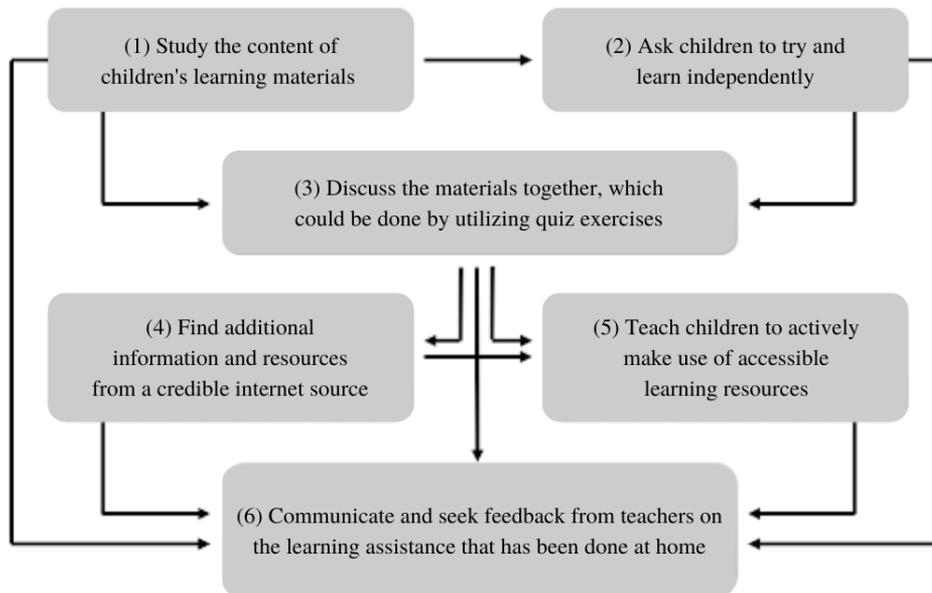


Figure 1. Strategies to Help Children Understand Learning Materials

The next strategy is related to the challenge of developing self-regulation in children. This challenge arises because like individuals at other ages, children who are affected by the pandemic conditions are also prone to experiencing psychological discomfort. As explained by Lieberman (2011) and Cohen & Scheeringa (2009), the mental, social, emotional and biological well-being of children can be significantly and permanently affected by stressful situations and environments. Therefore, self-regulation is an important skill that helps children to be able to manage their own attention span so that they are not easily distracted by other things during study time and consistently follow the teacher's directions even if at the same time they actually prefer to do something else. Self-regulation also further helps children to respond appropriately to various problems with peers, so it doesn't interfere with their learning activities (Blair & Diamond, 2008).

There are four steps in the strategy used to deal with children's self-regulation challenges. Based on the discussions and reflections of the parents who were participants in this study, the four of them can be described more concisely in Figure 2.

