

Foster Parents' Role in Developing Independent Character of Children of Female Migrant Workers: A Case Study in Talang Lindung

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Abstract: Child independence is an essential aspect of their development, especially for children raised by foster parents such as grandmothers. This study aims to analyse the development of independent character in children aged 6–12 years living in Talang Lindung Village, where many children are cared for by their grandmothers due to their mothers working abroad as Female Migrant Workers (TKW). The research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving 14 participants consisting of children, foster parents, and members of the local community. Data were collected through participatory observation and in-depth interviews. The results show that children experience increased independence in daily life, learning processes, and religious activities. Internal factors such as early responsibility and adaptability, as well as external factors like support from foster parents, contribute to their independence development. This study concludes that the role of grandmothers as foster parents is significant in shaping children's independent character, despite emotional challenges. Recommendations include strengthening support programs for foster parents, enhancing school-based initiatives to nurture independence, encouraging the village government to establish community-based child support programs, and involving migrant worker protection agencies to provide guidance and assistance for families of Female Migrant Workers.

Keywords: Foster parents; Child independence; Female Migrant Workers ; Character education; Talang Lindung Village.

Abstrak: Kemandirian anak merupakan aspek penting dalam perkembangan mereka, terutama bagi anak-anak yang diasuh oleh orang tua pengganti seperti nenek. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan karakter mandiri pada anak usia 6–12 tahun yang tinggal di Desa Talang Lindung, di mana banyak anak diasuh oleh nenek mereka karena ibunya bekerja di luar negeri sebagai Tenaga Kerja Wanita (TKW). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus, melibatkan 14 partisipan yang terdiri dari anak-anak, orang tua asuh, dan anggota masyarakat setempat. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipatif dan wawancara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak mengalami peningkatan kemandirian dalam kehidupan sehari-hari, proses belajar, dan

kegiatan keagamaan. Faktor internal seperti tanggung jawab sejak dini dan kemampuan beradaptasi, serta faktor eksternal seperti dukungan dari orang tua asuh, berkontribusi pada perkembangan kemandirian mereka. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa peran nenek sebagai orang tua asuh sangat signifikan dalam membentuk karakter mandiri anak, meskipun menghadapi tantangan emosional. Rekomendasi penelitian ini mencakup penguatan program dukungan bagi orang tua asuh, peningkatan inisiatif berbasis sekolah untuk menumbuhkan kemandirian, mendorong pemerintah desa untuk membangun program dukungan anak berbasis masyarakat, serta melibatkan lembaga perlindungan tenaga kerja migran untuk memberikan bimbingan dan bantuan bagi keluarga Tenaga Kerja Wanita.

Kata Kunci: *Orang tua asuh; Kemandirian anak; Tenaga Kerja Wanita (TKW); Pendidikan karakter; Desa Talang Lindung.*

INTRODUCTION

Independence is widely recognised as a crucial aspect of child development, as it reflects an individual's ability to think critically, make decisions, and act responsibly without excessive reliance on others. In developmental psychology, independence is not merely about performing tasks alone but also about cultivating problem-solving skills, emotional regulation, and self-confidence¹. For children, especially those in their formative years, independence plays a decisive role in shaping their character and equipping them with essential life skills that will sustain them throughout adolescence and adulthood. The process of developing independence, however, is not uniform; multiple factors, including family structure, parenting style, cultural expectations, and socioeconomic conditions, influence it. Within this context, the role of parents—particularly mothers—has consistently been highlighted as pivotal in fostering independence through daily guidance, discipline, and emotional support.

Nevertheless, in contemporary society, economic demands and global labour migration have significantly transformed traditional parenting arrangements. In many rural areas of Indonesia, mothers take up employment abroad as Female Migrant Workers (Tenaga Kerja Wanita or TKW) to secure financial stability for their families. While this migration provides essential economic support, it also generates complex social consequences, particularly for the children left behind. These children are often placed in the care of extended family members, with grandmothers being the most common substitute caregivers. This phenomenon is evident in Talang Lindung Village. In this community, a considerable number of mothers migrate overseas for work, leaving their children in the custody of their maternal or paternal grandmothers. Such arrangements create unique parenting dynamics that diverge from

¹ John Santrock, *Child Development: An Introduction* (McGraw Hill, 2014), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=EoZvEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&ots=6C1BjH7L_D&sig=aWp6xO2933mmwxNq92J-L0eygB4.

conventional mother-child interactions, and they raise important questions about how children's independence develops under these circumstances.

