

# The Role of Primary Caregivers in Building Self-Concept of Early Years' Children

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## ABSTRACT

The research aims to explore the role of primary caregivers in building self-concept in early years' children. This research was conducted in Latimojong Village, Enrekang. The participants consist of five early childhood education centers and 23 children. For the duration of two months, this research was conducted by involving primary caregivers. This research is a descriptive qualitative study. It is found that mothers are the main primary caregivers, because they tend to build the personal identity on their children through positive parenting. This research also discovered early childhood teachers simply focus on teaching mathematics and literacy, not building children's self-concept.

**Keywords:** *Self concept, primary caregivers, kids*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In some of its chapters, Al-Quran discusses the position of children in the family. It is mentioned that children are testament or *fitnatun* (Al-Anfaal 8:28); children are the world's jewelry or *zunatun hayat* (Qs Al-Kahfi 13: 46); children are *qurrota a'yyun* or comfort carriers (Qs Al-furqan 25: 74); and, children are also enemies or *aduwwan* (Qs At taghaabun 64: 14). It is also emphasized in the hadith of Bukhari Muslim that 'every child is born in the condition of *fitrah* (clean, good or positive).

The development of children has been more determined by parenting since early life. Communication is important substance of parenting, whereas parents as primary caregivers are an actor of parenting who importantly contribute on the development of child self-concept. The main factors lead to the development of children's self-concept consist of (1) body image, (2) parents and (3) feedback from people.

William D. Brooks defines self-concept as those physical, social, and psychological perception of ourselves that we have derived from experiences and our interaction with others. Self-concept as the key in the integration of personality and the motivation of behavior in achieving mental health. It is a way of viewing self and self-esteem as a whole in dealing with others (Santrock, 2012, p. 250).

## 2. LITERATURE

Self-concept also affects the system of one's view concerning the world whether positive or negative. Alfred Adler argues that a positive or negative view is termed with 'fiction finalism', which become the guiding self-ideal throughout life. Significant determinant on the building of such views is mother. The relationship between

mother and children becomes a model in the social environment. If a mother keeps an atmosphere that is positive and cooperative, her children will tend to develop self-concept. On the contrary, if she teaches her children not to do something with the purpose of self-interest, they will tend to learn to ignore people. Thus, she becomes the position of primary caregivers in building of self-concept on children.

Mothers as parents sometimes do the parenting based on the experience so that they can encounter the mistakes of parenting, for example: (1) physical inferiority, (2) spoiling/pampering, namely the creation of conditions of upbringing which causes children to believe that being the social responsibility to satisfy their needs and desires. (3) neglecting, meaning the conditions causing the children to feel worthless and angry with the world and become difficult to believe on others.

Dietz also suggests that one important part of the development of children's self-esteem is self-esteem or a sense of self usefulness. The ownership of a person against a sense of high self-esteem makes a person has a positive attitude towards themselves so that they can respect themselves and feel meaningful (Lea & Stewart, 2013, p. 251). Self-concept as key in the integration of personality and the motivation of behavior in achieving mental health. It is a way of viewing the self and self-esteem as a whole in dealing with other people, and so on. Self-esteem comes from our relationship with other people.

'Becoming' is a term created by Alport referring to the development of the building of self-concept, and communication as a creation in working during the process of the growth of children. Being the person with self-concept whether positive or negative in the perspective of George Herbert Mead with the theory of symbolic interactionism is that for being self, it should need the interaction with others. Thus, self-interaction provides the position of positive self-concept. Each child has a view of

the world positively as the foundation to live the interaction in the context of wider social life. Therefore, if the interaction tends negative, self-concept of children suffers social conflict.

The Pygmalion theory by Rosenthal is a theory is that named based on the story in the mythology of ancient Greece (Satiadarma, 2001). The concept of this theory explains that the perception of parents greatly influences children. All the actions of the parents in providing a stimulus to the children both positive in the form of compassion, or negative such as scolding, yelling, labeling all based on the implementation of the parental perception. The perception of parents (primary caregivers) by itself affects the children and begin to form a perception of self as well as react according to the perception of the parents. The message delivered for mother, pronounced with words or through non-verbal messages can influence the children. Giving of specific label can serve similar to the suggestion on the child's self-esteem, thus the children do the task as desired by parents or teachers.

