



The Role of Social Awareness in Growth and Development in Early Childhood

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Abstract

Social awareness of early childhood is the awareness and ability of a child to socialize or interact with other people in a social context in a certain way that is acceptable. Early childhood is also referred to as the golden age, because at that age, children's physical and motor abilities develop and grow very quickly. Children begin to be sensitive to receiving stimulation. Therefore, social awareness of early childhood must be optimally developed. This study aims to collect various references related to social awareness in early childhood. This research is a literacy study, where articles are obtained through the DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) website, Academia Edu, Google Classroom, and ScienceDirect. The reference criteria used are references published between 2005-2022. Based on various references that have been collected, social awareness has an important role in the life of the child itself. This is because social awareness in early childhood can affect their further development.

Kata Kunci: *Social awareness, social skills, early childhood.*

Abstrak

Kesadaran sosial anak usia dini adalah kesadaran dan kemampuan seorang anak untuk bersosialisasi atau berinteraksi dengan orang lain dalam konteks sosial dengan cara tertentu yang dapat diterima. Anak usia dini juga disebut sebagai masa emas (golden age), karena pada usia tersebut, kemampuan fisik dan motorik anak berkembang dan tumbuh dengan sangat cepat. Pada masa usia ini anak mulai sensitive untuk menerima rangsangan. Oleh karena itu kesadaran sosial anak usia dini harus dikembangkan secara optimal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengumpulkan berbagai referensi terkait dengan kesadaran sosial anak usia dini. Penelitian ini bersifat kajian literasi, dimana artikel didapatkan melalui situs DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), Academia Edu, Google Classroom, dan Sciencedirect. Kriteria referensi yang digunakan adalah referensi yang terbit antara tahun 2007-2022. Berdasarkan dari berbagai referensi yang telah dikumpulkan, kesadaran sosial memiliki peran penting dalam kehidupan anak itu sendiri. Hal ini dikarenakan karena kesadaran social pada anak usia dini dapat mempengaruhi perkembangan mereka selanjutnya.

Keywords: *Kesadaran social, Skill social, Anak usia dini.*

Introduction

2020 is the year when the government implemented a learning process at home or online classes. To help with the online learning process, there are many applications that

teachers can use. With online learning, this is a consideration for parents to facilitate children with gadgets to fulfill online learning. The development of this digital era means that children are preoccupied with being alone with their electronic devices, making them individual creatures.

Early childhood is also called the golden age, because children's physical and motor skills develop and grow very quickly. Law number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System paragraph 1 states that early childhood children are those aged 0-6 years. This is based on the theory of biological child development which states that up to the age of 4 years, a child's brain experiences development of up to 50%, while at the age of 8 years, a child's brain development reaches 80% (Mursid, 2015). This indicates that early childhood is a unique stage where it has a pattern of growth and development in aspects of creativity, social emotional, physical, cognitive, language and communication that are specific to the stages the child is going through.

One of these five aspects is social emotional. Children's social emotional awareness has an important role. At this age children begin to be sensitive and sensitive to receiving stimuli. Therefore, social awareness in early childhood must be developed optimally for further development, because social awareness influences children's acceptance in groups so that it can develop again in subsequent development.

Early childhood social awareness is a child's ability to socialize or interact with other people in a social context in a certain acceptable way. Social awareness is a person's capacity to interact with other people verbally and nonverbally in accordance with current circumstances and demands. This social awareness is a learned action. Children's ability to share, communicate, and collaborate with others is an example of social awareness. A person with social awareness will be able to communicate his emotions, good and bad, in interpersonal interactions without offending other people's feelings. According to Hargie and Saunders in Su'ud, F. M (2017) social awareness helps a person be braver when speaking, expressing any feelings or problems they may have, and doing so while also finding adaptable solutions, preventing them looking for ways to escape that could actually harm them and others.

DiDonato (2014) found children from kindergarten through 5th grade to have two unique social skills trajectories: a higher level trajectory with slightly significant curves and a moderately consistent trajectory. Children's social awareness starts from an early age and this is differentiated from gender aspects (Domitrovich, 2007). For example, women's social awareness is faster than men's social awareness (Pečjak, S., 2009; Mohamed, A. H, 2018; Tan, K, 2018). According to Su'ud, F. M (2017) developing social awareness from an early age will help develop rational thinking processes, the ability to make wise decisions in the future, and the ability to understand oneself and others, as well as making children better prepared to face life's challenges.

