

Building Early Childhood Social Skills Through Learning Empathy, Cooperation and Responsibility

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Abstract: Instilling social skills in early childhood is an important part of character building and healthy social interactions in the future. This article discusses the importance of developing social skills in early childhood through learning about empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Through the right approach, children can learn to understand the feelings of others, work together in groups, and feel responsible for their own actions. This study began by formulating the objectives and focus of the study, namely to explore how learning empathy, cooperation, and responsibility can build social skills in early childhood. After that, a literature review was conducted to deepen understanding of the theory of child social development and learning methods that can be applied. The subjects of this study were children aged 4-6 years, teachers at ABA 02 Bumiaji Kindergarten, and parents of children. Instilling the values of empathy, cooperation, and responsibility from an early age is expected to form a strong foundation for better social development in children, improve communication skills, and create a more harmonious social environment. Therefore, education that integrates these social skills is very important to equip children with the ability to adapt and contribute positively to society in the future.

Keywords: Social Skills, Early Childhood, Empathy, Cooperation, Responsibility

PRELIMINARY

Social skills are one of the important aspects in children's development, which not only affects their interactions with peers but also plays a major role in shaping their attitudes and behavior in the future (Agusniatih & Manopa, 2019). At an early age, children are at a stage of development that is very sensitive to the formation of social values, such as empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Therefore, education that prioritizes the development of social skills in early childhood is very important.

Empathy, cooperation, and responsibility are three social skills that are interrelated and can reinforce each other. Empathy teaches children to understand and feel the feelings of others, which is the basis of healthy social interactions (Rusmiati, 2023). Cooperation

teaches children the importance of working in groups, sharing, and achieving common goals (Prabandari & Fidesrinur, 2021). Meanwhile, responsibility fosters a sense of awareness in children that they have an obligation to carry out the tasks or roles given as well as possible (Ulfah et al., 2023). These three skills, if instilled early on, will equip children with the ability to adapt to various social situations and face life challenges in the future.

During learning activities, it was seen that children began to show improvements in their empathy skills, such as paying attention to their friends' feelings when they were sad or having difficulties. In group activities, children were also able to work together well, although some children still needed guidance in sharing tasks. In addition, children involved in cleaning tasks showed a sense of responsibility, although not all children did so consistently. Interviews with teachers and parents showed that empathy-based learning, cooperation, and responsibility had a positive impact. Teachers said that children found it easier to share and communicate after participating in the activities. Parents also reported positive changes, such as children being more attentive to family members and showing a more cooperative attitude at home.

Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to pay special attention to building children's social skills from an early age. Learning that involves a fun and experience-based approach, such as through games, discussions, and group activities, is an effective method in developing these social skills (Nastiti & Wathon, 2019). Thus, through the right approach, children can understand the importance of empathy, cooperation, and responsibility in everyday life, and prepare them to become individuals who can contribute positively to society.

The importance of building social skills in early childhood is not only limited to the context of formal education, but also to the formation of strong characters that can support children's success in various aspects of life. Therefore, this study aims to explore how learning about empathy, cooperation, and responsibility can be applied to build social skills in early childhood, as well as how educators and parents play a role in supporting the process. The benefits of this study for teachers are to provide an effective method in guiding children to develop social skills that are important for their lives. And for parents, it provides an understanding of how to support the development of children's social skills at home, in line with the learning carried out at school.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a research approach that aims to understand social phenomena, behavior, experiences, or processes in a deeper and more comprehensive context (Waruwu, 2024). The research stages begin with identifying problems and reviewing literature related to the theory of children's social development. The next stage is formulating research objectives and selecting subjects, namely early childhood, teachers, and parents. The instruments used include observation guides, interview guidelines, and analysis of learning outcome documents. The collected data were analyzed thematically to understand how learning that emphasizes empathy, cooperation, and responsibility can affect children's social skills.

The research data is in the form of learning phenomena in early childhood who apply social skills, both in and outside the classroom. The data sources for this study were teachers and students aged 5-6 years, consisting of 26 children registered at ABA 02 Bumiaji Kindergarten. The data sources for teachers and students were obtained when carrying out learning in the classroom by implementing empathy, cooperation and responsibility learning.

Data collection techniques by observation or observation of the learning process of teachers and students in the classroom in building children's social skills at school. The data obtained from the observation will be analyzed using a descriptive method, namely the results of the study will be presented in the form of a narrative description of changes in children's social skills after participating in learning that focuses on empathy, cooperation, and responsibility (Pahleviannur et al., 2022). Activities that can be applied such as assembling puzzles, arranging blocks.

