



Father involvement and self-efficacy in generation alpha children aged 3–6 years: a correlational study in Malang City, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between father involvement and self-efficacy in Generation Alpha children aged 3–6 years in Blimbing District, Malang City. Father involvement on children's self-efficacy is very influential, therefore communication between fathers and children is very necessary, during the child's growth and development process. A quantitative correlational design was used with 80 fathers selected through purposive sampling. Father involvement was measured using the Early Head Start father involvement instrument, and children's self-efficacy was assessed using the Indonesian Children's Self-Efficacy Questionnaire in three dimensions: academic, social, and emotional. Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality testing confirmed normal data distribution, and Pearson product-moment correlation was used for hypothesis testing. This study was only conducted on early childhood children aged 3 to 6 years with a specificity, a father aged 25 to 45 years who lived with the child. The results showed a significant positive relationship between father involvement and children's overall self-efficacy ($r = 0.542$, $p < 0.001$), with social self-efficacy showing the strongest relationship ($r = 0.552$), followed by emotional self-efficacy ($r = 0.431$) and academic self-efficacy ($r = 0.392$). Father involvement accounted for 29.4% of the variance in children's self-efficacy scores. These findings confirm that active father involvement is a meaningful predictor of early childhood self-efficacy, underscoring the importance of promoting involved fathering as an intentional parenting strategy to support the holistic development of Generation Alpha children in the digital age.

Keywords: *Father Involvement; Self-efficacy; Generation Alpha; Early childhood; Correlational Study.*

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Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology presents various social challenges, one of which concerns childcare. In this context, communication and role modeling are fundamental aspects that must be continuously maintained and strengthened within the family environment. Ongoing communication among family members plays a crucial role in shaping children's self-efficacy, empowering them to embrace broader change. Fathers' active involvement in interactions and communication with their children is a crucial factor in this process. Furthermore, instilling awareness of climate change and sustainability is integral to the development of children's emotional and social well-being (Ardiansyah et al., 2021). Therefore, a father's role extends beyond economic functions to include active involvement in instilling character values and life skills in children. However, social norms often give rise to fatherlessness. This situation highlights the importance of increasing awareness and social support to motivate fathers to be more actively involved in childcare.

The phenomenon of fatherlessness in families is inseparable from cultural constructs that define the father as the primary breadwinner, while domestic responsibilities, including childcare, are predominantly borne by the mother. This perspective can have psychological impacts on children, such as feelings of emotional emptiness and the absence of a father figure in their lives (Zarkasyi & Badri, 2023). These problems often lead to divorce, which ultimately impacts the psychological well-being and development of children. In his remarks, the Chairperson of the Advisory Board for the Development and Preservation of Marriage stated that before the rise of online gambling practices, the number of divorces in 2019 was around 1,000. However, after the increase in these practices, the number of divorces increased to around 4,000 cases, with 2,889 of these cases related to online gambling.

Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 1 of 2020 concerning the Implementation of Child Care emphasizes that child care is an effort to permanently and sustainably fulfill the needs for affection, attachment, safety, and welfare in the best interests of the child. In this context, every child has the right to receive welfare, care, nurturing, and guidance, grounded in affection, within their family environment so that they can grow and develop optimally. In line with this, the Deputy for Fulfillment of Children's Rights to Care and Environment at the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection stated that the presence and involvement of a father figure play a significant role in providing affection and in monitoring the child's growth and development. Furthermore, child and adolescent psychologists have stated that in the long term, children who have fathers who are actively involved in their lives tend to have a greater chance of obtaining stable employment, building healthy interpersonal relationships, and avoiding various psychological problems and high-risk behaviors in adulthood, such as drug abuse. This statement emphasizes that the role of a father is not limited to being a breadwinner, but also involves a strategic responsibility in supporting the optimal growth and development of young children (Ilmawaddah & Affia, 2025).

One aspect of a child's development that a father's involvement can influence in parenting is self-efficacy. Numerous studies have shown that parental involvement, including fathers', significantly influences a child's self-efficacy, particularly in academic settings. Parental involvement in the form of support, tutoring, and educational expectations has been shown to increase a child's confidence in their ability to complete academic tasks. Research by Fan & Williams (2010) showed that parental advice and high educational aspirations positively contribute to increased students' academic self-efficacy, particularly in subjects such as English. Furthermore, Yap & Baharudin (2015) found that paternal involvement plays a crucial role in adolescents' positive development, mediating the relationship between parental participation and children's academic self-efficacy.

