The urgency of social emotional development of elementary school children in improving character education

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ABSTRACT

Children's learning process does not depend only on the aspect of intelligence or cognitiveabilities, but also influenced by other aspects such as emotional and social aspects ofdevelopment. The emotional and social aspects have big influence on the child behaviortoward himself, others and the environment. In early childhood social emotional aspects canbe developed through social emotional learning. Social emotional learning is the process ofdeveloping skills, attitudes, and values necessary to acquire social and emotional competenceas a capital of children in interacting with himself, others and the environment. Emotionalsocial learning can serve as the beginning and foundation in plantings character education toearly childhood. There are four key competencies in social emotional development of children;self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, andrelationship management. These four competencies are important to be developed sinceearly age to build and instill social skills of children. By developing the four social and emotionalaspects of children, the good nature or excellent characters will be internalized within thechildren. Methods to be used in developing the four characters can be as follow: playing,modelling, story telling, drama, etc.

Introduction

Education is basically a conscious effort to develop the potential of students by encouraging and facilitating their learning activities. In detail, in Republic of Indonesia Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System Chapter I Article I, education is defined as a conscious and planned effort to create an atmosphere and learning process that allows students to actively develop their potential. The aim is for them to have religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and the skills needed for themselves, society, nation and

state (Rosyad & Zuchdi, 2018).

Education includes knowledge, skills and values that function as a guide to life. As a conscious effort, education aims to mature students, including intellectual, social and moral maturity, not just physical maturity. However, physical development also plays an important role in shaping students' maturity. Based on this opinion, education is a way to support mental, physical, spiritual development and meet the demands of human life.

However, up to now, education in Indonesia is still deemed incapable of forming superior character for the nation's generation. We can witness various developing social phenomena at any time and become significant problems that hinder development and the noble ideals of our nation's freedom fighters. These phenomena include high levels of crime, increasing moral decadence, problems with ethics, good manners, student dishonesty, reduced respect for parents and teachers, still high cases of acts of violence, increasingly eroding attitudes of tolerance between fellow humans, as well as high cases of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (Syamsul Hadi, 2013). Apart from that, law enforcement still seems far from the expected value of justice, as well as various other cases that lead to the nation's moral decadence (Kurniawan & Rochmadhona, 2021). Even in certain big cities, this phenomenon has reached a very disturbing level. This incident gives the impression that our nation is experiencing a prolonged moral, ethical and self-confidence crisis.

In addition, as a developing country, Indonesia cannot be separated from the influx of foreign culture, especially in the era of globalization and free markets. This makes the Indonesian nation vulnerable to the negative impacts of foreign culture which conflict with the morals and cultural values of the Indonesian nation. As a result, the nation's culture and noble values are at risk of being eroded, and the moral values of the nation's children are degraded (Islamiah, 2015).

Based on this reality, character education really needs to start from an early age to protect the nation's next generation from negative influences that conflict with morals and religious values. The Indonesian nation must have a noble character that is in accordance with religious norms, laws, manners, culture and customs. Social emotional learning for children is very important in instilling noble character, because childhood is a golden age. During the golden age, children quickly and easily receive stimuli from the surrounding environment and carry out various activities to understand and respond to their environment (Islamiah, 2015).

It is important for children to be able to see and go beyond themselves and appreciate the concerns of others. They must believe that care, nurturing, and concern for them is an ever-present part of the culture. The challenges of developing children's knowledge, responsibility and care have been recognized by almost everyone. Few realize that every element of this challenge can be improved with thoughtful, sustained, and systematic attention through social emotional learning (Suseno, 2024).

Social emotional learning is one approach in developing children's emotional domain. Children's social emotional competencies are organized into positive developmental tasks. This competency development will be achieved through children's exploration and interaction with parents, educators, friends, or the environment (Liansari, 2023).