Previous scholarly works have offered valuable insights into child independence and parenting, but significant gaps remain in the literature. For example, Harefa and Pohan explored how the employment of mothers influences children's emotional independence, emphasising the role of maternal presence and communication². Similarly, Hasanah examined the parenting patterns within families of TKWs, particularly focusing on their influence in shaping children's religious character³. Other studies, such as those by Santoso and Abror, have highlighted the potential of foster parents, including grandparents, to encourage independence in children's daily routines⁴. Khotimah also noted variations in children's independence that correlate with their mothers' occupational status, thereby indicating that parental employment has far-reaching developmental consequences⁵.

Similarly, research by Hosokawa et al. highlights the adaptive mechanisms employed by children of working mothers, where they exhibit increased practical and emotional independence. However, this independence may come at a cost, as the emotional well-being of these children is sometimes compromised. The dynamics of parental absence, whether due to work commitments, create complex emotional landscapes for children, which can influence their overall development, including their emotional resilience⁶. This is echoed by the findings of Stephan⁷, which discuss how grandparents take on

² Syifaushudur Harefa and Selamat Pohan, "Pengaruh Status Pekerjaan Ibu Terhadap Kemandirian Anak Usia Dini Kelompok B Di TK Ummi Aida Kecamatan Medan Tembung," *Jurnal Raudhah* 11, no. 1 (2023), <http://jurnaltarbiyah.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/raudhah/article/view/2846>.

³ Surrotul Hasanah, "Dampak Pola Asuh Terhadap Pembentukan Perilaku Anak TKW," *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi Undiksha* 4, no. 3 (2022): 115–21.

⁴ Lukman Santoso and Dawam Abror, "Pola Pemenuhan Hak Asuh Anak Pada Keluarga Buruh Migran Indonesia: An Maqashid Shariah Perspective," *Al-Syakhshiyyah: Journal of Law & Family Studies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 56–73.

⁵ Khusnul Khotimah, "Perbedaan Kemandirian Remaja Berdasarkan Status Pekerjaan Ibu," *FamilyEdu: Jurnal Pendidikan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* 1, no. 2 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.17509/familyedu.v1i2.4775>.

⁶ Yang Ding and Hasnah Toran, "Assessing the Need for a Teaching Module on Self-Care Skills for Children with Autism Aged Three to Six Years Old," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 23, no. 7 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.23.7.1>; Hosokawa, Katsura, and Shizawa, "Relations of Mother's Sense of Coherence and Childrearing Style with Child's Social Skills in Preschoolers."

⁷ Abigail Stephan, "Grandparent Caregiver Wellbeing: A Strengths-Based Approach Utilizing the Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment

significant caregiver roles when mothers are employed, contributing to children's autonomy while also presenting challenges related to emotional attachment and stability. Their role serves to mitigate the emotional impacts associated with parental absence, but may also complicate the child's relational dynamics within the family unit.

The importance of parenting strategies and styles further elucidates the mechanisms through which self-care skills are developed in children. Research indicates that the type of parental authority—be it permissive, authoritative, or authoritarian—has a demonstrable effect on children's ability to develop self-care skills⁸. The nurturing and responsive parenting observed in some styles encourages a child to explore and manage autonomy. In contrast, styles lacking in support may hinder their ability to practice self-care effectively⁹. Hence, both maternal employment and parenting approaches play essential roles in shaping children's skills and emotional health.

As evidenced by the synthesis of these studies, it becomes clear that while working mothers create environments conducive to independence and skill acquisition, this independence must be balanced with emotional support to ensure holistic child development. The implications of these findings are significant, as they underscore the necessity for supportive frameworks for working parents, including educational programs for skills development and emotional support systems¹⁰. The interplay between independence, emotional health, and parenting practices presents a rich area of inquiry, essential for understanding the multifaceted nature of child development in modern familial contexts.

Despite the valuable insights offered by previous studies on maternal employment, parenting styles, and the role of foster parents or grandparents in shaping children's independence, significant research gaps remain. Much of the existing literature, both national and international, has primarily focused on general outcomes of maternal absence, parenting strategies, and the

(PERMA) Framework,” *Journal of Family Issues* 44, no. 5 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513x211058818>.