Many studies show that social awareness in early childhood is very important (Flynn et al, 2015; Takahashi et al, 2015). According to Rumiati (2017), social and emotional development is one of the most important aspects of early childhood, and children should start learning these abilities around the age of 5 or 6 years. Children at this age need direction and guidance to ensure the correct development of social awareness, as well as appropriate emotional expression so as not to vent their feelings on the wrong things. By having high social awareness, this can help them at home, at school and in the surrounding environment (Meitya et al, 2017)

Based on articles that have been collected using the keyword "social awareness", many studies have developed ways to increase social awareness in young children. There are various ways to do this, one of which is by using games. Research conducted by Sintia, N., Kuswanto, C. W., & Meriyati, M. (2021) shows that the social abilities of young children experience developmental changes day by day. This is proven by the child's increased self-confidence, activeness and sportsmanship. Traditional games can be used as a supporting medium that allows young children to continue to develop. This is because various aspects of children's social development indicators are facilitated through traditional games (Mukhlis, A., &

Mbelo, F. H., 2019). Another research was also conducted by Terssi, M., & Matsouka, O. (2020) entitled Improving Social Skills through Structured Playfulness Program in Preschool Children. The implementation of structured play activities shows an increase in overall social behavior by students. This study aims to examine the effect of a structured play activity program on the development of social skills in preschool children (4-6 years) during recess in the kindergarten school yard. Participants were 40 pupils (26 toddlers and 14 pre-toddlers, 26 boys and 14 girls) from one Greek public kindergarten. Twenty (20) of them were designated, as they were divided into their school classes, as the control group (CG) and the remaining 20, as the experimental group (EG), who received the activity intervention for four weeks (2 days a week). Data on children's social skills (cooperation, interaction, independence) and behavior problems (externalizing and internalizing) were collected from their teachers before and after the intervention program. The results showed that both groups showed significant improvements in the investigated social behaviors. Nevertheless, in final measurements, intervention children showed significantly greater improvement in externalizing problems than the control group. The findings highlight the need for early detection of developing behavioral problems and the positive effects of a structured program of play activities in the school yard during recess on the development of social skills in preschool children.

Another research was also conducted by Rumiya (2017) entitled The Application of Geculan Bocah Dance in Improving Children's Social Emotional Development Aged 5-6 Years in Pertiwi Kindergarten, Pakis Sub District, Magelang Regency. The aim of this research is to determine the increase in social emotional development of children aged 5-6 years in Kindergarten at Pertiwi Kindergarten, Pakis District, Magelang Regency through the Geculan Bocah Dance treatment. This research method is experimental research with a one group pretest posttest design. The results of this

research are an increase in the social emotional development of children aged 5-6 years at Pertiwi Kindergarten, Pakis District, Magelang Regency.

The aim of this research is to collect various references that describe the social awareness of early childhood, starting from the definition, characteristics of social awareness, aspects, factors that influence it, stages of development of social awareness and techniques for developing social awareness in early childhood.

Methodology

The method used in this study is literature study, where various kinds of literature are obtained from DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), Academia EIDU, Google Classroom, and Scieince Direct. Literature studies are surveys of scientific literature, books, and other sources relevant to specific problems. Literature studies are designed to provide descriptions, summaries and critical evaluations of a topic that is currently being studied (Cronin, et al., 2008). The aim is to bring readers up-to-date with current literature on a topic and provide a basis for other purposes, such as providing insight into future research in that field.

Result and Discussion

Early Childhood Social Awareness

One of the keys to living a happy and successful life is having good social skills. A person can connect with their environment and build relationships with friends, coworkers, and classmates by using their social skills. Having good social skills will certainly guarantee a child's life, on the other hand, if low social skills in childhood can result in mental health problems later in life, substance abuse, and loneliness. Social awareness is a collection of taught behaviors and learned processes rather than a personality attribute. (Sarnelle: 2018)