Research conducted by Marzuki et al in 2024, stated that good children's social emotional growth is characterized by when children participate in learning activities at school, they show a high level of self-awareness, which is indicated by a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others. , the desire to share, independence in determining and completing assignments given by the teacher, helping friends who are experiencing difficulties in lessons, and a sense of appreciation for other people's work (Alam et al., 2024). This research only discusses positive social emotional signs in children. Meanwhile, in this research, the author focuses on social emotional learning methods in building children's character and strategies for developing children's social emotional competencies in the classroom. Therefore, this article tries to examine the importance of social-emotional learning for elementary schools in building children's character.

Method

This research is library research. What is meant by literature review is a study carried out to solve a problem which basically relies on a critical and in-depth study of relevant library materials (Mubin, 2022). Data collection techniques used in this research include searching for information related to the research topic through notes, books, journals and other relevant sources. This kind of library review is usually carried out by collecting data or information from various library sources which is then presented in a new way and/or for new purposes. In this case, library materials are treated as a source of ideas for exploring new thoughts or ideas, as basic material for making deductions from existing knowledge, so that a new theoretical framework can be developed or as a basis for solving problems.

Result and Discussion

A. Character Building

Literally, character means "mental or moral quality, moral strength, name and reputation" (Utami, 2016). In the Complete Indonesian Dictionary, character is defined as mental traits, character, character, morals or manners that differentiate a person from other people. According to Ramli, the essence of character education, moral education and moral education are the same. The goal is to form good and responsible individuals in society and the country. Character education includes social values that are influenced by community culture (Susanti, 2013). Therefore,

character education in Indonesia focuses on values education rooted in Indonesian culture, to shape the personality of the younger generation.

In line with Ramli, he states that character education has the same goals as moral and moral education. Character education places more emphasis on practicing positive values in everyday life, not just teaching the concepts of right and wrong (Zuhri et al., 2022). Furthermore, character education forms good habits so that students understand, feel and want to do good. Ethics and morals, although similar in meaning, differ in their application. Ethics places more emphasis on philosophical theoretical understanding as a guide to values, while morals focus more on practical assessment of individual actions (Budiutomo, 2014).

Character education is a planned effort to help students understand, care about, and act in accordance with ethical and moral values. This education teaches patterns of thought and behavior that support harmonious living and cooperation in various aspects of life, such as within the family, friendship, social life and nationality (Ningsih, 2015). It was further explained that character education involves all actions carried out by teachers that have the potential to influence the character of students. Teachers play a role in shaping students' personalities through examples given in daily life, communication, tolerance, attitudes and other aspects (Mulyadi, 2023).

This opinion is in line with Suwandi's view as cited by Wahid (in Nurchaili, 2010: 239), who states that character education tends to prioritize the modeling and exemplary approach shown by teachers. Parents provide examples of positive behavior to their children, while teachers provide good examples to their students. Both parties must be good examples for children because children tend to imitate behavior they see honestly and sincerely.

From the description above, it can be concluded that character education is a system of instilling character values in children, which includes understanding, awareness and action to apply these values in social and spiritual life, so that they can become individuals who are morally complete and ethics.

B. Social Emotional Learning

Children can experience effective learning when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and comfortable. According to the developmental approach which prioritizes maturity as the basis for growth, the process of children's growth, development and learning is seen as the result of internal maturity. This indicates that children's ability to learn occurs when they have adequate time to develop (Karolina, 2018). However, the behaviorist view is different; they see growth and learning as something that is influenced by the external environment. According to this view, the direct influence of the environment, through various stimuli and responses, forms the basis of children's learning. By designing the right environment according to children's development level, we can provide a comfortable and effective learning atmosphere for them (Nur

et al., 2023). This is different from the view of constructivist psychologists, who view that both biological and environmental factors contribute simultaneously to children's development by influencing each other (Rahmaini, 2007).

Social and emotional competence refers to an individual's ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of their lives. By having this competency, children can achieve success in various aspects of life, such as learning, interacting with other people, solving problems, and adapting to changes and complex demands of growth and development. This includes self-understanding, self-control, cooperation, and empathy towards oneself and others (Helaluddin, 2019).