⁸ Müge Yurtsever Kılıçgün, “Predictor Effect of Parental Authority on the Children's Self-Care Skills,” *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, ahead of print, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2014.05.8>.

⁹ Pamela Joie T. Sobrebiga and Sharon Rose G. Medez, “Parenting Styles and Self-Help Skills of Kindergarten Learners,” *Philippine Social Science Journal* 3, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.52006/main.v3i2.257>.

¹⁰ Zohreh Mahdavi et al., “Relationship of Autistic Children's Self-Care Performance with Coping and Quality of Life in Mothers of Autistic Children,” *Neuropsychiatry I Neuropsychologia* 18, nos. 3–4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.5114/nan.2023.134150>.

development of self-care or emotional resilience in children. However, limited attention has been directed toward the lived experiences of children aged 6–12 years who are explicitly raised in communities with high rates of maternal labour migration. This context is distinct because grandmothers not only provide daily care but also play a central role in balancing the children's practical independence, educational engagement, and religious development, while simultaneously addressing emotional challenges caused by maternal absence. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to bridge this gap by offering an in-depth case analysis of grandmother-led foster parenting in Talang Lindung Village, thereby contributing new perspectives on how intergenerational caregiving shapes children's independent character in socio-cultural settings impacted by female labour migration.

Talang Lindung Village offers a particularly compelling case for this investigation because it encapsulates the intersection of economic necessity, cultural traditions, and child development challenges. In this village, the care provided by grandmothers not only serves as a substitute for maternal guidance but also reflects intergenerational parenting practices that may differ significantly from those of younger parents. Grandmothers often bring with them a wealth of experience and cultural wisdom, but at the same time, they may hold traditional views on discipline, autonomy, and gender roles. These generational differences can shape children's independence in unique ways, either by fostering resilience and adaptability or by reinforcing dependency and passivity. Therefore, understanding the lived experiences of children in Talang Lindung is critical to capturing the nuances of how independence is negotiated within these alternative family structures.

This study is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the independent character of children aged 6–12 years develops under the care of foster parents, particularly grandmothers, in the context of maternal labour migration. Specifically, it aims to explore the processes through which children cultivate independence in their daily lives, examine the internal and external factors that either support or hinder this development, and analyse the role as well as the impact of foster parents in shaping and sustaining children's independence. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute both theoretically and practically to the discourse on child development, foster parenting, and the broader implications of maternal employment on family dynamics.

LITERATUR REVIEW

The development of independent character in children has been widely discussed in developmental psychology, education, and family studies.

Independence is considered a critical aspect of children's social and emotional growth, encompassing responsibility, self-reliance, problem-solving skills, and adaptive behaviors¹¹. According to Erikson's psychosocial theory, children aged 6–12 are in the stage of industry versus inferiority, where successfully mastering tasks and responsibilities enhances their self-confidence and sense of competence. Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory further emphasises that intrinsic motivation, including autonomy and the willingness to take responsibility, is central to fostering independent behaviours in children.

Parental and caregiving environments play a decisive role in shaping children's independence. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) highlights that children's development occurs through interactions between personal attributes and multiple layers of environmental influences, including family, school, and community¹². In contexts where biological parents are absent due to labour migration, substitute caregivers, such as foster parents or grandparents, become crucial agents in supporting children's emotional, social, and cognitive development. Research by Parrenas shows that in transnational families, substitute caregivers often provide emotional security and practical guidance that children need to adapt to parental absence¹³. Similarly, Yusuf et al. found that foster families play an essential role in cultivating responsibility, life skills, and resilience among children of migrant workers.

Foster parents' contributions are multidimensional. They not only meet children's basic needs, such as nutrition, health, and structured daily routines, but also provide moral, cultural, and spiritual guidance. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) asserts that children acquire knowledge, skills, and values through social interaction with more knowledgeable others, making the role of foster parents as cultural transmitters and role models critical in fostering independence¹⁴. Studies in Indonesia and other contexts have highlighted that

¹¹ Erik H. 1902-1994 Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, Norton paperback, reissued (New York, NY London: Norton, 1993); Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68.

¹² Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*, vol. 352 (Harvard university press, 1979), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=OCmbzWka6xUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=h+ecology+of+human+development:+Experiments+by+nature+and+design.&ots=yAO0M-RNig&sig=o9y2VLfDDbU7YllKSh8tjDhIzxA>.