RESULTS

This study was conducted to explore and explore effective ways to build social skills in early childhood through learning that focuses on three main aspects: empathy, cooperation, and responsibility. Observation and data analysis were carried out through the descriptive method, which took place for two days at ABA 02 Bumiaji Kindergarten involving 26 children aged 5-6 years. The following are the results obtained based on data collected through observation or teacher observation:

1. Increased Empathy Skills

Before learning begins, children show low levels of empathy. Many of them have difficulty recognizing and responding to the feelings of others, both inside and outside the context of social play. Children tend to focus more on their own needs without paying attention to the feelings of their friends. After learning interventions that focus on empathy, which involve role-playing activities, listening to stories about feelings, and group discussions, children begin to show positive developments in empathy. They begin to show more concern for friends who are sad or having trouble, and willingly offer help. In role-playing, such as "being a friend who cares about others," children are introduced to various feelings, such as sadness, happiness, or anger. Through this experience, they learn to respond to their friends' emotions more sensitively and appropriately.

2. Increased Cooperation

Before learning begins, most children tend to work individually in various tasks or games. They often have difficulty sharing roles, working together, or communicating effectively with their friends. In some cases, some children even prefer to play alone rather than join a group. However, after activities designed to promote cooperation, such as group games, building projects together, and sharing tasks, children began to show improvements in their cooperation skills. Children learned to work together to complete common tasks, share ideas, discuss solutions together, and make decisions together. Activities such as building a tower of wooden blocks together or completing a group puzzle provide firsthand experience of the importance of collaborating and supporting each other to achieve a common goal.



Figure 1: Increasing Early Childhood Cooperation

Source : (Learning Documentation Photos, 2024)

3. Increased Sense of Responsibility

Before learning begins, children tend not to understand or feel reluctant to take responsibility, both in terms of individual tasks and group tasks. In initial observations, some children often do not pay attention to their tasks or do not complete the work given. Through learning that includes activities that foster responsibility, such as tidying up toys together, keeping the classroom clean, and completing tasks independently, children show significant progress in terms of responsibility. They begin to care more about their surroundings and are responsible for the tasks given. Children who were previously reluctant to tidy up their toys after playing, now show changes by tidying up their play area independently or with their friends. They also more often show a desire to help their friends who need help in completing certain tasks.

DISCUSSION

Building social skills in early childhood is a very important effort in forming the foundation of their character and social interactions in the future. Good social skills will help children understand the feelings of others, cooperate with peers, and take responsibility for their actions, all of which are very necessary in everyday life and social relationships. Learning that focuses on developing empathy, cooperation, and responsibility from an early age is an effective approach in helping children prepare themselves to face various social challenges in the future (Sugiarto & Farid, 2023). At an early age, children are in a very sensitive stage of development and are very open to the influences around them (Sutrisno, 2023). Therefore, this period is the right time to instill social skills that they will carry throughout their lives. This article will discuss in detail how empathy, cooperation, and responsibility can be the focus of learning to build social skills in early childhood, as well as the role of parents and educators in this process.

1. The Importance of Empathy in Early Childhood Learning

Empathy is the ability to understand and feel the feelings of others. It is a basic social skill that allows children to interact with understanding and respect. At an early age, children begin to become familiar with their social world, and they need to learn to recognize their own feelings and the feelings of others, which will later influence how they interact with those around them. Developing empathy in early childhood is very

important because empathy is the basis for many other social skills, such as communication skills, resolving conflicts, and building healthy relationships (Ningsih, 2024). If children learn to feel what others feel, they will be better able to control their actions and be more careful in interacting with their peers. Empathy also helps children avoid aggressive behavior and increases their social awareness.

Learning empathy in early childhood can be done in various fun and experience-based ways. One of them is by using stories or books that describe the feelings of characters in certain situations. Through stories, children can be faced with situations where they need to understand what the characters are feeling and how they should respond (Jazilurrahman et al., 2022). For example, a story about a child who feels sad because he lost a toy and his friends try to comfort him. In this activity, children learn to recognize feelings of sadness, empathy for the feelings of others, and how to provide support. In addition, role-playing can also be an effective method for teaching empathy (Widyana & Nugrahanta, 2021). In this game, children can play the role of someone else, such as a mother comforting a sick child or a friend helping her friend with homework. By empathizing with the feelings of others, children learn to see the world from the perspective of others, which will help them develop better social relationships.

The role of parents and educators in teaching empathy is very important. Parents can start by providing examples of empathetic attitudes in everyday life (Tasya et al., 2023). For example, by showing attention and concern for children's feelings, and inviting children to talk about their feelings. At school, educators can provide space for children to express their feelings openly, and discuss the feelings of their friends in group activities (Agusniatih & Manopa, 2019). In this way, children will be more open to sharing their feelings and learn to respect other people's feelings..

2. Developing Collaboration Through Group Learning

Cooperation is a social skill that is no less important in early childhood development. At this age, children begin to learn to interact with their peers and work together in various activities, both playing and learning. The ability to cooperate with others is a skill that will help children in many aspects of their lives, both at school, in social activities, and in the future work environment. Learning about cooperation can be done by introducing children to group activities that require interaction and collaboration. One effective method for teaching cooperation is through group games (Ana, 2020). For

example, games like building towers from blocks or completing large puzzles together. In this activity, children learn to work together, share ideas, listen to other people's opinions, and help each other achieve the same goal.

