

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT TO INCREASE CHILDREN'S READING INTEREST FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Parental involvement plays a significant role in early childhood education. Parents are the most important persons that influence the children at their homes until the children enter preschool. Character development is an essential for children and it starts at an early age. Children reading interest enhances their character development through the exposures of values in the stories. Moral story books provide role models for children's reading interest and thus, by reading the stories and selecting high quality reading materials, parents help the preschool children character development and change their attitudes toward people in their surroundings. The purpose of this study was to provide an overview of parent involvement in increasing children reading interest in preschool to support their character development. The study was conducted to observe the level of parental involvement in reading the stories to the children at home. This research utilized quantitative analysis of responses gathered from 109 parents. Data was collected using questionnaire with descriptive statistics analysis. The results showed that the respondents' (parents) level of involvement is high toward the reading interest of preschool children as depicted by the overall mean score ($M=48.97$; $SD=.36$). The research finding shows that there are differences between the parents' that are frequently involved in reading the story than the parents' that are not. Therefore, it can be concluded that as the frequency of parental involvement in reading stories for children is high, the level of reading interest follows to increase, and thus influence positively toward the children's character development.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Children Reading Interest, Preschool Children, Character Development

INTRODUCTION

One of the efforts that has been established by the government of Indonesia in order to strengthen the development of education is the Indonesian law No. 20 (2003), about The National Education System, article 1 verse 14. It states that early childhood education (Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini - PAUD) is a development effort aimed for newborn children up to 6 years old, conducted by stimulating education to help support their growth and development of both physical and mental in order to make the children ready to enter a more advanced future education.

Children aged 0-6 years old are called early childhood, and their most sensitive age to receive education is from 4 to 6 years old by experiencing from the surroundings and stimulation given by adults. The adults, especially their parents, will significantly influence the children's future life. Preschool education become very important for the

development and academic advancement of children aged 5-6 to master writing, reading, and counting (Mohamed, 2010).

Children who received ideal early childhood education start off from their homes until they get into preschool. They will likely become better future generations from all aspects of development only if they are being actively supported by their parents. Parental involvement must be respected, as a legitimate continuing activity in educating children due to parents are the first people to nurture their children (Rahmi, 2014).

According to Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (BPS), a survey study conducted in 2015 shows that 91.47% of school-age children preferred to watch television and 13.11% of school-aged children who preferred to read (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2018). The advancement of information and communication technology has become a barrier to children's interest in reading. The digital media today has successfully become distraction for Indonesian children at this time. It can be seen from their daily activities which are more often spent in front of television and gadgets because of the media is more attractive to them (Yaumi, 2014). This phenomenon emerged due to the growth of the character about likes to read by the government through Gerakan Nasional Orang Tua Membacakan Buku (GERNAS BAKU) in the midst of the problem of the low reading interest of the Indonesian people is considered as a challenge as well as an opportunity.

In 2017, the president of Republik Indonesia, Joko Widodo, has signed a Presidential Regulation (Peraturan Presiden) No. 87 (2017) on Strengthening Character Education (PPK-Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter). PPK is to habituate positive attitudes and behaviors in schools starting from the first day of school (. In line with PPK, the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan) develops GERNAS BAKU, which involves all stakeholders of education policy, both within the internal education environment (central, provincial, city/district to the level of education units) and the community environment, parents of participants' students, and alumni.

GERNAS BAKU is very important because the results of the student assessment survey on PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) 2015 show that Indonesia rank 64th out of 72 countries. Love to read is one of the character education that currently become a center of attention because in 2012 the results of the study released that the data on the rankings of Indonesian Middle School students were ranked 64th out of 65 participating countries (Ambarwati, 2017).

Therefore, the strategy of developing reading interest as one of the characteristics of Indonesian people must receive primary attention. Reading habits, which starts from the early learning can accelerate the formation of character as a character who likes to read (Ambarwati, 2017). Loves to read habits provides time to read various readings that give virtue to him (the children).

