INTAN PUSPITASARI

Profile of Early Child Empathy Behavior at the RA Iqra Sabila in Jambi, Indonesia

ABSTRACT: *Empathy is a matter that must be possessed by every person, because it is closely related to moral that is important in human's position as social creatures. The early childhood empathy ability is determined by the environment, where he or she lives in and interacts. In a good environment, early childhood will have high empathy. On the contrary, if a child lives and interacts in a bad environment, the empathy level becomes low. Therefore, parents and educators must become role models and create good environment that support growth of early childhood's empathy. This study aims to determine the development of early childhood empathy. This study uses descriptive qualitative method of data collection through triangulation techniques consists of observation, interview, and documentation. The results of this study that there are differences in empathy in the four subjects. Girls have higher empathy than boys. Habituation conducted at RA (Raudhatul Athfal or Islamic Kindergarten) Iqra Sabila in Jambi, Indonesia is appropriate to develop children's empathy. These activities are carried out every Friday and also visiting the orphanage. Children learn also many things from parents, especially about behavior. Parents, who have high empathy, will find it easier to teach empathy to their children. Parents can provide examples starting from how to appreciate the feelings and emotions experienced by their children and how to react to them. Therefore, suggestions for further research on empathy are expected to be able to find out more into the factors that supporting and inhibiting the growth of empathy in early childhood, such as family background, the effect of gender on the level of empathy, and others.*

KEY WORDS: *Empathy Behaviour; Early Childhood Education; Role Models; Good Environment.*

INTRODUCTION

As social creatures, everyone needs one another. One of the factors for humans on their success in social interaction is empathy. People who have good empathy can be seen based on their behavior or actions (Taufik, 2012:39; Decety & Cowell, 2014; and Decety, 2016).

Empathy comes from the word "empathia", which means to share. In other words, empathy is sharing the feelings that other people experience from that person's point of view. Empathy is an understanding of the emotional condition of others, which is felt as a condition that is felt by oneself (Baggs, 2011; Utami, 2014:16; and Boswell, 2015).

Empathy is a matter that must be possessed by every person, because it is closely related to moral that is important in human's position as social creatures. There is research from G. Gini *et al.* (2007), and other scholars, which explain that there is relation between

empathy and bullying. People who have high empathy ability will not do bullying. In addition, empathy brings benefits in social life by making a person can control him/her-self from selfish attitude and avoid feeling superior from other person (Gini *et al*., 2007; Chatters, 2012; and Walker, 2017).

Many researchers focus on researching cognitive empathy. Cognitive empathy is defined as the ability to recognize and understand the emotional state of others. However, the focus of the researcher is emotional empathy, precisely on early childhood. Emotional empathy is the ability to share in the emotions of others (Davis, 1980; Christov-Moore, 2014; Decety *et al*., 2016; and Beadle & de la Vega, 2019).

The early childhood empathy ability is determined by the environment, where he or she lives in and interacts. In a good environment, early childhood will have high empathy. On the contrary, if a child lives and interacts in a bad environment, the empathy level becomes low. Therefore, parents and educators must become role models and create good environment that support growth of early childhood's empathy (Blandon, Calkins & Keane, 2010; Decety *et al*., 2016; and Houston, 2020).

According to M.H. Davis (1980), as cited in Taufik (2012) and other scholars, there are three types of processes in empathy, namely: non-cognitive process; simple cognitive process; and cognitive process. Non-cognitive process is empathy process that occur without cognitive or without prior understanding. The next process is simple cognitive process. This process has played a cognitive role. An example of this process is when the observer sees the irregularity or discomfort received by others, the observer will accept the same thing (Davis, 1980; Taufik, 2012; and de Guzman *et al*., 2016).

Another example when we see an old beggar was begging on the side of the road, then we will feel sad like he or she feels. The latter process is advanced cognitive process. This process involves empathy on the next level. An example is a child who says that his/her parents have divorced, but the child shows no expression of sadness, but the observer shows

empathy when hearing it (Preston & de Waal, 2002; Meneses, 2011; and Bavel *et al*., 2020).

