

RAISING COMMUNICATIVE CHILDREN: EXPLORING PARENTAL STRATEGIES FOR GENERATION ALPHA IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract: *This study explores the strategies Malaysian parents employ to enhance the communication skills of Generation Alpha, defined as children born between 2010 and 2025 who are growing up surrounded by digital technologies. Communication competence is an important life skill that influences emotional, social and cognitive development, yet the increasing presence of digital devices has raised concerns about the decrease of interpersonal interaction among children. Guided by Social Learning Theory by Bandura and Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner, this research examines how parental behaviours, family environments and digital practices contribute to the development of communication abilities in young children. A total of 217 parents from various regions of Malaysia participated in this quantitative descriptive study through structured online questionnaires containing open-ended questions. Responses were analyzed thematically to identify recurring parental strategies and communication practices. Findings reveal that parents commonly employ a combination of traditional and technology-supported approaches such as encouraging daily conversations, modelling positive communication, managing screen time, involving children in social activities and guiding the use of educational media. These strategies were found to improve children's verbal confidence, empathy and adaptability while excessive gadget use, inconsistent parental monitoring and lack of communication awareness emerged as key challenges. The study concludes that effective communication development requires a balanced relationship between digital exposure and interpersonal interaction. Parents play a crucial role as communicative role models whose consistent engagement, emotional warmth and constructive guidance shape the linguistic and social growth of Generation Alpha in Malaysia.*

Keywords: *Parental Strategies, Communication Skills, Generation Alpha, Digital Parenting, Malaysia*

Introduction

Communication competence is a core element of human development that influences social adjustment, learning capacity and emotional wellbeing. It represents not only the ability to speak but also the skill to listen, interpret and respond appropriately within different social and cultural contexts. For children, communication skills are among the earliest forms of cognitive and emotional expression that shape how they understand themselves and relate to others. The development of these skills begins at home where parents and family members serve as the primary role models and conversational partners.

Generation Alpha defined as children born between 2010 and 2025, represents the first group of children raised entirely within a world shaped by digital technology. Their early exposure to smartphones, tablets and online platforms has created new perspectives for learning and communication but has also introduced distinct challenges. While digital media encourages creativity, information access and social connection, it may simultaneously reduce the frequency and quality of face-to-face interaction. The increasing dependence on screens has been reduced empathy and limited verbal expression, raising questions about how interpersonal communication can be applied in such an environment.

In Malaysia, these concerns are particularly relevant because of the country's diverse cultural and linguistic background. Children are often exposed to multiple languages and communication norms and parental influence is vital in shaping their ability to navigate such diversity. The Malaysian family structure, traditionally centered on close family bonds and respect for elders faces a transformation as digital lifestyles become more dominant. Dual-income households, urban migration and the convenience of digital entertainment have gradually altered the nature of family communication. Studies such as by Jha and Arora (2020) and UNICEF Malaysia (2017) have shown that children spend significant portions of their time using digital devices often at the expense of interactive conversations with family members.

Parents play an essential role in balancing technological exposure with meaningful communication experiences. Their attitudes, values and behaviours determine how children learn to express themselves and interpret others. When parents engage in consistent dialogue, model positive language use and provide emotional support, they create an environment that fosters linguistic growth and social confidence. Conversely, when communication is replaced by digital interaction, children may become passive receivers of information rather than active participants in dialogue. The issue is not the presence of technology itself but how it is managed within the family context.

Malaysia's national education policies also emphasize the importance of communication as a contemporary skill. The Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025) outlines communication as one of the six key competencies that students must acquire to succeed in a globalized, digital society. However, the basic of this skill begins not in the classroom but within the home where parents play the most consistent and influential role in shaping communication habits. For example, understanding parental strategies to promote effective communication becomes crucial not only for family wellbeing but also for national educational goals.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the strategies that Malaysian parents use to enhance the communication skills of Generation Alpha children. By examining these practices within the framework of Social Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory, the research aims to highlight how parental guidance, environmental context and digital culture interact to influence children's communication development. This understanding can contribute to the creation of

informed parenting approaches, educational policies and social initiatives that strengthen communication skills among the younger generation in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Scholarly discussions have long emphasized the centrality of parental influence on communication development. Samfira (2022) noted that consistent parental communication fosters emotional balance and confidence in children. Kovalchuk and Yermak (2021) argued that active dialogue between parents and children promotes listening skills, empathy and clarity in speech. These interpersonal skills form the foundation for academic and social success.

