

The Role Of Teachers In Encouraging Social Interaction Of Early Childhood In Islahul Ummah Kindergarten In The 2025 Academic Year

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Abstrak

This study aims to examine the strategies implemented by teachers in promoting social interaction among early childhood students, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. The research was conducted at TK Islahul Ummah, Dusun Cupek, using a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings indicate that teachers play a significant role as facilitators in creating a supportive and friendly learning environment. The strategies applied include the habituation of positive behaviors such as greeting others, cooperating, sharing, as well as conducting communal meals and joint clean-up activities. Teachers also serve as role models by demonstrating appropriate social behavior. Moreover, regular group activities have proven effective in developing children's social skills. Inhibiting factors include shy personalities, low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, and unsupportive environments. On the other hand, supporting factors include a safe school environment, friendly teacher attitudes, peer involvement, and parental support through parenting activities and school-home collaboration. Consistent habituation practices can shape children's social character from an early age.

Keywords: Teacher's Role, Social Interaction

INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a very important role in encouraging social interactions in early childhood because they can shape character and personality in children, one of which is through social skills teachers can teach or instill a sense of empathy, how to cooperate, in addition teachers can help children to develop positive social values and teach them how to interact with others respectfully and responsibly. To build positive social interactions teachers can build a conducive classroom environment or create a pleasant classroom atmosphere where children feel comfortable and appreciated. Thus, the instillation of social skills from an early age by teachers is not only important for the development of individual children, but also creates a sense of caring, responsibility, and being able to contribute to society.

Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning teachers and lecturers, Chapter 1, Article 1, explains that teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing and evaluating students in early childhood education, formal education, basic education and secondary education (Ministry of National Education, 2005).

Teachers play a very important role in encouraging children's social and teachers as

guides and facilitators in this social emotional development by helping children learn (1) about themselves (2) how to interact with others (3) how to manage emotions. In addition, teachers can also provide opportunities for children to interact with their friends. Teachers must be able to encourage children to communicate, cooperate, and share roles in joint activities. Teachers must also support the development of children's social skills, where social interaction is an important aspect in kindergarten age learning. Teachers also need to provide encouragement and attention to children, especially when they start to disclose opinions and express themselves, we need to appreciate their self-confidence (Rahman & Salwa, 2024:6).

Learning is a process of interaction between students and educators and learning partners. Through the teaching and learning process, social, moral, and religious development, as well as student creativity, occur through various interactions and learning experiences. (Waruwu & Fitri, 2022:4).

Several factors can influence children's social interactions, including the role of parents as the first role models for their children. Children can learn how to interact with others by observing how their parents interact. The wider family environment provides opportunities for children to learn various social roles, family

values, and traditions. Peer relationships, as interaction with peers, are crucial for developing social skills such as sharing, collaborating, and resolving conflicts (Meiranny, 2022:34).

Initial observation results on Wednesday, February 19, 2025, field data at the research location of Islahul Ummah Kindergarten. Researchers observed that teachers play a crucial role in developing social skills in students. Furthermore, teachers consistently instill good moral values in social interactions with friends, teachers, and others.

The results of the interview were obtained with teachers at Islahul Ummah Kindergarten on Wednesday, February 19, 2025. The children are already able to share with their friends, are already able to

METHOD

The design used in this study was descriptive qualitative research. This qualitative approach was chosen in accordance with the general objective of the study, namely to encourage children's social interactions.

According to Sugiyono, qualitative research is a research method used to conduct research in natural conditions (as opposed to experiments) where the researcher acts as the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization. Research is understanding that qualitative research is descriptive and tends to use analysis, the deeper the analysis, the better the quality of the research results. (Safarudin & Rizal, 2023:4).

According to Sugiyono (2021:17), qualitative research methods are often called naturalistic research methods because the research is conducted in natural conditions (*Natural setting*); also called the ethnographic method, because initially this method was used more for research in the field of cultural anthropology; called a qualitative method, because the data collected and analyzed are more qualitative in nature. (Sugiyono 2021).

From the description above, the method used or type of research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, which is a

type of research that is descriptive or narrative in nature to explain a problem found by the researcher.

The data collection technique is the most strategic step in research because the main objective of research is to obtain data.