The process of empathy is an intrapersonal ability that produces two kinds of outcome, namely affective outcome and non-affective outcome. Affective outcome is divided into two forms, namely: parallel and reactive. The parallel result is harmony between what other people feel and what we can feel too. Whereas reactive outcome is reaction to other people's experience (Karim, 2011; Pihlajaniemi & Raitio, 2018; and Gunawan *et al.,* 2019).

Intrapersonal ability affects the observer, while interpersonal affects the observer's relationship with the subject. One form of interpersonal outcome is emergence of desire to help or also called helping behavior (Martin & Dowson, 2009; Pietromonaco & Collins, 2017; and Krauss & Fussell, 2018).

Besides the process of empathy, the important thing in empathy is the aspect of empathy itself. According to N.D. Feshbach (1975), and other scholars, one of aspects of empathy is recognition or discrimination of feelings. This aspect in practice is the ability to name and identify emotions that can be done by children in the age range between 4-6 years. They can already name the emotions they feel (Feshbach, 1975; Quas *et al*., 2017; and Juckel *et al.,* 2018).

The next aspect of empathy is role taking perspective, which means understanding that other individuals see and interpret situations in different ways, and the ability to take and understand other people's perspectives. In other words, role perspective is the ability to think about something that other people think. The last aspect, according to N.D. Feshbach (1975), and other scholars, is emotional responsiveness, namely the ability to experience and realize the emotions experienced by oneself (Feshbach, 1975; Lazo & Vik, 2014; and Quas *et al*., 2017).

Empathy arises because of supporting factors. There are four factors that support empathy. The first factor is cognitive factors. Cognitive insight and cognitive skills gradually increase in early childhood, so that they learn to recognize the signs of other people's sadness and be able to adjust their concern with appropriate behavior (Preston

& de Waal, 2002; McDonald & Messinger, 2018; and Read, 2019).

The second factor is inborn factor. For example, boys tend to have the nature of wanting to protect others physically. While girls help and show empathy by supporting the psychological side, such as cheer up by listening to stories of friends who are sad (Weeks, 2000; Zakrzewski, 2014; and Eion, 2018).

The third factor is education factor. One of the most important education is moral or religious education. The better morals of a child, the easier, it will be to appear empathy for others (Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007; UNESCO, 2014; and Kingston & Medlin, 2018).

The fourth factor is the family factor. Family members who have high empathy will set an example for children, so they will have high empathy, which he/she will apply to his/her daily life (Quann & Wien, 2006; Hirsch, 2007; and Read, 2019).

Previously empathy was thought to be something that had existed since birth, so theorists believed that empathy could not be influenced or even taught. Empathy is considered part of heredity. If parents have high empathy, it will come down to their children too (Preston & de Waal, 2002; McDonald & Messinger, 2018; and Read, 2019).

As time passes by many researchers, who try to research about empathy and provide treatments to increase empathy. In one study, it was found that children who have high empathy abilities, learn it from the behavior of parents who set an example for their children. In another study, it was found that students learned empathy through behavior exemplified by their teacher (Kremer & Dietzen, 1991; Taufik, 2012; and Riess, 2017).

From the results of the research above, we can conclude that empathy is not something that cannot be improved and studied. In this context, J.F. Kremer & L.L. Dietzen (1991), and other scholars' research, showed that children can receive empathy lesson and learn from the examples of parents and teachers shown to children in the form of behavior (Kremer & Dietzen, 1991; Riess, 2017; and Cotton, 2018).

In the early stages of empathy development, children can use empathy even though they don't know the reason. Children's empathy develops and changes in four stages. The first stage is the early stages of infancy; the second stage is 1-2 years old; the third stage is early childhood; and the last stage is 10 years to old (Nichols, Svetlova & Brownell, 2009; Santrock, 2014:267; and McDonald & Messinger, 2018).