Social and emotional learning is the process by which children and adults develop the skills, attitudes, and values necessary to achieve social and emotional competence (Age & Hamzanwadi, 2020). This process involves developing skills in recognizing and managing emotions, building healthy relationships, setting positive goals, meeting personal and social needs, making responsible decisions, and solving problems. Social and emotional learning creates an environment that supports the development and application of these skills in a variety of situations and settings. Thus, social and emotional learning can reduce negative behavior and encourage positive behavior, thereby forming superior character in children.

Thus, social emotional learning and character education support each other to strengthen individuals' abilities to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of their lives and organize actions positively to achieve relevant goals. Both support children's ability to manage daily life tasks such as learning, interacting with other people, solving problems, and adapting to changes and complex demands of growth and development (Syamsul Hadi, 2013).

C. Principles of Character Cultivation in Social Emotional Learning

Efforts to instill character in children, the involvement of parents and other communities as stakeholders are very important to support the principles of character instillation. The aim is for the school environment to be safe, orderly and a calm and friendly place to study and work. They also emphasize that there are four main principles that must be implemented in the learning process and in the school environment, which can be summarized with the abbreviation "rice" (respect, impulse control, compassion, equity) (Ningsih, 2015). These principles have high relevance in the application of children's social emotional learning in order to instill character education in early childhood.

First, "Respect" focuses on the importance of showing respect for oneself and others. This involves trying to avoid behavior that disturbs oneself or others, as well as to adhere to certain boundaries and norms. The way we communicate and act reflects respect for ourselves and also

how we treat other people, animals and the environment around us.

Second, "Impulse control" emphasizes the importance of carrying out the right actions for the right reasons. This involves the ability to control oneself and carry out activities using imagination, as well as being aware of the options available.

Third, "Compassion" encourages us to seek and appreciate similarities with others, even when we are faced with differences. This helps us to develop empathy and realize that everyone has the right to be respected and cared for.

Fourth, "Equity" teaches us to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to achieve success according to their abilities and desires. This involves fair and just treatment of all people, as well as recognizing that each individual has uniqueness and similarities that complement each other in achieving the goal of success.

D. Social Emotional Learning Methods in Building Children's Character

1. Story Telling

A narrative has the ability to convey various moral or ethical messages. Through stories, educators or parents can instill moral values in children (Yusnila Sinaga et al., 2022). Usually, stories contain examples of good and bad behavior. Examples of bad behavior are meant to be avoided, while examples of good behavior are meant to be imitated. According to Semiawan, stories are a tool to create emotional connections and understanding between the storyteller and the child, so that the child can understand and absorb the story more deeply. Stories do not have to be told orally, but can also be done through reading story books. The storyteller must create an atmosphere that is interesting and full of expression so that children can be involved in the story. Using language that is easy to understand and modeling the behavior of the characters in the story will help children understand the story better.

The stories told can be stories about exemplary figures, whether from religious history, national heroes or local stories. When reading stories, you can use picture books so that children can be more interested and understand the content of the story better. In addition, involving children in the process of retelling stories they have heard can also help them develop their imagination and self-confidence.

2. Drama

Playing drama is a way for children to explore social roles, strengthen gender identity, release pressure, reduce boredom, and express their joy and imagination. In play, they can become mothers with dolls, play house or school, or assume the role of parents (Hamid & Carini, 2010). It is important to provide a drama play room with complete

equipment so that children can express themselves more when playing roles such as pilots, doctors, teachers, knights, firefighters, soldiers, police, and so on.

3. Play

Play has an important role in children's development. According to Mildre Parten, play activities are a means of socialization that influence children's social interactions, both when playing alone and playing with friends. Playing together with friends can help children understand the concepts of sharing, waiting their turn, patience, and other social aspects, which stimulate their emotional and social development (Dr.Musfiroh Tadkiroatun, 2018). Play experiences provide opportunities for children to play a variety of roles and behaviors and receive feedback about their behavior. In play, children can become antagonists or protagonists and find appropriate responses to unexpected situations.