¹³ Rhacel Parrenas, "Long Distance Intimacy: Class, Gender and Intergenerational Relations between Mothers and Children in Filipino Transnational Families," *Global Networks* 5, no. 4 (October 2005): 317–36, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2005.00122.x>.

¹⁴ Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, vol. 86 (Harvard university press, 1978),

practical life skills—such as household chores, time management, and self-care—taught by caregivers enhance children’s autonomy and confidence¹⁵.

Finally, research emphasises that fostering independent character in children of migrant workers requires collaborative support from multiple stakeholders. Epstein’s framework of school-family-community partnerships (2011) underscores the importance of coordination between caregivers, teachers, and community members to reinforce children’s learning, discipline, and moral development. This holistic approach ensures that children receive not only emotional support but also structured guidance, skill-building opportunities, and social reinforcement needed to cultivate a robust sense of independence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study design. The qualitative approach is intended to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of independent character development.¹⁶ Among children aged 6–12 years raised by foster parents in Talang Lindung Village. The case study type was selected because it allows the researcher to focus on a specific case within its real-life context, namely the experience of children of Female Migrant Workers (TKW) who are cared for by their grandmothers. This design provides opportunities for a detailed exploration of the social environment, everyday practices, and the cultural-emotional dimensions that shape children’s independence.

The subjects of this study were children aged 6–12 years from families of Female Migrant Workers (TKW) in Talang Lindung Village, who were raised by their foster parents, specifically their grandmothers. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, the research also involved several categories of informants closely related to the children’s lives. These included three children under grandmother-led care, three grandmothers serving as foster parents, three classroom teachers, and two community representatives,

https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=RxjjUefze_oC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=ind+i n+society:+The+development+of+higher+psychological+processes&ots=okA-T_o68x&sig=XvdGYU8uaoEbH74XR8q5Ayza8UQ.

¹⁵ Pasmah Chandra, “Peran Pondok Pesantren Dalam Membentuk Karakter Bangsa Santri Di Era Disrupsi,” *Belajea: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 2 (December 2020): 243–62, <https://doi.org/10.29240/belajea.v5i2.1497>; Santrock, *Ebook*.

¹⁶ Elizabeth G. Creamer, *Visual Displays in Qualitative and Mixed Method Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (Routledge, 2024), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781003303602/visual-displays-qualitative-mixed-method-research-elizabeth-creamers>; Patricia Leavy, *Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches* (New York ; London: Guilford Press, 2017).

consisting of the Village Head and Dusun Head. In addition, three biological mothers working as TKW were included to provide perspectives on parental absence and transnational parenting. Altogether, a total of 14 participants were involved in this study, representing multiple viewpoints that enriched the exploration of children's independence development in the context of foster parenting.

The research relies on both primary and secondary data. Primary data are obtained through participatory observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews with children, foster parents, teachers, and community leaders¹⁷. Secondary data are collected from relevant documents and archives, including demographic data of Talang Lindung Village, records from the Indonesian Migrant Worker Protection Agency (BP2MI) concerning the number of TKW, and previous related studies.

The instruments used include observation guidelines and field notes for recording children's interactions and behaviours in daily contexts, as well as semi-structured interview guides that allow flexibility for probing questions as conversations develop.

Data were analysed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of four stages: (1) data collection, (2) data reduction through selection, simplification, and categorisation, (3) data display in narrative, tabular, or visual form, and (4) conclusion drawing and verification. This iterative process continued until the data reached saturation¹⁸.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, this study employed several key strategies¹⁹, including prolonged engagement of the researcher in the field to build trust and capture children's behavior in greater depth, persistent and continuous observation to ensure that no details of the development of independence were overlooked, and triangulation of sources and methods by comparing information from children, grandmothers, teachers, documents, and direct observations. In addition, the researcher conducted member checking by confirming the findings with participants to ensure accuracy of interpretation, as

¹⁷ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Sage publications, 2017).

¹⁸ Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), https://www.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=JFN_BwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR1&dq=Qualitative+Research+:+A+Guide+to+Design+and+Implementation&ots=wPZPRL6H41&sig=e9IEN0Hc8IaTwaD29tWs4fg9DFQ.