### 3. DISCUSION

Primary caregivers are the people in a close environment that provides psychological influence on a person (Chaplin, 2006). If our primary caregivers accept, respect, and love ourselves, then we will tend to be respect and accept ourselves. Conversely, if the underestimate, blame and reject us, we will tend not to please ourselves. George Herbert Mead mentions as primary caregivers. Richard Dewey and W.J. Humber mention as affective others. Slowly we form our self-concept. A smile, a compliment, appreciation, hug them, causing us to judge ourselves positively. Mock, scorn, and rebuke, make us view ourselves negatively. During the process of development, primary caregivers influence the behavior, thoughts, and feelings. They direct the action, forming a mind, and touch us emotionally. Feedback from other people (parents and others who are respected) are filled slowly, which is called 'the prophecy of the self'.

Emmert & Brooks (1970) estimate signs of person who has negative self-concept with the characteristic of sensitive to criticism, very responsive to praise, hypercritical, it is difficult to develop warmth and friendship with others and often put themselves as the victim of a social system, become pessimistic.

Three building factors of self-concept of a child namely primary caregivers, peers, and public figures who are respected. Primary caregivers are one of the factors building self-concept tend against an individual. There are the individuals in an environment that provides psychological influence. They are parents. while the public figure who is respected is a teacher. This study focuses on the role of mothers and early childhood education teachers in shaping the self-concept of early childhood in Latimojong village.

### 3.1. Interaction of Mothers as Primary Caregivers in Building Children's Self-Concept

Housewives in Latimojong village is very influential in the upbringing of the children, although they work in agricultural sector as daily routine. Taking care of the children while it is still small things to do without involving the nanny. All household chores are finished every day.

*"Dijama nasan tojaman jo bola den mane male lako bara'bah. Mbawaki kanallo dikua nakande to pea ketangbarah. Yake edda naundi edda den parallu mangkanallo bisa unapiki tahan polepa den kumande"*. (Interview with Mrs. Mli, September 8, 2018).

The mothers have central role in the family. Complete the work of household affairs, doing the childcare at the same time while also involved in the processing activities in farm land. Toddlers who are still on preschool age included when doing activity in the field. This is done to be able to keep the child, the mothers can ensure the safety of children as well as be able to control the food needed by children that called 'mangkanallo' (bring food to the field).

*"often being left if there is any playmate, or guardian"*. (Interview with Mrs. In, September 9, 2018).

Mangdempa is keeping the children. Mangdempa among the mothers also as the activity of keeping and parenting the children. This activity is also often done together. For example, mother A set off to the garden then ask for help to a neighbor or relative to keep her children. Mangdempa or keeping the child interpreted extensively, not just keeping and dealing with conditions of danger but also meet the needs of the children. Dipangdempaan or give the children to be taken care by the neighbor or another mothers who do not do activity in the field is often carried out alternately.

Ecologically, the children who lived in the Latimojong village grow and thrive in ecological systems that are still relatively safe. Supported by several natural factors and environments that allowing children to grow ideally with some assumptions:

- 1) Personal history, every child born from a family with a system of kinship and lineage that is clearly a joint family nucleus with the type of traditional marriage.
- 2) Exosystem, is socio-economic status of families who have access to fertile agricultural land allows every child can grow up in a family that has a source of income from the ownership of the land and become farm labors. The availability of local food supported by fertile farmland, make every child can grow with the fulfilment of good nutrition. Malnutrition will only be triggered by the inability of the household to process sources of food that are available as well as land use to the maximum in order to support the needs of the household. The mountainous natural conditions away from noise and pollution emissions support the growth of the children physically and psychologically.

Physical activity varies strongly encourage motoric developments.

- 3) Microsystem community. The system of kinship which is strong as well as the genealogy of the family which is still very inherent in a large family so that parents have partners of parenting. Relatives from a large family can voluntarily give help caring for every child even share breast milk when the mother is sick or busy with the children of close family is very often form the parenting practices together. Every child can grow up in a family that does not include too much mass media. The children have not been exposed to the game online, play station and various games presented in the gadget so that it allows children to interact well with parents and friends.
- 4) Macrosystem community. Every child lived in a community that knowing each other. Every child grows up in a society with the familiar relationship with peers, family, neighbors, and society. Each child is recognized widely so that parenting and joint control.

These four factors become the most frequent behaviors performed by mothers. Mothers always justify that behavior that is deemed correct in disciplining the children. Generally, parents do not understand about what is called anxiety in the children. As a result, their children grow up in conflict 'approaching-dodging'. That is, the children want to express or release against the negative emotions they have, however hampered by the fear of punishment so that it will become passive attitude.