Technology has also altered these dynamics. Al-Jarf (2021) found that children exposed excessively to gadgets displayed reduced eye contact and diminished verbal expression. In contrast, Jha and Arora (2020) observed that co-engagement with educational media could enhance linguistic awareness when guided appropriately. Therefore, it is not technology itself but the manner of its integration into family life that determines its developmental value.

The theoretical framework of this study shows two perspectives. Social Learning Theory by Bandura emphasizes that children learn behaviours through observation and imitation of models typically by parents. When parents demonstrate empathy, patience and polite speech, these attributes are mirrored by their children. Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner complements this by explaining how a child's environment including family, school, community and culture interacts to shape communication. The microsystem, particularly the family is the most immediate and influential. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how parental strategies influence communication in digital contexts.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative descriptive approach to examine the strategies that Malaysian parents use to improve their children's communication skills. A total of 217 parents of Generation Alpha children participated in the study representing different ethnicities, educational levels and socioeconomic backgrounds throughout Malaysia. Data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts which are demographic information and open-ended questions related to the strategies parents use to enhance their children's communication. Unlike typical survey instruments with multiple choices, this study intentionally used open-ended responses to allow parents to describe their strategies in their own words. This approach provided richer and more authentic data that reflected the diversity of parental practices. The responses were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and recurring strategies which were then categorized according to common themes such as daily communication routines, digital control and social participation. Descriptive frequencies were used to indicate how often each theme appeared among the participants.

Findings and Discussion

The open-ended responses revealed that Malaysian parents used a wide range of strategies to improve communication development among their Generation Alpha children. Thematic analysis identified five dominant themes which are encouraging daily family conversations, managing digital exposure, modelling positive communication, promoting social interaction

and using educational media with supervision. Each theme emerged repeatedly across responses showing the consistency of parental experiences throughout different demographic backgrounds.

Table 1: Parental Strategies to Improve Children's Communication Skills (N = 217)

Strategy	Description	Frequency	Percentage of mentions (%)
Daily conversations	Parents hold regular discussions with children	180	83
Screen-time control	Parents regulate gadget use and encourage balanced routines	156	72
Positive modelling	Parents demonstrate polite, calm and respectful speech	148	68
Encouraging social activities	Parents involve children in group learning and community events	141	65
Guided use of educational media	Parents supervise educational content for learning	128	59

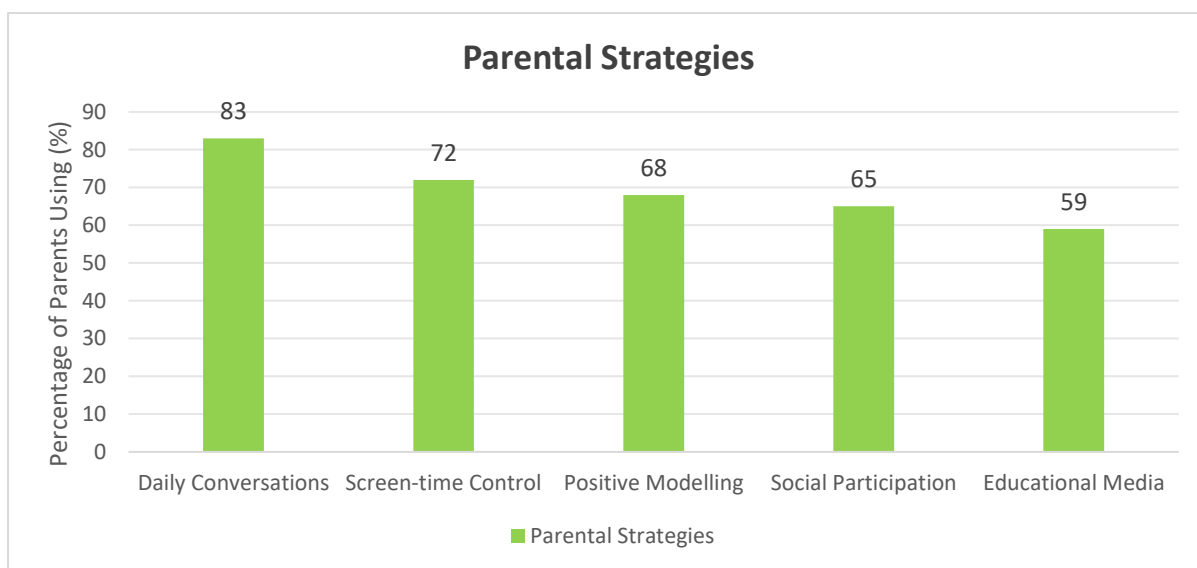
Parents frequently described daily conversations as the most natural and effective strategy to improve communication. Many respondents wrote that they intentionally initiate conversations during mealtimes, car rides or before bedtime to encourage their children to share daily experiences. These interactions even when brief, strengthen family relationships and build children's confidence in expressing opinions. Such practices align closely with Social Learning Theory which highlights the importance of communication development and observational learning.