In addition to direct involvement, parenting style is a crucial factor in the development of children's self-efficacy. Authoritative parenting, characterized by warmth, emotional support, and open communication, has been shown to correlate positively with children's self-efficacy and academic achievement (Edison et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2024). This parenting style encourages children to develop confidence in their abilities and builds motivation to achieve academic success (Hayek et al., 2022). Conversely, authoritarian or neglectful parenting styles tend to be less effective in fostering optimal self-efficacy development, resulting in lower self-confidence and

lower academic achievement. More broadly, various studies show that paternal involvement in children's education not only influences the development of self-efficacy but also directly affects children's academic achievement. Parental involvement and children's self-efficacy have been shown to correlate positively with academic success, so the active presence of fathers in children's education can improve their learning outcomes (González-Pianda et al., 2002). However, the effect of paternal involvement on children's self-efficacy can vary across cultural contexts. In some cultures, paternal involvement is more strongly associated with the development of self-efficacy and children's academic achievement, underscoring the importance of parenting approaches that take into account social and cultural contexts.

Research shows that paternal involvement contributes significantly to various aspects of child development, including mental health, prosocial behavior, and long-term social and cognitive development. Empirical studies also show that parenting factors, including interaction patterns and parental emotional support, are related to the development of self-efficacy and children's mental health (Holzer et al., 2024; Qian et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2024). However, most research still focuses on mothers or adolescents, while studies specifically exploring the relationship between paternal involvement in parenting and the development of self-efficacy in Generation Alpha children remain relatively limited. Therefore, research examining the relationship between paternal involvement and self-efficacy in Generation Alpha children is important to enrich the literature on modern parenting and provide an empirical basis for developing parenting strategies that are more responsive to children's developmental needs in the digital age.

Methods

Research Design

This study used a quantitative, correlational research design. It aimed to analyze the relationship between father involvement and self-efficacy in Generation Alpha children aged 3–6 years in Blimbing District, Malang City. The quantitative approach was chosen because this study focused on statistically measuring the relationship between variables by collecting numerical data and analyzing it using inferential statistics (Machali, 2021).

Research Population and Sample

The population in this study comprised all fathers of Generation Alpha children aged 3–6 years residing in Blimbing District, Malang City. Based on initial data obtained from a preliminary survey, the study population was 100 fathers who met these criteria. The sample was determined using a purposive sampling technique, which selects respondents based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. The respondent criteria in this study included:

1. Fathers aged 25–45 years
2. Having children aged 3–6 years (Generation Alpha)
3. Living with children in the same household
4. Willing to be research respondents

Based on these criteria, 80 respondents met the requirements for the research sample. The age distribution of the respondents' children can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Child Age Distribution Data from Respondents

No.	Child's Age (Year)	Total
1.	3	16
2.	4	13
3.	5	37
4.	6	24
Total		80

Variables

This study used two variables:

1. Independent variable (X): Father's Role
The father's role is defined as the father's active involvement in childcare, including interaction, emotional support, education, and character development.
2. Dependent variable (Y): Child's Self-Efficacy
Child's self-efficacy is a child's belief in their ability to perform specific tasks, face challenges, and solve simple problems in everyday life.

Instruments

This study uses two instruments, each of which has been tested for validity and reliability, to measure the two research variables.

