Contents lists available at openscie.com
E-ISSN: 2829-4521
Indonesian Journal of Community Services Cel
DOI: 10.70110/ijcsc.v5i1.108
Journal homepage: https://ijcomcel.org

Preventing Inner Child Issue: Enhancing Empathic Communication in Parenting among Informal Workers in Kemayoran

Meilani Dhamayanti[1]*

[1] Communication Department, Binus University, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Correspondence E-mail: meilani.dhamayanti@binus.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received 16 November 2025
Revised 27 January 2026
Accepted 3 February 2026
Published 7 February 2026

Keywords:
Empathy,
Inner Child,
Parenting Communication,
Toxic Parenting.

ABSTRACT

Background: Childhood trauma can impact a person's mental health both during and after adulthood. This can be caused by childhood conditions, especially within the family environment.
Aims: The goal of this activity was to improve participants' ability to communicate empathetically, thereby building healthier and warmer parenting relationships. The majority of participants were informal workers facing economic pressure, lack of knowledge, and emotional exhaustion. These factors often go unnoticed, leading to verbal abuse that can potentially lead to toxic parenting styles. This can cause emotional wounds (inner child) in children, which can continue to impact the next generation.
Methods: The community service method included delivering interactive materials on the concept of the inner child and its impact on children in the future. Additionally, presentations on the role of empathic communication, simulations of everyday parenting situations, and a question-and-answer session were provided to explore participants' experiences. Participants, mothers under the guidance of Pundi Rakyat in Central Jakarta, better understood the importance of empathetic communication in parenting.
Result: The results of the activity demonstrated an increased understanding of mothers in responding to their children's behavior with a calmer and more reflective approach. These findings confirm that education that is applicable and close to the lives of participants is effective in promoting positive parenting in vulnerable communities.

To cite this article: Dhamayanti, M. (2026). Preventing Childhood Trauma: Enhancing Empathic Communication in Parenting among Informal Workers in Kemayoran. *Indonesian Journal of Community Services Cel*, 5(1), 21–27.

This article is under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (**CC BY-SA 4.0**) License.
Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License Copyright ©2026 by author/s

1. Introduction

Family communication plays a significant role in a child's emotional development. As parents, we have an obligation not only to provide for physical needs such as clothing, food, and education, but also for emotional development. Good communication between parents and children significantly contributes to a child's emotional development. However, it turns out that establishing good communication between parents and children is not easy. Limited knowledge about parenting and communication leaves parents with little knowledge about how to communicate effectively with their children. On the other hand, social circumstances sometimes influence childcare.

A common phenomenon is that children experience emotional wounds in childhood due to their parents' behavior. The term "inner child" refers to psychological terminology describing emotional experiences in childhood that persist into adulthood (Harya, 2022). Children who grow up in parenting situations that are less than supportive, full of criticism, or involve verbal abuse can experience these experiences and impact their mental health later in life (Putri, 2021). A popular term today is toxic parenting. Toxic parenting is a parenting style that exhibits negative behaviors—such as excessive control, harsh criticism, verbal abuse, insults, emotional neglect, or domineering attitudes—towards children. This can create feelings of insecurity and damage a child's self-esteem. As a result, it can lead to long-term emotional, social, and psychological disorders in children.

Toxic parenting usually occurs when parents unintentionally or unknowingly commit violence, causing harm to their children. Economic circumstances also sometimes influence parenting styles. Many studies show that economic conditions can place mothers in stressful situations. The dual role of mothers, including caring for both the home and children, economic pressure, and lack of access to information can lead to physical and mental exhaustion and trigger reactive parenting styles—such as scolding, comparing, or responding angrily without room for dialogue (Sari, 2023; Gunanta, 2020). Child abuse, such as verbal abuse, while not leaving physical trauma, has the potential to cause emotional trauma or inner child wounds. The inner child can have a significant impact if repeated incidents persist over the long term. The visible impact is that children lose self-confidence, their ability to manage emotions, and their social relationships as adults (Hidayanti & Fatimah, 2022).

Amidst this reality, empathetic communication is a crucial approach to developing a more humane, accepting, and emotionally sustainable parenting style. Empathetic communication helps parents understand their child's feelings before responding, so that the relationship is not based on a power hierarchy, but rather on affective collaboration between mother and child (Rakhmawati, 2015). Education about this concept is crucial for mothers, especially those in vulnerable social communities who have limited resources for psychology-based parenting information.