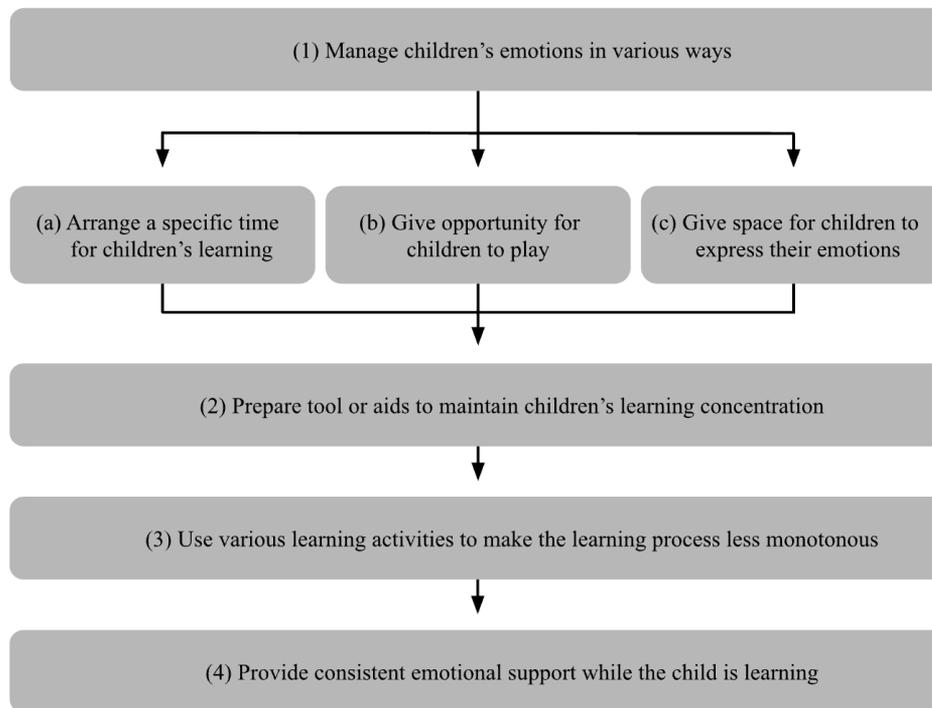


Figure 2. Strategies to Develop Self-Regulation in Children

The third strategy focuses on addressing the challenge of developing and maintaining effective communication with children, which is of utmost importance for parents. Open and effective communication benefits not only children but also every family member, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic when families are confined to their homes, leading to intensified interactions among family members (Aykanat & Omeroglu, 2021). Effective communication greatly enhances the relationship between parents and their children, as a strong communication foundation often indicates a positive parent-child relationship (Runcan, Constantineanu, Ielics, & Popa, 2012).

While communication between parents and children may not be inherently difficult, it does require certain skills, availability, and time. When communicating with children, parents should use vocabulary that is easily understood by them and employ a calm and appropriate body language. The use of appropriate vocabulary holds significant implications, as it demonstrates both

an understanding of the child's language and a sense of acceptance within social norms (Runcan et al., 2012).

The strategies to overcome the challenges of parent-child communication consist of three steps: (1) Providing stimulation for children to share their daily learning experiences, encouraging them to openly discuss their thoughts and feelings about the learning process; (2) Allowing children to regulate their own learning style and engaging in discussions about it; and (3) Actively listening to children's stories and dedicating more time to enjoyable activities together.

Lastly, the fourth strategy identified in this study underscores the importance of managing the psychological aspects of parents as key figures in supporting children's learning at home. Previous literature, as summarized by Barros, Goes, & Pereira (2015), highlights the critical role of parental self-regulation in determining the effectiveness of parenting and learning assistance. Conversely, parental dysregulation can significantly impact parents' thoughts, actions, and interactions (Schechter & Willheim, 2009). Emotionally dysregulated individuals often exhibit response patterns that do not align with the demands of the social environment, leading to feelings of hostility, aggression, or frustration, which may manifest through harsh discipline or overreactions to their child's signals (Bugental & Happaney, 2004).

To prevent such conditions from arising, parents have agreed upon five important steps to alleviate the psychological burden they may experience, including: (1) Enhancing cooperation and task division with their partners to fulfill various roles; (2) Cultivating empathy for the psychological challenges faced by children during the pandemic; (3) Setting realistic targets or expectations for children's learning outcomes; (4) Acknowledging and expressing gratitude for even the smallest achievements in children's learning process at home; and (5) Taking time for self-reflection and evaluation of the learning assistance provided, respecting themselves for the efforts made. These steps aim to minimize parental stress and promote a supportive learning environment for children.

The results of this study have also shown that parents' efforts to bring about positive changes in the learning assistance process have helped establish well-managed learning routines for children,

leading to a more cooperative attitude during learning sessions. This improved learning attitude further supports children in achieving their developmental tasks across various domains, as highlighted by Park, Byun, & Kim (2011).

## **Conclusion**

This study has addressed the inquiries regarding effective learning assistance strategies for elementary school-age children at home during the COVID-19 pandemic, drawing on the successful practices of parents. The formulation of these strategies was guided by the parents' own effective practices.

A sound learning assistance strategy begins with an understanding of the challenges encountered in the learning process. Four challenges were identified: (1) Children's access to learning materials, (2) Child self-regulation, (3) Communication between parents and children, and (4) Parental self-regulation during study sessions. Each of these challenges is addressed through distinct yet interconnected strategies.

All the strategic steps devised have a positive impact on both parents and children. This learning assistance strategy can serve as a valuable resource to empower other parents in optimizing their involvement in their child's learning process.

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