GERNAS BAKU is the movement to support initiatives and family roles in increasing children's interest in reading habituation at home, in early childhood education units, and in the community. The purpose of GERNAS BAKU is; familiarizing parents to read books with children; strengthen social-emotional relations between children and parents; foster interest in reading children from an early age (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2018).

Nowadays, character development is very important for every human life. The term character is typically used to refer to the particularly moral dimension of a person (Mohammad, et al, 2016). According to the copy written in attachment IV of the regulation of the minister of education and culture of the Republic of Indonesia number 146 of 2014 concerning the 2013 curriculum of early childhood education in early childhood learning guidelines, which is use several principles when carrying out the learning process, namely "oriented to the development of character values". It means the provision of educational stimuli directed at developing values that form a positive character in children. The development of character values is not by direct learning, but through learning to develop competency in knowledge and skills as well as through habituation and example (Peraturan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2014).

There are 18 characters required in education which is listed by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia) those are religious, honest, tolerant, disciplined, hard-working, creative, independent, democratic, curious, nationalistic spirit, love for the country, respect for achievement, friendly/communicative, peace-loving, fond of reading, caring for the environment, caring for the social, and responsible (Zubaedi, 2011). The character of fond reading or reading interest is one of the character values, which needs to be internalized by students assisted by the school. Internalization of character education, such as reading, is conducted through the habitual activity of reading books. The habit of reading a book can start by allowing students to choose high quality books and children's favorite books (Ambarwati, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of parent involvement in increasing children reading interest in preschool to support their character development. In line with that, this study was conducted to observe the level of parental involvement in reading the stories to the children at home. Based on the background discussion of the research, this study carried out to achieve the objective that aimed to identify the level of parental involvement toward children reading interest to increase character development of preschool children in Banda Aceh, and to determine whether parental involve, and moral story viewing are good predictors for children's interest to develop their character.

In this study, the researcher reviews parental involvement in the early childhood education and identifies solution toward issues related with this subject. The research was aimed to study the level of parental involvement toward children's reading interest in increasing the character's development of preschool children.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Parental involvement plays a significant role in early childhood education. Parents are the most important persons that influence the children at their homes until the children enter preschool. Parents are considered to be the most important primary role models in their young children's immediate surroundings (Tekin, 2011).

Epstein's Model for Parental Involvement

Epstein et al. (2002) described that parental involvement in early childhood education affects the development of children. Therefore, educating parents about the essence of their attention and their roles in the household is very crucial because children's early learning and guidance are from their family, and especially from parents, such as they support children as students. There are six types of parental involvement according to Epstein (2011, pp. 395-396) as follows:

1. Parenting. Assist families with parenting skills, family support, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions to support learning at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, and goals for children.
2. Communicating. Communicate with families about school programs and student progress. Create two-way communication channels between school and home.
3. Volunteering. Improve recruitment, training, activities, and schedules to involve families as volunteers and as audiences at the school or in other locations. Enable educators to work with volunteers who support students and the school.
4. Learning at Home. Involve families with their children in academic learning at home, including homework, goal setting, and other curriculum-related activities. Encourage teachers to design homework that enables students to share and discuss interesting tasks.
5. Decision-Making. Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy activities through school councils or improvement teams, committees, and parent organizations.
6. Collaborating with the Community. Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with community groups, including businesses, agencies, cultural and civic organizations, and colleges or universities. Enable all to contribute service to the community.

Reading interest is one of 18 characters listed by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia. Loving reading is an important issue nowadays because overall, reading interest in Indonesia is still low. Reading habits that are done early can accelerate the formation of character as human beings who love reading, and character education like reading can be done through the habit of reading books by parents.

The Indonesian National Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional- RPJMN) 2015-2019 says "strengthening character education (PPK-Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter) in school-age children at all levels of

education are to strengthen students' moral, moral and personality values by strengthening character education that is integrated into subjects."

According to the Minister of Education and Culture No. 146 (2014) concerning early childhood education 2013 curriculum in Appendix IV concerning about Learning Guidelines; there are 10 Principles in early childhood learning process, one of the learning guidelines which is oriented to the development of character values (Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2014).