1. Observation

According to Sugiyono, observation as a data collection technique has specific characteristics compared to other techniques, namely that it is not limited to other people (Sutikno P.H. Sobry, 2020). In this study, the researcher conducted passive participant observation, where the researcher participated in the activities carried out by the people being studied. This type of observation was used to facilitate the researcher's observations. This observation involved the class teacher and students because it was necessary to obtain data regarding the social interactions of early childhood.

2. Interview

Interview is a data collection technique that is done through face-to-face and direct question and answer between the data collector and the interviewer / data source. (Trivaika & Senubekti, 2022:34).

When researchers conducted interviews at Islahul Ummah Kindergarten, they asked the principal, teachers, and students questions about children's social interactions both in and outside of class. The interviews were conducted to gain more in-depth information about children's social interactions. The researchers included the principal, teachers, and students in the interviews.

3. Documentation

According to (H.R. Zulki Zulkifli Noor, 2015), a document is a record of past events. Documents can be in the form of writing, drawings, or monumental works by someone.

In this research, a documentation study was conducted to obtain the data or information expected in this research and also as a review of the documents needed to obtain the data. Documentation means one way to collect data by taking data from

document sources such as student report cards, evaluation documents, children's work, lesson plans, liaison books and student data records. Data collection techniques through document studies to complement the data and information obtained for this research.

Documentation can be taken in the form of activity archive documents or school documents in the form of Rpph, syllabus, etc. In addition, the documentation taken is in the form of images of students using recording devices and cameras.

The data analysis technique used is according to BogdanIn (Sugiyono, 2020) it is said that data analysis is the process of systematically searching for and compiling data obtained from interviews, field notes, and other materials, so that it can be easily understood, and the findings can be communicated to others.

Interactive is a model developed by Miles and Huberman (1992) and refined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Miles & Saldana, 2014). Interactive refers to continuously connecting data analysis components until data saturation is reached or no further data is available. Therefore, producing good data requires several stages of analysis. There are three activities in qualitative data analysis, namely the data condensation stage, data presentation, and data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Teacher Strategies in Encouraging Social Interaction in Early Childhood

Observations show that during communal mealtimes, teachers encourage sharing food and cleaning up after each meal. These activities teach children to understand simple social rules and the importance of shared responsibility. Through repeated practice, children begin to naturally develop good social behavior patterns.

Teachers not only provide guidance but also serve as models of kindness and patience, which children can emulate in their daily lives. Thus, the habits teachers implement are not only routine but also have

strong educational value, shaping children's character and social skills from an early age.

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Teachers in Encouraging Social Interaction in Early Childhood

Based on the researchers' observations, Islahul Ummah Kindergarten actively involves parents in various activities aimed at supporting children's development, both at home and at school. This parental involvement is demonstrated through parenting activities, regular meetings, and direct participation in school-organized activities. The school recognizes the crucial role of parents in shaping children's character and social attitudes, making collaboration between the school and parents a top priority.

DISCUSSION

1. Teacher Strategies in Encouraging Social Interaction in Early Childhood

Research results show that teachers play a crucial role in fostering social interaction in early childhood. Teachers serve not only as educators but also as facilitators and role models in developing children's social skills. Strategies implemented at Islahul Ummah Kindergarten include positive habits, modeling, and structured and consistent group activities.

Based on interviews with the principal and class teachers, social habits such as greeting, shaking hands, sharing, and cooperating have been implemented since the children arrived at school. These activities are carried out daily and have become part of the educational routine. This strategy has proven effective in developing children's friendliness, empathy, and ability to interact with their peers.

The strategies used by the teachers at TK Islahul Ummah are as follows:

1. Group Activities

Group activities are an integral part of this strategy. Based on observations and interviews, group activities such as playing together, building blocks, drawing together, or putting together puzzles are done almost daily. This gets children used to working together, helping each other, and

communicating with one another, even in simple language. This strategy can encourage previously quiet children to join in and socialize.

2. Award

Teachers also provide positive reinforcement in the form of praise, hugs, or reward stickers as a token of appreciation when children demonstrate good social behavior. This form of reinforcement is very helpful in strengthening children's habits and motivation to maintain a positive attitude towards their environment.

3. Weekly Activities

Furthermore, communal eating and community service activities serve as additional strategies that support the development of social interactions. Through these activities, children learn about shared responsibility, social norms, and the importance of sharing. Teachers are also actively involved in guiding, mentoring, and modeling behavior, allowing children to naturally imitate.