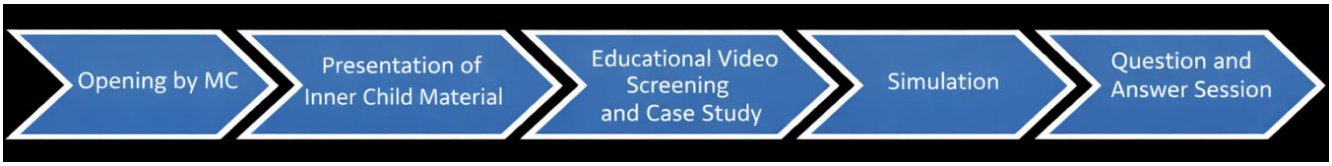
The community service activity "Childhood Trauma: Strengthening Mothers' Empathetic Communication in Parenting" was carried out as an effort to increase the capacity of mothers assisted by Pundi Rakyat in Kemayoran, Central Jakarta. Pundi Rakyat is a Social Work Institution (Lembaga Pekerjaan Sosia) with several areas of activity, one of which is providing assistance and mentoring to informal women workers and the elderly. The activities carried out vary, from economic assistance to spiritual activities and other activities that increase insight. Pundi Rakyat supports more than 100 informal women workers located in Serdang, Kemayoran. Parenting communication activities are important considering the phenomenon mentioned above. This activity was carried out in collaboration with Pundi Rakyat and speakers from Binus University.

The purpose of delivering material in this community service is to increase knowledge and reflect on experiences regarding empathetic communication within families to prevent toxic parenting behavior that can trigger inner child. This community service activity is expected to improve participants' communication skills, especially between mothers and children. This activity not only provides counseling, but also provides a safe space for mothers to share experiences about parenting and learn about empathetic communication between parents and children.

2. Methods

The community service program was held at the Pundi Rakyat Secretariat in Kemayoran, Central Jakarta, on November 30, 2025. The participants were mothers under the guidance of Pundi Rakyat, who work in the informal sector, such as daily laborers, laundry workers, domestic helpers, and non-foundation childcare providers. Thirty participants, meeting the aforementioned criteria, attended. The program was structured using a participatory and reflective approach, ensuring that participants not only received material but also actively engaged in discussions and explored experiences.

The stages of the program are illustrated below:



This activity consisted of several stages: an opening by the MC, presentation of the material, video screening, simulation, and Q&A. Prior to the activity, a simple survey was conducted to assess participants' knowledge of toxic parenting and inner-child. The results indicated that participants lacked a clear understanding of toxic parenting and inner-child terms and concepts.

During the presentation, the participants' situation and activities were monitored. The sessions were conducted in a gradual and progressive manner to facilitate participants' understanding of the activity. The sessions began with an introduction from the facilitator to break the ice, followed by an introduction outlining the key concepts of the inner child and how empathetic communication can facilitate parents' emotional care for their children.

Following the presentation by the speaker, a short video about inner children was played and several case studies of inner child triggers were discussed. The short video also illustrated how emotional and verbal responses from parents can lower a child's psychological well-being. In the next activity, the mothers participated in several discussion activities and role-played everyday events about judgment when responding to children. This activity served to reflect the practice of mastery of speaking and mastery of theoretical approaches.

In the end, the activity concluded with a reflection session and a question-and-answer session. Participants recorded their feelings and any changes they experienced after the training. These two points illustrate that the learning process during this stage of the activity continues to evolve throughout the participants' daily activities and routines.

3. Results and Dicussion

At the start of the activity, the term "inner child" sounded like a foreign word, far removed from the mothers' daily lives. Many had never heard of it, let alone understood that emotional wounds in children can grow from small things said in a moment of exhaustion. This was understandable, considering their limited access to information, and some didn't even have devices that would allow them to learn independently. However, something changed as the material began—their eyes slowly opened, curiosity sparked, and the previously flat room came alive with honest conversation and confessions from one person to another.

Figure 1 is material presented by the author in community service. The material focuses on things that parents often don't realize when communicating with their children. Verbal abuse, often carried out by parents without realizing it, causes wounds in the child's heart. This, if done continuously, can damage the child's inner self. Words such as comparing children within the family, physical teasing, etc., seem trivial but can cause wounds.