Another theme was the regulation of digital exposure. Parents emphasized that controlling screen time helps children focus better and engage more meaningfully with family members. Many parents described establishing house rules such as no phones during dinner or limited daily device usage. They observed that these practices encouraged their children to speak more and listen actively. This finding supports the Ecological Systems Theory perspective showing how structural adjustments within the home environment can positively shape communication development.

Parents also stressed the importance of modelling appropriate communication. Several respondents explained that they strive to use polite and calm tones when speaking to their children, especially during conflicts. Children also were observed to adopt similar communication styles when interacting with peers. This reflects Bandura's concept of observational learning where children imitate behaviours modelled by significant adults.

Promoting social participation was another key strategy identified through thematic analysis. Parents encouraged their children to join storytelling sessions, playgroups and community activities to enhance confidence and adaptability. They observed that such activities helped children develop listening and turn-taking skills while fostering empathy toward others. Additionally, many parents described using digital media in purposeful ways. They allowed their children to watch documentaries or play educational games under supervision, explaining that guided exposure to quality content improved vocabulary and comprehension.

Figure 1: Percentage of Parents Using Communication Enhancement Strategies



A bar graph illustrates that 83 percent of parents engage in daily conversations, 72 percent manage screen time, 68 percent model positive communication, 65 percent encourage social participation and 59 percent integrate educational media.

The findings demonstrate that parents continue to value interpersonal communication as the basic of their children's development while digital media serves a supportive role. Further analysis revealed a relationship between parental education and the diversity of strategies used. Parents with higher educational backgrounds tended to combine digital and traditional approaches more effectively while others usually applied on direct conversations. This suggests that awareness and access to information influence how communication strategies are implemented.

Table 2: Summary of Strategies and Their Communication Outcomes

Strategy	Theoretical Basis	Expected Outcome
Daily conversation	Social Learning Theory	Improved expressive confidence and empathy
Screen-time control	Ecological Systems Theory	Better focus and family engagement
Positive modelling	Social Learning Theory	Enhanced politeness and emotional regulation
Social participation	Ecological Systems Theory	Strengthened adaptability and collaboration
Educational media	Combined SLT and EST	Balanced digital literacy and vocabulary growth

These results reinforce the idea that parents act as the primary communicative models in a child's life. Their ability to balance interpersonal dialogue with digital exposure shapes how well children adapt to both real-world and online communication.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings highlight that effective communication development begins within the home. Parents are encouraged to maintain consistent and meaningful conversations to create emotional bonds and linguistic skills. Digital exposure should be moderated through structured routines that encourage shared family experiences. Demonstrating empathy, patience and attentiveness during conversations allows children to show positive communication habits.

Educators can complement parental efforts by designing classroom programs that promote parental involvement such as family reading activities or interactive storytelling assignments. Policymakers and community organizations should also provide workshops focusing on digital parenting and communication literacy to help families manage technology responsibly. By encouraging collaboration between homes and schools, Malaysia can create a generation that is both communicatively competent and emotionally resilient.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Malaysian parents used various strategies to improve Generation Alpha's communication skills, combining traditional interaction with modern technology. The most effective approaches include maintaining daily conversations, regulating digital usage and modelling positive communication behaviour. These findings affirm that Social Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory together explain the interaction between parental modelling and environmental structure in shaping children's communication development.

Parental consistency, warmth and awareness are important to improve communication skills. Families that integrate conversation, digital guidance and social participation raised a children who are articulate, empathetic and adaptable. Future research should explore how these strategies evolve across different cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Empowering parents through education and policy support will ensure that Generation Alpha develops into a communication and culturally the generation prepared for the demands of the digital age.

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