Social awareness is characterized as learned and socially acceptable behavior that allows a person to communicate effectively with others, while avoiding socially

unacceptable responses. Social skills development is recognized as a fundamental aspect of building successful relationships with others and has shown a positive relationship with children's academic achievement, intellectual and behavioral development, and school adaptation (Wentzel et al, 2021; Hukkelberg, 2019). In contrast, low levels of social skills in the early stages are associated with maladjustment problems, low self-esteem, and poorer mental and physical health (Ali, 2018; Ke et al, 2017). Many experts believe that the preschool years are an important time for children to improve their social skills, as most children begin to learn how to self-regulate to communicate effectively with peers and teachers. Therefore, it is important to clarify the development of social skills during the kindergarten period, identify children who exhibit social skills deficiencies, provide interventions aimed at improving their social skills, and diligently take appropriate preventive measures. (Zhu et al, 2021)

Social awareness is useful for individuals to interact with other people effectively. These skills are also important for the continuity of relationships between individuals through cooperation and behavioral adjustments in the particular context or situation in which the relationship occurs (Halle & Darling-Churchill, 2016). Social awareness also directs individual success in adult life because the quality of cooperation and interaction with other people will be accepted in a social context, and this acceptance will lead to social acceptance of all efforts (Adela et al., 2011).

Social Awareness is the ability to express oneself in social interactions, the ability to read and understand different social situations, knowledge of social roles, norms, and scripts, interpersonal problem-solving skills, and social role playing skills. (Riggio & Reichard, 2008).

According to Kadir (2015), social intelligence, empathy and sympathy are very important for all humans because they enable them to respect each other. Children are trained to be sensitive to their environment so that these traits emerge in the child. It is very important to instill these values in children

from an early age so that they can grow into individuals who can respect other people. The introduction (socialization) of children to other people outside themselves and their environment, as well as the mutual influence of various parts of life that come into contact with each other, are all part of social meaning.

According to Hartup's research (Astuti, 2013), social awareness is the idea that the behavior of adults in the classroom at a particular time determines the quality of their social relationships with children rather than the relationship between childhood peers as individuals and adults at school.

Social awareness refers to a person's capacity to respond effectively and promptly to various social cues or situations that may arise. To reduce children's egocentrism and foster empathy for the people around them, it is very important to instill various social awareness from an early age. Social awareness includes generosity and the desire to help those in need (Tondok, 2012).

According to Chaplin (Na'im, 2015), social awareness is behavior, activities carried out by people to interact with other people and be able to adapt to the group so as to calm the people around them. Everyone has a certain level of social awareness, whether they are adults or children. The earlier social awareness is taught, the better the future will be.

Based on some of the views of the experts mentioned above regarding the social awareness of children at this age, it can be concluded that social awareness is the first quality that must be balanced by children in order to be able to interact with the people around them, care about the environment, help each other, and be considerate in apologizing to others. do it mistake.

Characteristics of Social Awareness

Piaget Inhelder in Putri, Silvia Dyah Nur Oktavia., Alfi Purnamasari. (2014), classifies children's social characteristics into three age groups:

- a. Age 4 years. Children aged 4 years have high energy levels, prefer to work in groups of two or three, still like to wear their parents' or other people's clothes, and

are able to tidy up.

- b. Age 5 years. Characteristics children already have include wanting to be near their mother at home, wanting to be asked for help, being an obedient child, enjoying going to school, sometimes being hesitant to approach other people, liking groups of two to five people, and wanting to compete with others in activities.
- c. Age 6 years. Children aged 6 years can reduce their dependence on their mother, are starting to be selfish, feel right, and always want to win. They can also be disruptive in class, enjoy playing outside of class, and enjoy schoolwork.

Research on the social behavior of young children when they are playing freely conducted by Susanto (Akilasari, 2015) provides the following characteristics:

- a. Unoccupied behavior, this behavior shows that a child has no intention of playing, in other words, he doesn't mean it. He seemed to be standing and only paying attention to his other friends.
- b. Solitary play, these characteristics show children who focus on themselves without caring about other people around them. They didn't try to talk to each other or interact with each other, even though they were close together.
- c. On-locker behavior, children are still playing alone, but still paying attention to the people around them, and there has been interaction with them. Children may start to criticize what their friends do.

According to Gresham & Reschly in Su'ud, F. M (2017) identifies social awareness with several characteristics, including:

- a. Interpersonal Behavior. Interpersonal behavior is behavior related to relationship skills used in social contact.
- b. Self-related behavior. This type of behavior indicates social situation management abilities, such as the capacity to handle tension, understand the emotions of others, and maintain emotional control.