Figure 1. Material delivered during community service



Figure 2. Implementation of the Inner Child Material Presentation

The mothers' enthusiasm was palpable. They sat up straighter, leaning forward as the section on empathetic communication was explained. Simple sentences about compassion and emotional pain made the atmosphere seem breathless. Many of them began to realize that the anger they considered normal actually leaves scars. That a small cry uttered in the midst of fatigue can etch a child's heart with a sense of inadequacy.



Figure 3. Speaker and participant

The emotional feelings that emerged from several participants:

"I do laundry at several houses. It's tiring... Not to mention the household chores. Sometimes my kids and husband don't help. It feels overwhelming... and I end up leaving angry." “Saya kerja cuci di beberapa rumah. Capek… Belum lagi urusan rumah tangga. Kadang anak dan suami gak bantu. Rasanya penuh… dan akhirnya keluar marah.”
"Tiredness builds up, seeing the house a mess, no one helping... so I end up complaining, sometimes loudly. I often only realize it after I've gone outside." “Capek itu numpuk, lihat rumah berantakan, gak ada yang bantu… ya akhirnya ngomel, kadang keras. Seringnya baru sadar setelah keluar.”
"When we're tired, we feel like no one cares. The kids are playing on their phones, the husband is busy. Everything seems to be on our shoulders. Our emotions flare, and words we shouldn't say come out." “Kalau kita capek, merasa gak ada yang peduli. Anak main HP, suami sibuk. Semua seolah di pundak kita. Emosi itu pecah, dan kata-kata yang gak seharusnya pun keluar.”

At this point, the atmosphere in the room changed. It wasn't just a sharing session, but a space of emotional reflection. Some took deep breaths, some bowed their heads to suppress their trembling, and some shed tears—not out of weakness, but out of a realization of the depth of love they held, often obscured by a never-ending weariness.

The activity resulted in increased awareness among participants about the concept of the inner child, which had previously been unfamiliar to most. Many participants stated that they had previously considered verbal abuse a normal part of discipline, such as scolding children in a loud voice, labeling them negatively, and comparing them to other children. The majority acknowledged that these actions often stemmed from physical exhaustion and financial pressure.

Slowly, they came to understand that the inner child wasn't a foreign theory, but rather a reflection of themselves. Many of them grew up with yelling, comparisons, and labels—and now, unintentionally, those patterns were being repeated in their own children. When examples like "Why aren't you like your sister?" or "You're such a nuisance" were mentioned, some participants instinctively covered their faces. They knew, they'd said them before. They knew how that feeling lingered in their chests like a long-untidy house.

During the final discussion, several mothers cried. Not just because they regretted it, but because they began to understand that love can be expressed in a more tender way. That the small wounds of childhood can grow with adults who never knew how to embrace themselves. And that they can still make amends—slowly, but surely. In that simple space, understanding turned into awareness, and awareness slowly grew into determination. This activity was not just about sharing knowledge, but opening the door for mothers to make peace with themselves and build warmer relationships with their children.

This activity provided a space for mothers to pause, sit, and reflect on how they treat their children at home. As the material on the inner child deepened, a big question arose, unspoken but powerfully felt in the room: How many words have hurt us without us realizing it? This awareness is crucial, because emotional wounds often don't show up like physical bruises—they emerge slowly, in the form of low self-esteem, fear of being wrong, or reluctance to express feelings. Research shows that an untouched inner child can affect how a person relates and regulates emotions as an adult (Bradshaw, 2018; Stern, 2022). These findings align with the participants' reflections. However, behavioral change isn't something that happens in a single session. Many mothers work all day, come home exhausted, and then still have to take care of the home and children. Economic pressures, limited division of domestic roles, and even a lack of appreciation from family members make them easily irritated. It's at this point that communication becomes vulnerable to sharp changes. Previous studies have shown that single-parent household burdens can increase stress levels and increase the likelihood of harsh parenting styles (Najib & Arumsari, 2022; Alizamar *et al.*, 2020). When this discourse was discussed together, participants nodded—as if finally finding a word to describe what they had been feeling. Interestingly, it was precisely in these tearful moments that a turning point occurred. Participants not only listened to the material but also internalized it. They began to talk about new hopes—wanting to learn to control their anger, wanting to have heart-to-heart conversations with their children, wanting to break the chains of old habits that had previously hurt them. This realization was the core of the service session: not just providing material, but opening the door to making peace with oneself.