1. Paternal involvement was measured through a set of questions developed for the National Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (Cabrera & Coll, 2004). Fathers were asked to rate how often they took part in 31 activities with their child in the last month. Examples of the questions include: "How often did you read to your child?" "How often did you put your child to bed?" "How often did you take your child to visit relatives?" "How often did you help your child get dressed?" and "How often did you play peek-a-boo with your child?" Each item was rated on a 6-point scale, where 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = a few times a week, 4 = once a week, 5 = once a day, and 6 = several times a day. The score for each item ranges from 1 to 6, with higher numbers showing more frequent actions. This instrument shows high internal reliability with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.87 to 0.95.
2. Children's self-efficacy was measured using The Indonesian Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children: Translation, Cross-Cultural Adaptation, and Psychometric Evaluation (Wuryaningsih et al., 2025), an adaptation of Muris's Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children (SEQ-C) (Muris, 2001). This instrument measures children's confidence in their ability to handle various situations across three main dimensions: academic, social, and emotional self-efficacy. This scale consists of 24 items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very well) and has good reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.78 to 0.88.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection techniques in this study included distributing measurement scales for each variable to fathers to assess their level of involvement in raising their children and to children (guided by teachers) to assess their self-efficacy. Both scales are shared in Google Forms.

Analysis Data Technique

The research data, derived from self-reports using a measurement scale for each variable, were then tabulated to determine the data's general characteristics. The data were then analyzed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to determine whether they were normally distributed. If the data were normally distributed, the hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation. If the data were not normal, the hypothesis was tested using Kendall's Tau technique. SPSS was used to conduct these analyses.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Data were collected from 80 fathers of Generation Alpha children aged 3–6 years residing in Blimbing District, Malang City. Descriptive analysis was performed on both variables: father involvement (X) and children's self-efficacy (Y). The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Father Involvement and Children's Self-Efficacy (N = 80)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Father Involvement (X)	80	97.90	124.50	109.54	5.21
Self-Efficacy – Total (Y)	80	57.80	95.70	78.83	7.67
Academic Self-Efficacy	80	18.30	35.10	27.07	3.31
Social Self-Efficacy	80	17.60	33.10	26.50	3.00
Emotional Self-Efficacy	80	17.80	32.00	25.27	2.80

Table 2 shows that the father involvement variable (X) has a mean score of 109.54 (SD = 5.21) out of a theoretical maximum of 186, indicating a moderate-to-high level of paternal engagement among respondents. All 80 fathers fell within the medium category (scores 93–155), suggesting a generally consistent pattern of involvement. For children's self-efficacy (Y), the overall mean score was 78.83 (SD = 7.67) out of a maximum of 120. Of the three sub-dimensions, academic self-efficacy recorded the highest mean (M = 27.07, SD = 3.31), followed by social self-efficacy (M = 26.50, SD = 3.00), and emotional self-efficacy (M = 25.27, SD = 2.80). In terms of categories, 47 children (58.75%) fell in the medium self-efficacy range (48–80), and 33 children (41.25%) were in the high range (> 80), while no child scored in the low range.

Normality Test

Prior to hypothesis testing, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) normality test was conducted on both variables. The results showed that the father involvement variable yielded a K-S statistic of 0.054 ($p = .966$), and the children's self-efficacy variable yielded a K-S statistic of 0.061 ($p = .909$). Since both p -values exceeded the significance threshold of .05, the null hypothesis of normal distribution was retained for both variables. These results confirm that the data meet the parametric assumptions required for Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. The normality test results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test Results

Variable	K-S Statistic	p-value	Distribution
Father Involvement (X)	0.054	.966	Normal
Children's Self-Efficacy – Total (Y)	0.061	.909	Normal

Hypothesis Testing: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Since both variables were normally distributed, hypothesis testing was conducted using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The research hypothesis states that there is a significant positive relationship between father involvement and children's self-efficacy. The results of the Pearson correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Between Father Involvement and Children's Self-Efficacy (N = 80)

Self-Efficacy Dimension	r	r ²	p-value	Interpretation
Self-Efficacy – Total	.542**	.294	<.001	Moderate, Significant
Academic Self-Efficacy	.392**	.154	.001	Low-moderate, Significant
Social Self-Efficacy	.552**	.305	<.001	Moderate, Significant
Emotional Self-Efficacy	.431**	.186	<.001	Low-moderate, Significant

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As shown in Table 4, the Pearson correlation between father involvement and total children's self-efficacy yielded $r(78) = .542, p < .001$, indicating a moderate, statistically significant positive relationship. This finding supports the research hypothesis that higher levels of father involvement are associated with higher levels of self-efficacy in Generation Alpha children aged 3–6 years. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = .294$) indicates that approximately 29.4% of the variance in children's self-efficacy scores can be explained by differences in father involvement.