- c. Behaviors associated with academic success. Related to activities that help students learn in class, such as paying attention to the teacher, doing school work well, and following the rules that apply at school.
- d. Acceptance by peers. This is based on the assumption that people with poor social skills often experience rejection from their friends because they find it difficult to get along with their friends. Giving and receiving information, accurately understanding other people's emotions, and other types of behavior are some of those that are in dispute.
- e. Communication skills. The ability to listen attentively and provide feedback to others is necessary to develop positive social relationships.

Aspects of Social Awareness

Djohan (Budyartati, 2015) categorizes aspects of children's social awareness into seven categories, as follows:

- a. Children are able to perceive what their friends are feeling, such as joy and sorrow.
- b. Children can differentiate between the problems they experience and those faced by others. They also understand the difference between small and big problems.
- c. Children are able to pay attention to situations that are happening to themselves or around them.
- d. Children are able to overcome the challenges they face in the right way and do not rush to act,
- e. Children's creative abilities begin to appear in social activities at school.
- f. Capacity to communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas to others: Children can communicate their emotions, whether they are happy or unhappy, to the people around them.
- g. Interpersonal communication and cooperation skills: Children can build

relationships with others by talking and working with their friends.

Meanwhile, Rohima (2018) emphasized that social awareness can be demonstrated by the following actions:

- a. The culture of helping others is very important for everyone. When we help others, we ultimately need help from those who will help us, because helping others fosters brotherhood and compassion among friends, neighbors, and others around them.
- b. Collaboration: Because social engagement requires the cooperation of others, humans are social organisms that cannot survive alone. With this teamwork, the goal will be achieved.
- c. Self-awareness: How do people understand their own behavior, including what is appropriate and inappropriate? High self-awareness allows a person to reflect on themselves and improve themselves for the future.
- d. Respect for others: A person may pay attention to the needs of others without being visible.

Social Awareness Indicators

The development of children's social awareness can be seen from indicators of social skills which can be seen in almost all games (Kurniati, E, 2016), including:

- a. Team collaboration skills. To encourage active involvement from all players, the actors in the game have developed skills in cooperation, creating the possibility for other children to play the game that has been played.
- b. Adaptability. The development of an attitude to impose one's own opinion, the process of adapting to the somersaulting roles that occur during the game.
- c. interaction ability. The ability to interact with friends with an attitude of inviting them to play with you and the emergence of an attitude of helping friends in solving game-related problems.

- d. Self-control ability. The ability to control oneself is the attitude of resisting the urge to play a game when it is not one's turn and the ability to resolve disputes that arise when playing this game.
- e. Empathic abilities. When a friend succeeds, a sense of joy develops within him, and this joy spreads to others who have a positive experience.
- f. Ability to follow rules. Having very flexible rules and regulations will allow children to create their own game rules and follow them easily. This will also allow children to wait their turn to play and make it easier for children to clean up their toys.
- g. Capacity to respect others. The ability to respect others, have mutual respect for the diverse talents of peers, and create the possibility for children to spend time watching other people play are important life skills.

Factors Influencing Social Awareness

According to research conducted by Gresham & Reschly in Su'ud, F. M (2017), it shows that social awareness can be influenced by several things, namely:

- a. Family. Family is the main environment in which children receive education. The mother and closest family have been the child's first and only world since birth. The level of psychological fulfillment of children in the family will have a significant impact on how they respond to their environment. It is difficult for children to develop social awareness when they are raised in discordant families where they do not receive enough psychological satisfaction. The most important thing for parents to focus on is fostering a democratic environment at home so that children can build strong relationships with their parents and siblings. All disputes will be easily handled if parents and children communicate with each other. On the other hand, communication that is stiff, cold, limited, oppressive and full of authority

can give rise to various conflicts that are not good for a child's development.

- b. Environment. The second factor that has the greatest influence on a person's abilities is the environment. Children must be exposed to a healthy environment from an early age. The social and physical environment all fall within these boundaries. The family environment (including primary and secondary families), the educational environment, and the wider community environment are also included in this environment. As a result of getting to know the environment, children realize from a young age that their core family, parents and siblings, is not their entire social environment. This implies that his environment impacts how his social awareness develops as well.