Reading for early childhood is an activity of telling pictures and pronouncing the letters that adults do with children. It is necessary for children because reading can add new vocabularies, improve the ability to express ideas, increase curiosity and develop children's imagination. Moreover, increasing interest in reading to children is more important than children can read quickly (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2018). There are number of things that parents need to do to foster reading interest in children, including understanding the developmental stages of reading in children, understanding how children learn, introducing children to various medias/reading resources, providing reading material for children, and reading books to children.

When reading stories to the children, it may provide them with wonderful opportunities for moral growth. As they listen to stories, children imagine ways of behaving when faced with real problems in the real world, and they learn to see things from others' points of view. Stories help children overcome narcissism, expand their social world, and learn to identify with a broader range of other people (Gray, 2014).

Character means character or personality. Character is "the overall natural disposition and disposition that has been mastered in a stable manner which defines an individual in his overall psychological behavior that makes it typical in the way of thinking and acting" (Zubaedi, 2015, para. 9). Character is a distinctive trait, distinctive quality, moral strength, the pattern of found behavior in an individual or group. (Zubaedi, 2015).

Bonfiglio (2017, para 9) says "there are ten benefits that highlight the importance of reading with young children, one of them is reading books with children helps to develop empathy. It means when a child can put himself into the story it helps them to develop empathy. They identify with characters, and they feel what they are feeling. Thus, children begin to understand and relate to emotions.

Developing children's character is done as we try to develop their ability to think critically. Asking children to discuss about why one behavior may be done or may not be done, for example after we invite children to read a storybook. Early childhood education is not enough to teach children on academic abilities. On the contrary, character education is considered primary in early childhood education (Ritayanti, 2018).

A study from Harvard University concluded that character is one of the important aspects that determine a person's success. In the study, it was reported that 85% of the

causes of success, achievement of goals, promotion, etc., were due to someone's character. Only 15% is due to the expertise or technical competencies they have. Therefore, it is very important for parents to develop their children's character early on through good nurturing in accordance with the child's growth (Ritayanti, 2018).

METHOD

This section describes how the research was conducted, the participants, and the instrumentation used. It also described how the data were collected and how the data were analyzed, and how trustworthiness of the data was assured. This study used a quantitative method. Quantitative data is measured by using statistics to indicate the overall information, contradiction and causality of the study (Mertens, 2005).

In implementing this study, the population is the parents from the entire preschool in Banda Aceh and the total sample in this study is 109 parents and chosen by the researcher and participated as the sample from four preschools. The four preschools with four different sub-districts in Banda Aceh namely; Taman Kanak-kanak Karyawan Kota Baru, Taman Kanak-kanak Aisyiyah Ulee Kareng, Taman Kanak-kanak Islam Terpadu Al Azhar dan Taman Kanak-kanak Negeri 2.

The questionnaires were distributed to the parents in the aforementioned schools. The questionnaire was the main instrument in this study allowing the collection of information related to parental involvement at home. The information related to parental involvement of these parents are associated with the development of children's character in increasing reading interest. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first part questions parental support and the intensity of interaction with their children at home, this part was consisted of 4 items; and the latter questions children's reading interest and parental involvement, which was consisted of 5 items. The questionnaire consisted of closed ended questions.

In this study, all data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed with descriptive statistics analysis by using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) tool version 21.0. This research utilized quantitative analysis of responses gathered from 109 parents. Parents involved in the study were from four preschools, which is different sub-districts in Banda Aceh.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From 150 questionnaires distributed to the parents, only 109 returned. The data in table 1 is a frequency distribution and the percentage of parental support on developing children reading interest. It shows that the frequency and percentage analysis based on parental support and interaction intensity in increasing reading interest of the preschool children at home.