At the sub-dimension level, the strongest correlation was found between father involvement and social self-efficacy ($r = .552, p < .001$), followed by emotional self-efficacy ($r = .431, p < .001$) and academic self-efficacy ($r = .392, p = .001$). The relatively stronger association with social self-efficacy may reflect the nature of father–child interactions, which in early childhood tend to be characterized by play-based, peer-like engagement that directly scaffolds children's interpersonal competencies and confidence in social situations (Yap & Baharudin, 2015). Fathers who engage more frequently in activities such as taking children to visit relatives, playing games, and bedtime routines provide regular social modeling experiences that reinforce children's belief in their ability to interact effectively with others.

The significant correlation with academic self-efficacy ($r = .392$), though the lowest among the three dimensions, is consistent with prior research demonstrating that paternal involvement positively contributes to children's confidence in learning tasks. Fan & Williams (2010) found that fathers' educational aspirations and advice meaningfully enhanced students' academic self-efficacy. In the present study, fathers' engagement in literacy-related and educational activities—such as reading to children, helping with dressing routines, and educational guidance—appears to foster early academic confidence even among children at the preschool stage. The relatively lower correlation compared to social and emotional dimensions may be attributed to the age of the sample (3–6 years), where formal academic demands are minimal and self-efficacy perceptions are still primarily shaped by social and emotional interactions rather than achievement-based feedback.

The positive correlation between father involvement and emotional self-efficacy ($r = .431$) aligns with the argument that a father's active presence provides children with a secure emotional base from which to explore their environment and regulate their emotions. Bandura's social cognitive theory emphasizes that vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion from significant figures—such as fathers—are core sources of self-efficacy information (Bandura, 1977). Fathers who consistently engage in nurturing activities communicate to the child a sense of trust and competence that extends to the child's own emotional regulation abilities. These findings collectively underscore the importance of promoting active fatherhood as a protective factor for early childhood self-efficacy development, particularly in the context of Generation Alpha families who face the complex social challenges of the digital era.

The link between father involvement and emotional self-efficacy in this study merits deeper consideration in light of recent evidence on the father–emotion regulation nexus. A 2024 systematic review published in *BMC Psychology* (Baillot et al., 2024) synthesized ten studies on father involvement and emotion regulation in children aged 0–5 years and found that, while direct associations were not consistently observed, significant conditional effects emerged when father involvement was measured in terms of both quantity and quality of caregiving behaviors. Specifically, fathers who were present across diverse caregiving contexts—not merely recreational interaction—were associated with more adaptive emotion regulation in children, particularly when temperamental characteristics of the child and the interactive quality of the father–child relationship were taken into account. The present study's finding that father involvement correlates significantly with emotional self-efficacy ($r = .431$) is thus consistent with this emerging body of work, suggesting that fathers' routine engagement in activities such as bedtime routines, daily care, and emotional reassurance creates opportunities for children to observe, practice, and internalize emotional coping strategies. For Generation Alpha children navigating a digitally saturated environment, these co-regulatory experiences with fathers may serve as a critical counterweight to the emotional dysregulation risks associated with excessive screen exposure (Neophytou et al., 2021).

The strongest correlation in this study was observed between father involvement and social self-efficacy ($r = .552$). This result is theoretically significant and warrants elaboration beyond the play-based engagement framework. Recent research on parental playfulness in the preschool years has highlighted that fathers uniquely contribute to the social competence trajectory of young children through the distinctive texture of father-child play. Bureau et al., (2023), writing in *Frontiers in Psychology*, noted that paternal play tends to be more challenging, physically stimulating, and unpredictable compared to maternal play, and that this quality of interaction fosters children's capacity to manage social uncertainty and assert themselves in peer contexts. This aligns with Diniz et al.'s (2023) systematic review of qualitative fathering studies (*Family Relations*), which identified that fathers who were actively present across multiple dimensions of care—affection, nurturance, and stimulating activities—facilitated broader positive developmental outcomes, including social competence. The finding in the present study that social self-efficacy is the dimension most strongly predicted by father involvement adds a quantitative Indonesian perspective to this predominantly Western literature, suggesting that the social scaffolding function of active fatherhood may transcend cultural boundaries, even within the collectivist family context of Malang City.