¹⁹ Helen Noble and Joanna Smith, "Issues of Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research," *Research Made Simple, Evidence-Based Nursing* 18, no. 2 (April 2015): 34–35, <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054>.

well as peer debriefing through discussions with academic peers and supervisors to review the analysis critically. These steps were taken to maintain credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Independent Character of Children Aged 6-12 Years Living with Foster Parents in Talang Lindung

The findings indicate that children of migrant workers (TKW) living with foster parents (grandmothers) in Talang Lindung Village have experienced significant development in their independence. These changes are evident in three main aspects: (a) independence in daily life, (b) independence in learning, and (c) independence in religious practices.

Independence in Daily Life

Data from interviews with the Village Head, Hamlet Head, and grandmothers as foster parents show that the children have become increasingly accustomed to performing household activities on their own, such as making their beds, washing dishes, simple cooking, and cleaning the house. Before being cared for by their grandmothers, most children were accustomed to being pampered and heavily dependent on their biological parents. However, after the shift in parenting patterns, the children were encouraged to be more independent. Field observations reinforce this finding, showing that the children can carry out daily routines with little assistance from adults. This demonstrates a positive adaptation in their behavioural patterns.

Independence in Learning

Teachers at school confirmed a marked difference between children living with their biological parents and those living with foster parents. Children of TKW tend to be more accustomed to completing school assignments independently without much guidance. However, at times, the quality of their work is less optimal due to limited supervision. Nevertheless, they show greater initiative in completing homework and seeking solutions when facing difficulties. These findings suggest that such constraints train the children to take greater responsibility for their own learning processes.

Independence in Religious Practices

The change in parenting patterns also affects the religious aspect. Interviews with grandmothers and field observations reveal that the children have become more disciplined in practising worship, such as performing prayers and reciting the Qur'an, even without direct instructions. Some children even

connect their religious independence with praying for the health and safety of their mothers working abroad. Grandmothers, as foster parents, play an essential role by providing examples, encouragement, and religious guidance. This illustrates that the role of foster parents is not limited to physical caregiving but also extends to instilling spiritual values that encourage children to be independent in their worship.

Overall, the independence of children aged 6–12 living with foster parents in Talang Lindung Village reflects a transformation that occurs because of changes in parenting patterns. The absence of biological parents due to labour migration abroad has forced children to adapt to new family conditions, where grandmothers act as foster parents. This adaptation process is not always easy, yet it creates opportunities for children to cultivate independence across various domains of life.

So, the findings imply that the absence of biological parents due to labour migration, while initially challenging, can foster adaptive growth in children's independence when supported by foster parents, especially grandmothers. This demonstrates the crucial role of alternative caregivers in shaping children's character, suggesting that parenting is not solely dependent on biological presence but also on consistent guidance and modelling. The study highlights the importance of strengthening community and family support systems to ensure children of migrant workers develop holistically, not only in practical skills but also in academic responsibility and religious discipline. These insights can inform educational institutions, policymakers, and social programs to design interventions that empower foster parents, enhance children's resilience, and balance independence with emotional well-being.

The findings of this study reveal that the independent character of children aged 6–12 years raised by foster parents in Talang Lindung Village emerges through the interplay of necessity, adaptation, and structured guidance. This aligns with Erikson's psychosocial theory, which emphasises that children in middle childhood face the developmental task of industry vs. inferiority, where independence, responsibility, and initiative are crucial for building self-confidence and competence. The absence of biological parents due to labour migration compels children to assume responsibilities earlier, and when properly guided, can accelerate their independence. The unique circumstances in which these children find themselves—particularly the absence of biological parents due to labour migration—prompt them to take on responsibilities earlier than their peers may typically face. Research emphasises that early guidance in such contexts can foster quicker emotional and social maturation, potentially enhancing their sense of autonomy.

Previous studies also support these results. Research by Lam & Yeoh and Parrenas on children of migrant mothers highlights that caregiving by grandmothers often instills discipline and responsibility, although it may also create emotional challenges²⁰. Similarly, a study by Graham & Jordan found that children left behind by migrant parents tend to develop higher self-reliance in managing daily routines, even if academic performance is uneven due to limited parental supervision²¹. These parallels strengthen the argument that alternative caregivers play a crucial role in moderating the adverse effects of parental absence.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with the concept of character education, which stresses that independence is not only a practical life skill but also a moral value shaped through modelling, habituation, and reinforcement. Grandmothers in this study acted not only as caregivers but also as moral exemplars, fostering responsibility, discipline, and religious commitment. This finding aligns with the concept of value habituation and modelling in family dynamics, as described by Hidayati et al., which emphasises that children acquire values primarily through imitation of their caregivers. In this context, grandmothers play a pivotal role in instilling essential values during children's developmental stages²². Moreover, Jones et al. highlight that attachment figures—particularly grandmothers—significantly shape the modelling of religious and moral behaviours, which children are likely to internalise and carry into adulthood. These insights underscore the intricate interplay of emotional support and ethical guidance, reinforcing the importance of grandmothers as both caregivers and role models in nurturing children's character and independence.