Table 1. The distribution and frequency of parents' support and interaction intensity to increase reading interest

No	Item	Scale	N	(%)
1.	At what age (of the child) did you begin reading to your child?	0-12 months/ 0-1 year	7	6.4
		13-24 months / 1-2 year	24	22.0
		25 months/ 2-3 year	29	26.6

		37-48 months / 3-4 year	35	32.1
		49-62 months / 4-5 year	14	12.8
2.	How many books do you own?	Nothing	1	0.9
		1-5 books	29	26.6
		6-10 books	20	18.3
		11-15 books	13	11.9
		Up to 15 books	46	42.2
3.	How many books does your child own?	Nothing	0	0
		1-3 books	15	13.8
		4-6 books	24	22.0
		7-9 books	14	12.8
		Up to 10 books	56	51.4
4.	Do you have any published reading materials at home, such as newspaper, magazines, and so forth?	Never	0	0
		Seldom	7	6.4
		Sometimes	44	40.4
		Often	49	45.0
		Always	9	8.3

Analysis of data in this research used frequency distribution, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of parental involvement in reading interest for preschool children at home. Findings analysis is about average of mean score of parental involvement on reading interest for children based on research questions.

Table 2 shows the mean score of parental involvement in reading interest of preschool children. The items and scoring are adapted from Boudreau (2005).

Table 2. The mean score distribution of parental involvement in increasing reading interest

No.	Reading Skills	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
		N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)		
1.	I read stories to my child when he/she asked.	9 (8.3)	28 (25.7)	26 (23.9)	38 (34.9)	8 (7.3)	3.07	1.1
2.	I read stories to my child although he/she does not ask.	2 (1.8)	5 (4.6)	19 (17.4)	60 (55.0)	23 (21.1)	3.89	0.8
3.	My child independently points to or talks about pictures when I read stories.	1 (0.9)	0 (0.0)	7 (6.4)	69 (63.3)	32 (29.4)	4.20	0.6
4.	My child asked questions about characters or events during story reading.	1 (0.9)	2 (1.8)	5 (4.6)	66 (60.6)	35 (32.1)	4.21	0.6
5.	My child shows interest in	0	0	7	53	49	4.39	0.6

reading a book	(0.0)	(0.0)	(6.4)	(48.6)	(45.0)	07
Total Mean Score						4.08 0.4 47

Note: N=109. Score Mean: 1.00 - 1.89 = Very low; 1.90 - 2.69 = Low; 2.70 - 3.49 = Moderate; 3.50 - 4.29 = High; 4.30 - 5.00 = Very high.

The research finding shows that there are differences between the parents that are frequently involved in reading the story than the parents' that are not. Therefore, this suggested that as the frequency of parental involvement in reading stories for children is high, the level of reading interest follows to increase, and thus it influences positively toward the children's character development. The results showed that the respondents' (parents) level of involvement is high toward the reading interest of preschool children as depicted by the overall mean score (M=48.97; SD=.36). The research finding shows that there are differences between the parents' that are frequently involved in reading the story than the parents' that are not.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to analyze an overview of parental involvement in increasing children's reading interest for preschool children's character development. The results obtained showed that there are differences between the parents that are frequently involved in reading the story to their children than the parents that are not. The level of parental involvement in reading stories to their children although they did not ask is higher than the level of parental involvement in reading stories when their children asked. This means that the more children-parent engaged in this activity, the more the parent will be aware on children reading contents. Thus, in the long run, parents will be able to see the benefits of promoting reading materials with moral education to their children as a part of educating and developing the children's character.

The most important goal preparing children's future is the society's future. Parents required to be very attentive to their children's development and they need to be able to apprehend how meaningful their positive involvements are for their children at home. Therefore, this study may give insight into how to increase reading interest for children by reading moral story books for developing children's character. There are benefits that can be gained by raising parent's awareness on their involvement in supporting their children reading at home. Furthermore, it is also important that educators and teachers at the children's schools should promote more parental involvement at home such as to improve parents understanding on children character development and how that by collaborative children-parent reading activities will gradually increase the children's reading interest. Parents need to prioritize reading in a child's early years to help them to succeed later in life.

This study recommends the effects of certain environmental factors such as whether the parents' encouragement, parents' support, and material reading can improve children's reading interest as well as develop their character or not. The level of parental involvement of preschool children in Banda Aceh in reading the stories for children is high. The level of reading interest follows to increase, and thus promote the children's character development.

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