The relatively lower but still significant correlation between father involvement and academic self-efficacy ($r = .392$) in this study invites a nuanced discussion about the developmental timing of academic self-belief formation. Mancini et al., (2024), in a study published in the *British Journal of Educational Psychology*—a Scopus-indexed journal—examined the role of parenting-related variables on fathers' educational involvement and argued that promoting fathers' personal confidence in their caregiving abilities is a precondition for the kinds of educational engagement that translate into children's academic self-efficacy. Their framework suggests that paternal involvement in education operates through two channels: direct educational activities (e.g., reading, helping with tasks) and the quality of the broader father-child relationship that provides the motivational soil in which academic confidence grows. In the present sample of children aged 3–6 years, direct academic engagement is naturally limited by developmental stage; however, the significant correlation observed here indicates that even pre-formal educational interactions—reading aloud, answering questions, exploring the world together—lay the foundation for academic self-efficacy. This finding reinforces the argument that educational investment in early fatherhood, including literacy-related activities as assessed by the Cabrera & Coll (2004) instrument used in this study, begins to shape academic self-belief well before formal schooling commences.

It is also important to situate these findings within the Indonesian cultural context, where traditional gender-role norms have historically positioned fathers primarily as breadwinners and authority figures rather than active caregiving partners. A cross-cultural systematic review of paternal roles indexed in the Scopus database found that, while fathers in collectivist societies such as Indonesia continue to operate within cultural constructs that emphasize the breadwinner role, there is a demonstrable shift toward more participative fathering practices, particularly among urban, educated households (*Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, 2023). The fact that all 80 respondents in the present study fell within the medium-to-high category of father involvement, with a mean score of 109.54 on a scale of up to 186, suggests that fathers in Blimbing District, Malang City are increasingly embracing a more engaged model of paternal care. This shift is particularly consequential for Generation Alpha children, who—as the first cohort raised in an environment of ubiquitous digital technology—are at heightened risk for social and emotional developmental disruptions when parental physical presence and interaction are displaced by screen time (Neophytou et al., 2021). Active father involvement thus functions not merely as a developmental asset but as a protective buffer against the risks associated with early digital exposure.

Despite the contribution of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; although a significant positive relationship was established, it cannot be determined whether higher father involvement produces higher child self-efficacy or whether children with naturally higher self-efficacy elicit greater paternal engagement. Longitudinal designs are recommended for future research to examine the directionality and stability of this relationship over time. Second, both instruments relied on self-

report data—fathers rated their own involvement and children’s self-efficacy was assessed through teacher-guided questionnaires—which introduces potential social desirability bias, particularly in the context of evolving cultural expectations around fatherhood. Future research would benefit from incorporating observational measures and multi-informant perspectives. Third, the sample was drawn exclusively from Blimbing District, Malang City, limiting the geographic and socioeconomic generalizability of the findings. Replication in rural and peri-urban Indonesian contexts, as well as comparative studies across different cultural groups within Indonesia, would strengthen the external validity of these results. Finally, mediating and moderating variables—such as parenting style, co-parenting quality, maternal involvement, and child temperament—were not examined in the present study. Future research employing structural equation modeling could illuminate the pathways through which father involvement exerts its influence on children’s self-efficacy, providing a more fine-grained understanding of the mechanisms underlying the observed relationship (Baillot et al., 2024; Mancini et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study established a significant positive relationship between father involvement and self-efficacy in Generation Alpha children aged 3–6 years in Blimbing District, Malang City ($r = .542$, $p < .001$). Father involvement was most strongly associated with social self-efficacy ($r = .552$), followed by emotional ($r = .431$) and academic self-efficacy ($r = .392$). These findings confirm that active paternal engagement is a meaningful predictor of early childhood self-efficacy across all three dimensions. The results underscore the urgency of promoting engaged fatherhood as a deliberate parenting strategy, particularly in the digital era, to support the holistic development of Generation Alpha children.

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The author is a graduate of Malang Islamic University. Bachelor program. Majoring in early childhood Islamic education which researches the environment and family. Janneke is a volunteer in Good Village Project in Malang. She is teacher in primary school. She is bachelor in University of Amsterdam.

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