Thus, consistent and patient teacher strategies have been proven to foster social skills in early childhood in a gradual and enjoyable manner. Habitual reinforcement, role modeling, and group activities are essential foundations for creating a supportive learning environment that supports children's social development.

The above discussion is supported by Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's cognitive and social development. According to Vygotsky, children learn through interactions with adults or more capable peers within what is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), the area where children can complete tasks with assistance (Fudyartanta, 2012).

2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Teachers in Encouraging Social Interaction in Early Childhood

Supporting factors that are very helpful in encouraging children's social interactions, namely:

- a. A safe, comfortable, and Islamic school environment, so that children feel accepted and appreciated.
- b. Teachers who are friendly, patient, and open, provide space for children to express themselves.
- c. Support from peers, which motivates children to join in social activities.
- d. The active role of parents, especially through parenting activities, regular meetings, and direct involvement in school activities, creates continuity between home and school education.

These supporting factors play a significant role in creating a conducive and harmonious learning environment. Collaboration between schools and families strengthens the process of developing children's social character from an early age.

However, in practice, teachers also face several obstacles that can hinder children's social interactions. These obstacles include:

- a. The child's character is shy or quiet, so he is less active in interacting.
- b. Lack of self-confidence causes children to tend to be alone.
- c. The outside school environment is less supportive of children's social development.
- d. Limited vocabulary or language skills, which makes it difficult for children to express their wishes verbally.

These factors require wise management and an appropriate approach. Teachers are expected to guide children slowly, without forcing them, so they can develop according to their uniqueness and potential.

The above discussion is supported by Vygotsky's and Bandura's theories, both of which emphasize that the social environment plays a significant role in child development. A supportive environment, patient teachers, and parental involvement in school activities (such as parenting and mutual cooperation) are factors that accelerate the development of children's social behavior (Mawarni Purnamasari & Na'imah, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research conducted at Islahul Ummah Cupek Kindergarten, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Teachers' strategies for encouraging social interaction in early childhood are implemented through various consistent and targeted approaches. Teachers act as facilitators and role models in shaping children's social behavior. Strategies implemented include fostering positive habits from the moment children arrive at school (such as greeting each other, saying hello, and sharing), providing positive reinforcement (such as praise and stickers), and group activities that encourage cooperation, empathy, and communication between children. Teachers also create a warm and safe learning environment so that children feel comfortable interacting. This strategy reflects the application of Vygotsky and Bandura's theories, which emphasize the importance of social interaction and imitation in early childhood learning.
2. Inhibiting and supporting factors in encouraging social interaction in early childhood are found to be balanced in classroom learning practices. Inhibiting factors include shy or quiet children, lack of self-confidence, limited vocabulary, and an unsupportive external environment. Meanwhile, supporting factors that strengthen the success of teachers' strategies include: a conducive and Islamic school environment, friendly and open teacher attitudes, support from peers, and active parental involvement through parenting activities and home-school collaboration. By optimizing supporting factors and overcoming obstacles through appropriate approaches, teachers can effectively foster early childhood social skills gradually and naturally.

SUGGESTION

The suggestions that the author provides after conducting research at Islahul Ummah Kindergarten regarding the role of teachers in

encouraging social interaction in early childhood are as follows:

1. For Kindergarten teachers:

It is hoped that they will continue to maintain and develop enjoyable social habituation methods and strengthen the role of teachers as role models in daily interactions. Teachers are also advised to maximize their individual approach to children experiencing social challenges and to continue improving their empathetic communication skills.

2. For Parents:

There needs to be continuity between social education at school and at home. Parents are expected to be more active in communicating with teachers and involving their children in social activities at home to strengthen their interaction skills.

3. For the Board (Tk Islahul Ummah):

Institutions are advised to provide regular training or workshops to teachers on social-emotional strategies for early childhood, including how to address children with special social needs. Furthermore, supporting collaborative programs between teachers and parents is also crucial for more effective character development in children.

4. For Further Researchers:

This research can be used as an initial reference to study more deeply the formation of social skills in children of preschool age. Further researchers are advised to explore other factors that influence children's social interactions, such as the role of peers, digital media, or the environment outside of school.

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