The thing we need to remember is that the stage of empathy of each individual with other individuals can be different. In infancy, children still show empathy responses in general or known as global empathy. At the age of 1-2 years, children begin to realize their feelings. For example, when a child feels depressed when his/her toy is taken by his/her friend. He/she realize that feeling already, but nothing they can do to overcome these feelings of distress (McDonald & Messinger, 2018; Jordan, 2019; and Read, 2019).

When reaching childhood, children begin to respond better to the feelings of others. While at the age of 10-12 years, the child's response to the feelings of others is better. Children begin to be able to feel a variety of their environment and children's self-felt concerns are also growing. Similarly, when a child interacts with a group of other children. He/she will learn how to look after themselves and their behavior (Rubin, Coplan & Bowker, 2009; Dowling, 2010:42-44; and Santrock, 2014:367-368).

Meanwhile, according to D. Goleman, R. Boyatzis & A. McKee (2005), and other scholars, empathy is strongly influenced by sex. Women empathize better than men. Many studies tell us that women can feel the feelings of others, who are nearby (*cf* Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Badea & Pană, 2010; and Stuijfzand *et al.,* 2016).

The conclusion from the description above, it can be seen that there are four stages of empathy. The first is the global empathy experienced by newborns, which is characterized by babies who cry when they hear other babies cry. The second stage at the age of 1-2 years, at this age the child has begun to realize his feelings. For example, he/she was depressed when his/her toy was taken by his friend. The third stage in early childhood; and the last is at the age of 10-12 years, at this age the empathy of children has
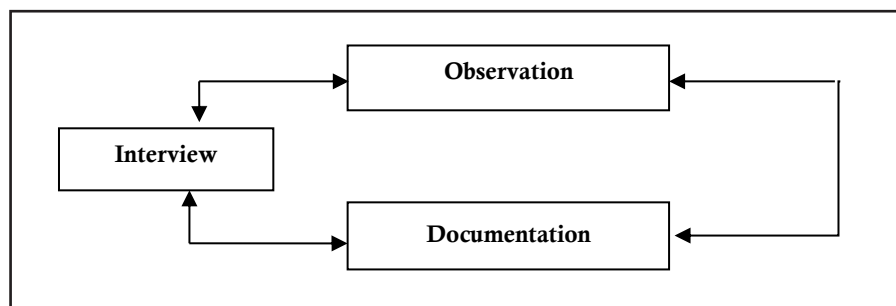
Chart 1:
Techniques of Data Collection

increasingly developed. He/she has begun to be able to feel the feelings of people who are not as fortunate as him/her-self (Huang, Su & Jin, 2016; Ruffman *et al.,* 2019; and Meidan & Uzefovsky, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used is descriptive research with a qualitative approach. Through this method, the researcher aims to describe the object of the problem in research in accordance with the facts that occur. The subjects in this study were RA (*Raudhatul Athfal* or Islamic Kindergarten) *Iqro Sabila* in Jambi, Sumatera, Indonesia's students consisting of 2 boys and 2 girls and 1 teacher as an informant (Creswell, 2003; Williams, 2007; and Aspers & Corte, 2019).

In this study, researcher used three techniques of data collecion, namely observation, interview, and documentation. Observations were made through the subject's parents, i.e. the researcher gave pictures and short videos, then the subjects were asked to name the emotional names of the pictures. As for the short video, the subject is given an impression and while watching the subject is observed. The observer records and names the emotions the subject shows while watching (Creswell, 2003; Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; and Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The second technique is interview conducted through WA (WhatsApp) application media, started on Friday, 1st May 2020. The observer conducted an interview via video call to the subject to find out how far the subject knew the names and reasons for the emotions the observer asked (Fontes

& O'Mahony, 2008; Kim, Sefcik & Bradway, 2017; and Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The interview was also conducted to a teacher as an informant. The interview was held on Friday, 15th May 2020. The third technique is the documentation of the results of each interview and observation properly in the form of photographs and sound recordings (Fontes & O'Mahony, 2008; Hendriani, 2018; and Aspers & Corte, 2019). See chart 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study can be concluded as follows. There are differences in various aspects of empathy. The first subject has a fairly developed empathy seen from the aspect of emotional responsiveness. This is indicated by the first subject being able to name and know almost all emotions asked by researchers. As for taking perspective and the role and recognition is still not developed very well (*cf* Gruhn *et al.,* 2008; Taylor *et al.*, 2013; Batchelder, Brosnan & Ashwin, 2017; and Interview with Respondent A, 1/5/2020).