Referring to Walsh's (2021) opinion, change can occur by accepting existing wounds and then learning to create safer relationships. It's also important to understand that change cannot be achieved alone. Harmonious family relationships grow when responsibilities and support are shared. Children learn to help, husbands become involved in household chores, and mothers no longer carry everything alone. When the burden is lessened, opportunities for patience and gentle conversation become more likely. Therefore, this activity not only touched the mothers but also opened up new conversations about family collaboration as the foundation of healthy parenting (Wulandari & Sari, 2023). Ultimately, this activity was not just a learning forum, but a space that opened up new possibilities: that parenting doesn't have to follow the path of childhood wounds, that words can be bridges, not knives, and that big changes often begin with a small awareness. That day, the mothers went home with more than just material things—they left with hope and a desire to establish empathetic communication with the children they love.

4. Conclusion

This community service program demonstrates the eagerness to learn of the mothers assisted by Pundi Rakyat. Their enthusiasm is palpable, but it still needs to be nurtured to continue growing. Seeing their enthusiasm, regular and ongoing mentoring is necessary so that the new insights they receive don't remain temporary knowledge but can be continually practiced and deepened.

After receiving material on the inner child and the importance of empathetic communication, small but meaningful changes emerged: participants began to open up more and understand that a harsh tone of voice is not an appropriate parenting method. In fact, such speech can leave emotional wounds that may not be visible on the surface but can linger into adulthood.

Because this is a one-off activity, it is too early to assess profound behavioral changes or long-term effects. Nevertheless, this initial session has successfully opened a new awareness space that introduces warmer and more emotionally sensitive parenting styles.

Going forward, this program will be even more beneficial if implemented sustainably. For example, through monthly meetings, the provision of easily accessible visual modules, and a safe space for parents to share experiences. With these steps, the knowledge gained will not just stop as discourse, but can slowly turn into positive habits that have a good impact on the whole family.

5. Acknowledgment and Funding Information

Many thanks to Pundi Rakyat for this community service activity. We hope to accomplish much more together for community empowerment programs. This community service project was independently funded

6. Conflict of Interest Declaration

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

7. Author Contribution Statement

All authors contributed equally to the conduct community service project, data analysis, and writing and preparation of this article.

8. Reference

Alizamar, S., Syahniar, S., Ifdil, I., Zikra, Z., & Ilyas, A. (2020). Toxic parenting dan dampaknya terhadap perkembangan psikologis anak. *Jurnal Ilmiah Konseling*, 10(1), 45–56.

Bradshaw, J. (2018). Homecoming: Reclaiming and healing your inner child. Bantam Books.

Gunanta, W. (2020). Tekanan ekonomi dan pola asuh keluarga urban. *Jurnal Sosial*, 14(1), 45–57.

Harya, A. (2022). Inner child dan proses penyembuhan emosi. *Psikologi Nusantara*, 5(3), 112–128.

Hidayanti, N., & Fatimah, S. (2022). Komunikasi empatik dan pencegahan toxic parenting. *Jurnal Psikologi Keluarga*, 7(2), 90–101.

Najib, F. A., & Arumsari, I. (2022). Pola komunikasi negatif dan luka batin keluarga. *Jurnal Psikologi Keluarga*, 7(2), 112–124.

Putri, M. L. (2021). Luka masa kecil dan dampaknya terhadap regulasi emosi. *Jurnal Psikologi Klinis*, 9(4), 210–225.

Rakhmawati, I. (2015). Empati dalam komunikasi keluarga. *Jurnal Komunikasi*, 3(2), 143–157.

Sari, D. (2023). Pendidikan parenting pada komunitas rentan. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 12(1), 33–49.

Stern, D. N. (2022). The interpersonal world of the infant. Routledge.

Walsh, F. (2021). Family resilience through shared responsibility. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 13(4), 531–548.

Wulandari, A., & Sari, K. (2023). Kekerasan verbal dan dampaknya pada self-esteem anak. *Psikoedukasi*, 5(3), 174–183.