Through group activities, children also learn about task division and negotiation (Prastiwi & Wathon, 2019). They will learn that in achieving common goals, they need to work together and utilize each other's strengths. Children who are smarter at something can help other friends, and vice versa, friends who are more skilled at something else can help them. In this way, children learn to appreciate differences and develop tolerance towards others. In addition, in group activities, children also learn to resolve conflicts that may arise in the process of cooperation (Agusniatih & Manopa, 2019). For example, when there are differences of opinion about how to complete a task or when a child does not get a fair share. In this situation, children learn to negotiate, discuss, and find solutions that benefit all parties. This process teaches children to have effective communication skills and the ability to solve problems constructively.

The importance of cooperation must also be demonstrated by parents and educators. Parents can provide examples in everyday life, for example by involving children in household tasks that require cooperation, such as cooking together or tidying up the house (Suryana, 2021). At school, educators can design activities that involve collaboration, such as group projects or games that require teamwork. Thus, children will understand that cooperation is an important part of everyday life and will prepare them to adapt to a wider social life.

3. Cultivating a Sense of Responsibility in Early Childhood

Responsibility is a social skill that teaches children to understand that they have certain obligations and roles that need to be carried out as well as possible. At an early age, children begin to learn about their duties, both in the family and at school. Learning responsibility is very important to help children develop self-confidence and self-discipline (Puspitasari et al., 2023). To foster a sense of responsibility in early childhood, parents and educators can start by giving simple, age-appropriate tasks. For example, children can be given the responsibility to tidy up toys after playing, clean the dining table after eating, or water the plants. These tasks teach children that they have a role to play and that they must be responsible for what they do.

Learning responsibility also includes understanding the consequences of their actions. Children should be taught that every action has consequences, both positive and negative (Aghnaita & Irmawati, 2022). For example, if children do not tidy up their toys after playing, they will have difficulty finding the toys they want later. On the other hand, if they tidy up their toys, they can play more comfortably later on. In this way, children learn about cause and effect and how their actions affect their surroundings. In addition, it is also important to provide positive reinforcement when children succeed in carrying out their tasks well. Praise or appreciation for their efforts will increase children's self-confidence and motivate them to continue carrying out their tasks better (Blegur, 2020). On the other hand, if children do not carry out their tasks well, educators or parents can provide constructive explanations and provide opportunities to correct mistakes.

4. Integration of Empathy, Cooperation, and Responsibility in Social Learning

The three social skills, empathy, cooperation, and responsibility are actually interrelated and mutually reinforcing. For example, in a group game, children not only learn to work together, but also learn to understand the feelings of their friends (empathy) and take responsibility for their own tasks in the group. Thus, learning that integrates these three skills will be more effective and provide better results for children's social development. An approach that integrates these three skills can be done through various activities that encourage children to interact socially, such as group games, joint projects, or art activities (Mesra & Tuerah, 2024). For example, in drawing together, children not only learn to work together in completing tasks, but also learn to appreciate each other's work and understand how they can help each other in achieving common goals.

In addition, activities that involve joint decision-making, such as choosing a game or determining the next step in a group task, can be an effective means of teaching children about cooperation, empathy, and responsibility simultaneously. In this activity, children learn to listen to each other, understand their friends' feelings, and take responsibility for the decisions they make.

5. The Role of Parents and Educators in Developing Children's Social Skills

Parents and educators play a very important role in building social skills in early childhood (Agusniatih & Manopa, 2019). Parents are the first people to set an example and guide their children in developing social skills. Therefore, it is important for parents to demonstrate empathetic, cooperative, and responsible behavior in their daily lives. If

parents are able to set a good example, children will tend to imitate and develop the same behavior. On the other hand, educators in schools also have a very large role in creating an environment that supports learning social skills (Nastiti & Wathon, 2019). Educators can design curricula and activities that encourage children to learn empathy, cooperation, and responsibility through games, group discussions, and joint projects. In this process, educators must pay sufficient attention to children's social and emotional development, as well as provide constructive and positive feedback.

CONCLUSION

The development of social skills in early childhood is very important to form good character in the future. Learning empathy, cooperation, and responsibility can be an effective means of building these skills.

1. Empathy teaches children to understand and feel the feelings of others, which can strengthen their social relationships with peers and those around them.
2. Cooperation teaches the importance of working together to achieve common goals, introducing children to the concept of sharing, respecting differences, and communicating well.
3. Responsibility teaches children to become reliable individuals, develop self-discipline, and understand the consequences of their actions.

Through structured learning and activities that involve social interaction, children can develop social skills that will be useful in their lives, both in the context of family, school, and society. Thus, the role of educators and parents is very important in providing experiences that support this learning.

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