Children who are often get verbal attacks from mothers is an indication of bad behavior parenting. The disappointment of the children against the mother will be repressed because it is also in position of dependence to the mother so that the repression against the attacks would produce anxiety and hostility in self of the children. There are also nonverbal attacks as sarcastic stare, pinch, hit, and the behavior of other that increasingly caused the anxiety of the children for a number of experience interactions with people that most expected to give softness destroyed by the bad experiences as result of attack or aggression that is often accepted by the children

### ***3.2. Mother's Feedback as Children's Identity Caregivers***

Entering the age of two is the initial phase of the introduction of identity. Children experienced a number of changes in the size and experience of themselves that they have to understand. Children realize their name through repeated calls using by parents as a nickname. Gradually children see themselves as a distinct reference in seeing their own differences from other people or objects and names used by parents to call them over and over again will raise awareness of independent significance in the relationship in a social group.

Critical sign or danger during children's identity building through the use of the name 'nickname' of the specific

characteristics of children where the nickname is more commonly used parents as a nickname. Gradually each children receive their own identity through the names attached to them. Sticking nickname is a stereotype in their identity. Nickname usually a name based on personal characteristics that is owned and has no relations between alphabetical connection and sure name.

There are two important factors in the building of the children's identity, namely through the name identity and physical identity. The name becomes important is not just a differentiator from other people. The sure name of the abbreviated name of the call used as the identity of the children's self-esteem to know themselves and introduce themselves to the others. Abbreviations for ease of reference due to the mention of the name has a high intensity in the relationship of parents and children. Parents in the Latimojong village generally in the giving the name of a call using a relevant name or acronym with the sure name and not spoofed to be mocking name.

The physical identity of the children also becomes a differentiator from other people. No birth of any person who has physical characteristics that are exactly the same, the distinguishing features become identification tools to recognize a person. Each individual has a distinctive physical as one of the sources of the building of self-concept. There are individuals with perfect conditions, but sometimes do not have self-esteem with unique traits. They always look at the physical characteristics of other people as an ideal picture. That is, physical perfection does not make the best of a person can define and feel themselves in a positive way. Through observation and discussion about the interaction of mother with the children found that the mothers mention the physical characteristics in the negative form. A narrative that composed begins by mentioning the weaknesses inherent in the body of the children. Mothers generally focus more on the physical characteristics of the negative such as 'lotong' (black), dongkong (skinny), and so on. This is a critical threat to children in thinking and feeling themselves physically.

Finally, the perception of the children refuses the body and makes the body of others as a reference about the body ideal. The children will become jealous at another person's body, not confident and define themselves. In the end, the obsession is more focused on the ownership of the body together with the body of another person as the skin, hair and body size. Physical traits and unique personal attraction and discriminating their identity from the others to be neglected. Many children color the hair as a way they can imitate other people who become reference.

### ***3.3. Achievement Stimulant***

A sense of self-confidence starts is needed by children when entering the third year where the children need to feel proud of themselves that appears when the children learn that they can do their own specific things. In this stage children often seek total freedom from parental supervision. Children try a variety of things, do initiative

action based on intuition and cognition that they owned. Act autonomously, is often shown as a self-expression to obtain a sense of pride if it has been successfully performing an action.

In addition to self-confidence, an expansion sense on themselves in the next is the fourth year, children thrive on a sense of self-expansion marked by a sense of ownership towards themselves and various objects or people around him. A sense of ownership of the body, certain toys, parents, pets, siblings and others. Gradually comes the sense of a self-portrait at the age of four to six years in which the children begin to develop a conscience as a reference for 'good or bad'. The ability to compare what they do with other people's expectations. Children are also starting to build future goals and ideals if achievement accomplishment grows briefly.

The expectations of parents towards the achievement of the child should be harmonized with the child's ability at the age-of a certain age and unique potentials potential of each child. Mothers must know the competencies and the uniqueness of the potential of each child. Motivation for the achievement not only always seen on the final result or how the achievement being done but most important is the process of achieving.

Based on observations during conducting the research, generally mother who becomes the object of the research is always associate achievements with the achievements of children on the school ability so, the achievement of good behavior is not given special attention.

Mothers generally set high standards of achievement for children. For example, the mother is very demanding their children could be smart to math and literacy at the age of childhood. Of course, the standard of achievement expected is not yet relevant with the achievements on their age. All mothers involved in the study have the same perception towards the achievements of early childhood is the ability to math and literacy.

Finally, every mother who accompanies their children while running a class session as much as possible to force their children to be able to write any sentence can be emulated with the correct writing. Mothers are involved to assist children do not hesitate to give punishment in the form of reproach when they fail to write correctly. The word 'ba'ngoq' is pronounced as a way of encouraging the child to be able to write correctly.