The second subject has better empathy than the first subject. The second subject excels in aspects of emotional responsiveness and role perspective taking while recognition still needs further guidance (*cf* Nichols, Svetlova & Brownell, 2009; WHO, 2012; Beadle & de la Vega, 2019; and Interview with Respondent B, 1/5/2020).

The level of empathy of the third subject is almost the same as the first subject. The third subject is quite developed in the aspect of emotional responsiveness, while in the aspect of recognition and discrimination feelings still

needs further guidance (*cf* Nichols, Svetlova & Brownell, 2009; Hendrawan *et al.,* 2015; McDonald & Messinger, 2018; and Interview with Respondent C, 1/5/2020).

The fourth subject has quite developed empathy in aspects of emotional responsiveness and perspective and role taking. While in the recognition aspect, the subject still needs direction and guidance (*cf* McHale, Updegraff & Whiteman, 2012; Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015; Read, 2019; and Interview with Respondent D, 1/5/2020;).

The RA (*Raudhatul Athfal* or Islamic Kindergarten) *Iqro Sabila* in Jambi, Sumatera, Indonesia provides empathy learning by familiarizing children with routine charity that is loaded into an *infaq,* or donation, box every Friday (*cf* Astuti, 2017; Rizkyanti & Murty, 2018; and Rahmawati, 2019).

Based on information from the teacher who became the informant, the children also have an agenda every *Ramadhan* (fasting month) to visit orphans in the orphanage. Previously, children and parents were asked to collect items suitable for use and money to give when visiting (*cf* Hendrawan *et al.,* 2015; Meilanie, 2016; Suyahman, 2016; and Interview with Respondent E, 15/5/2020).

This activity is carried out with the aim that children have good empathy and continue to develop. In addition, children are expected to have high empathy when they are adults. Examples of behavior exemplified by teachers and parents will be easily imitated and applied by children in daily life (Decety & Meltzoff, 2011; Decety & Cowell, 2014; and Hendrawan *et al.,* 2015).

CONCLUSION [1]

Empathy must continue to be developed and maintained in schools, so that children will always have growing empathy. Habits, such as giving to infants and visiting orphanages, can improve children's empathy abilities. One of the lessons that can increase children's empathy is through storytelling using hand puppets.

Storytelling is an effective learning method, because it can form positive characters in early childhood. In fairy tales, there are good values; while hand puppet media is used as a tool to attract the attention of children, so that when teachers tell stories, they will follow the learning in a fun way.

Children learn many things from parents, especially about behavior. Parents, who have high empathy, will find it easier to teach empathy to their children. Parents can provide examples starting from how to appreciate the feelings and emotions experienced by their children and how to react to them. If children are neglected from childhood emotions, the child is difficult to have empathy for others and their environment. Empathy is an aspect that is needed in social life in society.

Therefore, suggestions for further research on empathy are expected to be able to find out more into the factors that supporting and inhibiting the growth of empathy in early childhood, such as family background, the effect of gender on the level of empathy, and others.[2]

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[2]***Statement:*** I, undersigned, certify that this article, with all its interpretations, is my personal academic work. It is not the result of plagiarism, because the sources I refer to in the analysis and discussion are clearly and completely stated in the Bibliography or References. This article has never been sent, reviewed, and published by other scientific journals. I am willing to be given an academic sanction, if what I say, turns out to be at a later date, violates the rules and regulations that apply.

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Interview with Respondent C, a boy of pupil at the RA
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(Source: http://insanmadanijambi.org, 2/3/2020)

Empathy must continue to be developed and maintained in schools, so that children will always have growing empathy. Habits, such as giving to infants and visiting orphanages, can improve children's empathy abilities. One of the lessons that can increase children's empathy is through storytelling using hand puppets.