Thus, the case of Talang Lindung demonstrates that the absence of biological parents does not necessarily hinder character formation; instead, it can open pathways for adaptive growth when foster parents provide consistent guidance, schools collaborate effectively, and cultural-religious values are reinforced. These findings enrich the body of knowledge on child development

²⁰ Theodora Lam and Brenda S. A. Yeoh, "Parental Migration and Disruptions in Everyday Life: Reactions of Left-behind Children in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 16 (December 2019): 3085–104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1547022>; Parrenas, "Long Distance Intimacy."

²¹ Elspeth Graham and Lucy P. Jordan, "Migrant Parents and the Psychological Well-Being of Left-Behind Children in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 73, no. 4 (August 2011): 763–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2011.00844.x>.

²² Nur Alfin Hidayati, Herman J. Waluyo, and Retno Winarni, "Exploring the Implementation of Local Wisdom-Based Character Education among Indonesian Higher Education Students," *International Journal of Instruction* 13, no. 2 (2020): 179–98.

in transnational family contexts, suggesting that independence in children is both a personal achievement and a socially nurtured capacity.

Factors Influencing the Independent Character Development of Children Aged 6–12 Raised by Foster Parents

The findings reveal that the development of independent character among children of female migrant workers (TKW) in Talang Lindung Village is shaped by both internal and external factors. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, it became evident that these two dimensions are interrelated, working together to influence how children aged 6–12 adapt and cultivate independence under the care of foster parents, primarily their grandmothers.

Internal Factors

From the children's perspectives, their sense of responsibility, willingness to help, and adaptive emotional responses emerged as key internal drivers of independence. For instance, children like Salma and Zafira reported that while initially they struggled with daily tasks, over time they became accustomed to managing household chores such as cleaning their rooms, washing dishes, or even cooking simple meals. These practices reflect the internalisation of responsibility and growing self-confidence. Similarly, Arsalan noted that engaging in tasks such as feeding pets and participating in house cleaning made him feel more capable and helpful. These narratives illustrate how internal motivation, emotional resilience, and self-confidence play crucial roles in shaping independent character. Furthermore, religious practice was highlighted as another internal factor. Children gradually developed autonomy in worship, such as praying and reading the Qur'an without being reminded, which not only reinforced discipline but also nurtured spiritual independence.

External Factors

Equally significant are the external influences, which include the roles of foster parents, the limited but continuous involvement of biological mothers, and the support of schools and the wider community. Grandmothers, acting as foster parents, were consistently identified as the primary external agents shaping independence. They not only fulfilled children's physical needs but also modelled discipline, encouraged responsibility, and instilled moral and cultural values. As one grandmother explained, fostering independence meant guiding children to take responsibility, make decisions, and cultivate honesty, respect, and empathy. This guidance often came through practical teaching in household tasks and everyday routines. At the same time, biological mothers, though absent physically, maintained their parental role through regular communication

via phone and video calls. They provided encouragement, monitored schoolwork, and reinforced discipline remotely, showing that maternal control and emotional support still played a meaningful role despite distance. Teachers also emerged as external contributors, emphasising collaboration with foster parents to support children's learning and self-management skills. Finally, local leaders such as the village head and hamlet head noted that broader cultural and socioeconomic contexts—including the educational background of foster families and the preservation of cultural values—also influenced children's character development.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the development of independent character in children raised by foster parents results from a dynamic interplay between internal and external factors. While internal aspects such as responsibility, confidence, and adaptive resilience enable children to take on independence, external influences from foster parents, biological mothers, teachers, and cultural norms provide the structure and reinforcement necessary for sustaining it. This balance underscores that independence among children of TKW is not an isolated personal trait but a product of ongoing relational, cultural, and structural interactions.