According to Nurjannah (2017) there are three factors that can influence children's social development, namely:

- a. Heredity Factor
These factors are things passed down from parents to their children and grandchildren which are given biologically from birth.
- b. Environmental Factor
The environment can be interpreted as a complex force for children's physical and social aspects. Environmental factors include all influences obtained from family, school and society.
- c. General Factors
This factor is one of the two factors above. These factors influence a child's development, namely health and gender.

Stages of Development of Social Awareness

Because social awareness is a component of child development, it is impossible to separate a child's social abilities from his social development. Hurlock in Musyarofah (2018) stated that social development is the ability to act in accordance with society's expectations. Children have no social awareness or qualities when they are born, making them less able to get along with other people. Children must learn how to interact with others in order to become adults.

Children develop these skills through various interactions with individuals around them, including parents, siblings, friends, and other adults. In Putri (2015), Erick Erikson focuses on social development and highlights the value of interaction in personality development. Each stage creates the need to express oneself and develop personality. The following are the stages of psychosocial development of preschool children according to Erick Erikson: (1) Basic Trust vs Mistrust (0-1 years), (2) Autonomy vs Shame & Doubt (2-3 years), (3) Initiative vs Guilt (4-5 years), (4) Industry vs inferiority (6-puberty).

Preschool children are at the Initiative vs Guilt stage, where they are required to develop behavior that is appropriate to their social environment, show initiative, and be responsible for their actions. Otherwise, they will feel guilty. At this stage, children begin to enter a wider social environment. Children must be able to adapt to their environment during the preschool years, including their family, school, and friends. The child gradually acquires the skills necessary to adapt to a group of people. The socialization process is one of today's social awareness because it will help children's social abilities

According to Hurlock in (Rachmawati, 2014), in order to socialize properly, a person must go through the following three processes:
a. Learning to behave in a socially acceptable manner, where teenagers must acquire appropriate social behavior in order to socialize well.
b. Take on appropriate social roles. Children need to learn how to take on social roles in society through their interactions with their environment.
c. How social opinion changes. Children must adopt social attitudes and behavior towards others and engage in social activities to socialize and associate successfully.

Through a successful adjustment process, social skills can be learned. Children who successfully navigate social situations will be able to form social attitudes that are appropriate to their environment. Teachers must provide opportunities for students to

interact socially with other students and inspire them to be socially active if they want students to adapt well. Children who successfully navigate social situations will be better prepared to succeed as adults. The ideal time to instill social ideals is during the preschool years so children can learn how to fit in well.

Techniques for Developing Social Awareness in Early Childhood

According to Agusniatih, A., & Manopa, J. M. (2019) children's social awareness can be developed in various ways, including through group activities, behavior, games involving a group of children, and teaching them to share with peers. The following strategies can be used to help children aged 4-6 years develop their social awareness:

- a. Sharing children. Children are socialized through grouping, which is considered very successful for kindergartens. Children will interact with each other and learn to know each other better through grouping.
- b. Modeling and Imitating. Imitating is the deliberate imitation of another person's attitudes, actions, and perspectives.
- c. Collaborative play. Children play games called collaborative games where each child has a part and a task that must be completed to achieve a common goal.
- d. Learn to share. Children really need to learn social sharing skills. Children will learn to read environmental situations, develop empathy for the needs of other children, learn to be kind, practice socializing, and gradually let go of egocentric attitudes through sharing.

Conclusion

Social awareness is the first quality that children must develop so that they are able to interact with the people around them, care about the environment, help each other, and have the courage to apologize when they make mistakes. Social awareness is the most important aspect to be developed as early as possible to prepare individuals to face various problems in the world related to their status as social creatures who will continue to interact. Children with better social awareness will live

their lives more effectively because they can choose and adopt attitudes that suit environmental demands. Children will be able to adapt to the standards expected by society, choose appropriate ways of communicating, establish relationships with other people, and respect them.

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Profil Penulis

Profil singkat berupa narasi data kelahiran; pendidikan dari jenjang sarjana sampai pendidikan terakhir yang berisi prodi, dan tahun kelulusan serta pekerjaan/aktivitas yang dilakukan sampai saat ini.