In a play environment, children will experience various processes such as understanding property rights, maintaining social relationships, appreciating diversity, and taking turns using toys. They also learn to carry out activities together, find solutions to problems that arise, and comply with applicable rules. Apart from that, playing is also an opportunity for children to communicate well and be accepted by their friends, so that positive relationships are formed and knowledge can be exchanged. Playing also allows children to understand local cultural values, which are often reflected in traditional games. This helps them understand the values, morals and customs that apply in the surrounding environment.

Through playing together, children will develop positive characteristics such as self-management, self-awareness and social awareness (Mukhlis & Mbelo, 2019). They learn to evaluate themselves, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and form a positive self-concept and develop self-confidence and self-esteem. It is important for teachers or parents to provide opportunities for children to explore their play environment without applying pressure, because the purpose of play is a learning process, not the final result. Not only that, children also learn responsibility by tidying up their toys after playing. This helps them understand the importance of acting with confidence, working together with friends, being honest, patient, and showing other positive qualities such as chivalry, generosity, sincerity, responsibility, hard work, self-control, and respect for others. (Education et al., 2023).

4. Modeling

Modeling is a process in which individuals imitate the observed behavior of others, either consciously or unconsciously. Bandura stated that most human behavior is formed

through observation and learning from models (Masulah, 2019). There are four conditions that must be met for someone to imitate a model well: attention, retention, motor reproduction, and motivation and reinforcement. Children learn to follow models by storing information in memory and performing the same actions if they have the appropriate motor skills. However, motivation and reinforcement also play an important role in influencing children's behavior (Rohmah, Zaenab, 2021).

Modeling can be done by showing films or television programs that contain positive messages or show good characters that children can imitate. For example, stories of children's struggles in overcoming their physical limitations or patience in facing difficulties with bad friends. Bandura's research shows that modeling has a significant impact in changing children's attitudes and behavior.

In everyday life, we often see children identifying themselves with characters or actors in films or television shows. Television is one of the main media that influences children's development, both in the family, school and social environment. Anwas emphasized that the reality presented by television media influences the formation of children's character, especially when they look for figures or role models to shape their identity or character. Therefore, television media has a big influence in shaping children's character.

E. Strategies for Developing Children's Social Emotional Competencies in the Classroom.

Teachers have four strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to support children's social and emotional development (Firmansyah, 2023).

First, teachers can create a responsive and empowering classroom environment, where children are actively involved in creating a learning atmosphere that builds awareness, responsibility and commitment to learning. Strong emotional connections in the classroom can also strengthen children's attachment to school and increase their interest in learning, as well as helping them control behavior that may disturb the comfort of themselves and others.

Second, teachers must create a safe and secure classroom community, where children feel supported by teachers, peers and the school. Attentive communication and careful supervision of each child will create a comfortable atmosphere for them to express themselves and accept expressions from others.

Third, the importance of using a comprehensive learning framework and plan that is appropriate to the child's development and needs. With this approach, learning can be well integrated and able to develop all aspects of children's social and emotional competence.

Fourth, teachers need to apply instructional methods that are able to improve social and

emotional learning. Research shows that social and emotional learning is closely related to children's intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. Therefore, teachers must use methods that are relevant to the development of children's social and emotional aspects, such as activities that stimulate various aspects of their development.

Conclusion

Character education is an important process in instilling moral values in children, which involves understanding, awareness, desire, and action to apply these values to various aspects of life, such as relationships with God, oneself, others, the environment, and country, with the aim of producing quality individuals. Social and emotional learning in children is an important foundation in this effort, because it forms the basis for their character development along with the various stimuli and experiences they experience. Through social and emotional learning, children will develop adaptive abilities both cognitively and socially. Social aspects such as self-understanding, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision making, and relationship management are the main focus in this learning process, and this also influences the development of children's character in the social context and surrounding environment. Methods such as games, modeling, storytelling, drama, and others are used to develop children's social and emotional aspects, which will ultimately increase their self-confidence, respect for themselves and others, empathy, and effective communication skills. All of this will have an impact on the formation of strong character, such as self-introspection, honesty, discipline, responsibility, caring, attractive personality, readiness to adapt to change, ability to take risks, self-control, enthusiasm, cooperation, justice, etc. .

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