So, the findings imply that children's independence develops through the synergy of internal motivation and external support systems. While responsibility, confidence, and resilience drive children's self-reliance, the structured guidance of foster parents, the emotional reinforcement of migrant mothers, and the collaborative role of schools and community leaders ensure that independence is nurtured and sustained. This suggests that effective character development for children of migrant workers requires holistic interventions that empower both children and their caregiving environments. Strengthening foster parents' capacity, maintaining active maternal communication, and fostering school-community collaboration are essential to balance children's autonomy with emotional stability and cultural values.

The findings of this study highlight that the independent character development of children aged 6–12 raised by foster parents, particularly the children of female migrant workers, is shaped by a synergy between internal and external factors. This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasises that children's development is the result of continuous interactions between personal attributes (microsystem) and external environmental influences (mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem)²³. In this context, children's sense of responsibility and emotional resilience function as

²³ Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development*, vol. 352.

internal drivers, while foster parents, biological mothers, teachers, and the wider community serve as the external ecosystem that reinforces independence.

From the internal perspective, the gradual growth of responsibility, confidence, and resilience observed among the children echoes Erikson's psychosocial theory of development, particularly the stage of industry versus inferiority (ages 6–12). According to Erikson, children at this stage strive to demonstrate competence through tasks and responsibilities²⁴. When they succeed, they develop confidence and a sense of initiative, as reflected in the children who learned to manage household chores, engage in worship independently, and contribute to family routines. This finding is also supported by research from Ryan and Deci on self-determination theory, which stresses the importance of intrinsic motivation—responsibility and autonomy—as a foundation for sustainable character development²⁵.

Externally, the pivotal role of foster parents, particularly grandmothers, confirms Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), which emphasises that the guidance of more capable adults facilitates children's learning and independence. By providing models of discipline and instilling cultural and moral values, foster parents act as scaffolds, enabling children to internalize independence gradually. Foster parents are often observed to model discipline and instill cultural and ethical values, which play a crucial role in children's social and emotional development. Goemans et al. stress that positive parenting behaviours have predictive effects on foster children's prosocial behaviour, suggesting that nurturing interactions significantly contribute to children's adaptive functioning. Similarly, Oktaviani et al. assert the critical nature of parenting in shaping the emotional development of children in foster care and emphasise the necessity for compassionate and consistent parenting practices.

Therefore, the implications are twofold. First, interventions to strengthen independent character must address both the personal dimension (empowering children's responsibility, confidence, and emotional resilience) and the structural dimension (equipping foster parents with parenting skills, facilitating maternal communication, and fostering school-community partnerships). Second, given the cultural and socioeconomic contexts of foster families, character education must be situated within local values, ensuring that independence is nurtured without neglecting emotional security and spiritual development.

²⁴ Erikson, *Childhood and Society*.

²⁵ Ryan and Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being."

The Role of Foster Parents and Their Impact on Children's Independence

The findings highlight that foster parents, particularly grandmothers, play a central and multidimensional role in shaping the independence of children aged 6–12 in Talang Lindung Village. Through descriptive qualitative analysis and content analysis of interviews and observations, several recurring themes emerged: emotional support, fulfilment of basic needs, moral and cultural guidance, practical skill development, and modelling independence.

First, the theme of emotional support was strongly evident. Grandmothers not only filled the physical absence of migrant mothers but also provided comfort, affection, and reassurance. They offered encouragement and positive reinforcement when children performed tasks independently, while also wisely addressing children's longing for their absent mothers. This emotional stability became a foundation for children to adapt positively and cultivate resilience.

Second, foster parents assumed responsibility for the fulfilment of basic needs, such as providing nutritious meals, ensuring cleanliness, maintaining health, and organising structured routines for eating, studying, and sleeping. This created a secure environment in which children could grow and gradually take responsibility for their own daily care.

Third, the role of moral and cultural guidance emerged as another central theme. Grandmothers acted as transmitters of family values and traditions, instilling honesty, respect, empathy, and cooperation. They also emphasised the importance of religious practices, teaching children to pray, recite the Qur'an, and integrate spiritual values into their daily lives.

Fourth, a strong theme of practical skill development was identified. Grandmothers consistently taught children life skills such as cooking simple meals, cleaning, washing clothes, caring for pets, and gardening. These tasks not only enhanced children's independence in managing household responsibilities but also strengthened their confidence in handling challenges.