'Ba'ngoq' is a word derived from the word bango as known as stupid in Indonesian language. The word is used to describe the ability level of the children, which is very minimal. And the word often used by mother in every failure of the children in trying a new initiative. During the conduct of research through direct interaction the word is most often used to respond to any children's failure in achieving the expected effort.

It means, mothers encourage the achievements over the limit above achievement ability (overachiever) and if when the child cannot reach them will be rewarded with the punishment of mocking with the phrase "ba'ngoq". Thus, the children will slowly build up the perception of themselves as people who are not competent in initiating new activities. Children will also feel themselves as failing

actor. Feelings of failure that makes children do not have the courage to start a new activity because 'self-failed' as a guide for behavior.

Of the three factors that becomes related focus is how a mother as primary caregivers that contribute to the building of the identity of the child, the establishment of security, and the driving achievement in early childhood in the Latimojong village, the mothers play as builder of positive children's identity on identity building of children with no nicknames and negative labeling because only two people give nicknames. On the building of a sense of security mothers play as a negative self-building with presents many threats, punishments, and hostility, and anxiety through verbal and nonverbal attacks use in disciplining the children's behavior. While in encouraging achievement, position of mothers as forming of children's negative identity because mothers set targets above achievement ability (overachiever) children, and failure will be given definition 'ba'ngoq' by parents.

### ***3.4. Teachers as Primary Caregivers for Early Childhood Children***

Non-formal school as a place of education for early childhood in the village of Latimojong established in the form of play group and early childhood education has been established by the local government through local government budgets as well as the village budget. This indicates the presence of alignments and establishing the commitment of the government and society to the place of education for early age children is very urgent. Latimojong village consisting of six hamlets, four of them which have been built school for pre-school age children.

Based on the number of places for early childhood education in the village Latimojong is not enough there are two villages that do not have facilities for children early childhood education in each hamlet, among others are Buntu Dea hamlet, Karuaja hamlet and a village belongs to Karangan hamlet should have early childhood education facilities that is Buntu Lamba. Conditions of hamlets and villages located separately and long distance that do not allow children crossing the inter-village for early childhood education facilities located in the neighboring hamlet.

School capacity that has been established is an issue, early childhood schools can not accommodate all children who have entered the age of early childhood and playground in every hamlet. As argued by one early childhood teachers in preschool of Ainun Rantelemo,

*"We do not accept many students because of the limitation of the room, this room is only one class and not spacious and already joined by administration room and office. The children are pitiful if they are jostling. So the students who received only a four-year-old until the sixth year and was quickly closed the registration at the time when it felt enough". (Interview with Ms.*

Isnayanti as a teacher in playgroup, September 2, 2018).

The one-class building facility can only accommodate a maximum of 30 children, making the group play does not open an opportunity for all children to attend education. The establishment of facilities that do not consider the capacity of capacities and the number of children who need school at an early age become the domain policy of rural and district governments through the support of policies and adequate budgets.

In addition, distortion of parental perception is more influenced by the lack of parental understanding of early childhood developmental phases. Parents give demands for early childhood education schools to teach read, write and count.

*“We feel difficult to enforce education curriculum because parents require us to teach reading and writing. If their children were not reading and writing we are considered not teaching them, then they are angry”*(Teacher in playgroup Anugrah Alam Karang).

Demands of parent to child become inappropriate if the parents do not have a good level of understanding against developmental age of the children that is very acculturative. Sometimes on the basis of love for the children parents actually give the demands and responsibilities imposed on the children that is not relevant to their ability.

#### **4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

- 1) Mothers tend to give positive labels to their children by calling their names. Of 23 mothers participating in the study, only two people used negative nicknames for their children. The negative labelling generally centers upon body shaming. Mothers pay more attention on their children's physical weakness than positive excellence. Mothers form a sense of security perception with an approaching-dodge pattern, a number of basic anxiety-infusing behaviors and basic enmity that removes the perception of safe feeling in children. Mothers as performance boosters provide a standard achievement that is not relevant to the child's ability so that the inability of the child to be given feedback in the form of a negative message 'stupid' that perception will slowly form children's self-perception children stupid children. Early childhood teachers have not significantly established positive interactions with children, since they only focus on teaching literacy and have not yet developed a class management method, ranging from opening to closing classes involving active students.
- 2) Further development should design a communication and behavior guidebook that can be a reference for parents and teachers. The guidebook should be made technical and practical.

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