Finally, the theme of modelling independence appeared across multiple narratives. Grandmothers deliberately gave children age-appropriate responsibilities and trusted them to complete tasks. By acting as role models—demonstrating honesty, patience, and discipline—they provided living examples that children could imitate in their own development of independent characters.

The overall impact of foster parents was found to be largely positive, as children became more responsible, confident, and self-reliant in daily life, learning, and religious practices. However, challenges were also noted, such as limited academic supervision, restricted exposure to broader experiences, and the physical limitations of elderly caregivers. Despite these constraints, the role of grandmothers as foster parents remains essential in sustaining children's independence and moral growth amid the absence of their biological mothers.

So, the findings imply that foster parents, particularly grandmothers, play a decisive role in shaping children's independence by providing emotional support, meeting basic needs, transmitting moral and cultural values, and teaching practical life skills. Their presence helps children adapt to the absence of their biological mothers and develop responsibility, confidence, and resilience from an early age. At the same time, limitations such as reduced academic guidance and the physical constraints of elderly caregivers highlight the need for stronger collaboration between foster parents, schools, and communities. These implications stress that sustaining children's independence requires a shared effort among families, educators, and policymakers to complement the crucial role of foster parents.

The significant role of foster parents, especially grandmothers, in providing emotional support and transmitting values aligns with Bowlby's attachment theory, which underscores the importance of secure emotional bonds for children's resilience and independence²⁶. Even though the biological mothers were absent, the emotional availability of grandmothers created a compensatory attachment figure, allowing children to feel secure while navigating their developmental tasks. This is consistent with research by Parrenas, who found that in transnational families, substitute caregivers often become critical in sustaining children's emotional well-being and facilitating adaptive independence²⁷. Moreover, the emphasis on moral and cultural guidance resonates with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), which posits that learning and character formation are mediated through cultural tools and advice from more capable others²⁸. Through daily routines, religious practices, and cultural traditions, grandmothers provided scaffolding that allowed children to internalise values and develop self-regulation. Thus, while foster parents play a decisive role in laying the foundation of independence, sustaining it requires

²⁶ E. J. M. Bowlby, *Loss-Sadness and Depression: Attachment and Loss Volume 3*, vol. 3 (Random House, 2008), https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=bPyZyrzSzmAC&oi=fnd&pg=PR13&dq=Attachment+and+loss&ots=4CXz_I2GGp&sig=Y9mp3IH-qrydLEyalnohXaSdigs.

²⁷ Parrenas, "Long Distance Intimacy."

²⁸ Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, vol. 86.

systemic collaboration where schools provide academic reinforcement, communities offer opportunities for broader learning, and policymakers design interventions that empower foster families.

CONCLUSION

Children of female migrant workers (aged 6–12) who are cared for by foster parents, particularly grandmothers, in Talang Lindung Village, demonstrate the development of independent character across daily life, learning, and religious practices. These children have become accustomed to managing household chores, completing school assignments independently, and performing religious duties without direct supervision. The results highlight that the absence of biological parents due to migration does not hinder character development; instead, it promotes adaptive growth when foster parents provide consistent guidance.

The development of children's independence is influenced by internal factors, such as self-motivation, responsibility, diligence, and emotional resilience, as well as external factors, including the role of foster parents, remote communication with migrant mothers, school support, and the local socio-cultural context. The interaction between these internal and external factors enables children to internalise values of discipline, responsibility, and initiative, aligning with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Erikson's psychosocial theory, which emphasise the importance of environmental and experiential influences in fostering independence.

Foster parents play a multidimensional role as providers of emotional support, fulfillers of basic needs, moral and cultural guides, practical skill instructors, and models of independence. Based on these findings, specific recommendations include local policies to develop foster parent training and mentoring programs, schools adapting self-directed learning and mentoring initiatives, and migrant worker protection agencies providing psychosocial support, monitoring, and counselling services. This approach ensures that children's independence develops systematically, balancing personal capabilities with environmental support.

Recommendations based on the findings of this research include the need for greater support for foster parents in the form of training and relevant resources to assist them in educating children. Additionally, collaboration between foster parents, biological parents, and schools should be enhanced to create a more supportive environment for children's independence development. Educational programs emphasising independence values and practical skills should also be introduced to help children manage daily tasks and

build their confidence. With these steps, it is hoped that children can grow into independent and responsible individuals in the future.

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