



How Early Children Understand Diversity in Social Interaction

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Abstract. Schools are often places that are not culturally sensitive, so unpleasant things can happen to the minority. Discrimination against children from other areas of different ethnicity can be seen in the observations made by the author in the Kindergarten area of Bandung Regency, which is dominated by the Sundanese. The kindergarten accepts new students from the city of Padang who have a Malay cultural background. The student, of course, cannot speak Sundanese, so he uses Indonesian a lot. These language differences cause him to have difficulty communicating. Moreover, with different dialects or language accents from the habits of the majority group, in this case, Sundanese, children from minority groups often become the object of laughter and ridicule. This is sometimes considered normal for some people even though it is one of the bullying behaviors that have a bad impact on children; therefore, diversity needs to be taught from an early age. However, for further research, the author needs to study how children understand diversity in their social interactions. The purpose of this research is to analyze how children understand diversity in their social interactions. The research design used is Systematic Literature Review. Search for articles was done using the Preferred Reporting Item for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guide. The study found 3 themes about how early childhood understands diversity in their social interactions. By analyzing how children understand diversity in their social activities, it is hoped that they will be able to oppose acts of discrimination and injustice experienced by children in minority groups.

Keywords: Diversity, children's social interaction, multicultural, early childhood.

1 Introduction

Having thousands of islands, three hundred ethnic groups, various cultures, religions, and beliefs has placed Indonesia as the big country in the world with a high level of multiculturalism [20][7][2]. The Indonesian people also recognize this diversity by agreeing on the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* as an acknowledgment of the heterogeneity of ethnicity, culture, religion, race, and gender.

A high level of social diversity requires Indonesians to understand and respect the differences in tribes, religions, races, and groups to maintain national unity [20]. Unfortunately, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which should be able to function as a unifier of Indonesian society, has not been fully implemented in everyday life. Conflicts between groups still often occur [28]. One of the most famous examples of social complications is the conflict in Sampit in 2021. The conflict occurred because the Dayak tribe did not accept the Madurese who came to Kalimantan, and there was a complication between the two tribes that resulted in the massacre of the Madurese. The phenomenon of majority privilege still occurs frequently. An example is a coercion to accept the beliefs of the dominant group [27] as absolute or universal truths, thereby strengthening the practice of monoculturalism [9]. If we understand together, each region has different ways and habits, both from the traditional language which is considered a local culture [34]

Schools are often culturally insensitive places [21] resulting in unpleasant things for minority groups. An example is the act of discrimination and injustice experienced by children who come from different areas. These children seem to be forced to accept the habits of certain dominant groups, as found in the research by [32] on the practice of *Rebo Nyunda* in the city of Bandung. Discrimination against children from other regions of a different ethnicity is also evident in the observations made by the author while serving as a teacher in November 2021. The author works as a teacher in a kindergarten in the Bandung Regency area which is dominated by the Sundanese. In September, the kindergarten where the writer worked accepted new students from the city of Padang who had a Malay cultural background. The student, of course, cannot speak Sundanese. He uses Indonesian a lot. The language difference makes it difficult for him to communicate. When he tried to speak Sundanese, he later became the laughingstock of his friends because of the different dialects or language accents that did not match the Sundanese dialect. [32]

Then, because of the lack of understanding of the diversity of each region, the child is often the subject of laughter and ridicule when he tries to speak in Sundanese with a slightly different accent than usual. This laughing material is sometimes considered a normal thing for some people, including teachers who view it as not having such a big impact. However, this can be considered bullying and peer rejection so it indirectly risks reducing self-confidence and affecting children's mental health [5].

Based on the Google Scholar search, a lot of research on multi-cultural studies in early childhood has been carried out [17] [1] [31] [10]. However, it is still difficult to find research that discusses how early childhood understands diversity in their social activities, especially in the Indonesian context. Much research has been limited to how to introduce culture, language [26], traditional clothing, regional arts, or dances [29], and traditional games [33] [4]. Furthermore, many of them develop models and curricula [19] [31] [14], strategies [13], and media for multicultural learning. The existing studies only use an adult's point of view. As in Zahrafani's research, Amin & Anwar (2017) explains that inter-ethnic conflicts in adults are caused by differences because there are tribes that feel the most superior or dominant while some are marginalized.

This study aims to analyze the existing literature on how children understand diversity in social interactions, especially in the Indonesian context, so that it can be used as a reference for further research. Based on the literature review, the researcher assumes that the way children understand diversity in their social interactions is influenced by

opinions about the concept of diversity of adults around them such as teachers and parents. Then, children understand that there is diversity around them; for example, when a child knows the themes (language, dialect, disability, and religion) are different from others. However, attitudes to support multiculturalism have not emerged. Ridicule, peer rejection, and bullying still often happen.

2 Method

This research is a Systematic Review using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses method or commonly called PRISMA. Systematic review is one method that uses reviews, studies, structured evaluations, classifications, and categorizations from previously produced evidence. The procedure of this systematic review consists of several steps. First, carry out the article screening process. The number of articles that can be accessed in full is $n = 527$, while the articles that pass the screening process are 200 articles on Garuda and 327 articles on Google Scholar. After the screening process, the final journal can be analyzed according to the problem formulation ($n = 20$).

3 Finding and Discussion

3.1 The Concept of Multicultural Education as Education to Describe Diversity

Education is said to be the most important means to accommodate cultural diversity, including early childhood education, which must recognize the existence of differences in nationality and ethnicity in a heterogeneous society. This is because education provides space for the cultivation and implementation of ethical values and virtues that can respond to any differences in diversity. Therefore, multicultural education is the answer to these various backgrounds and demands that the arrangement of education requires a multicultural-based educational order [23].

The concept of multicultural education is seen as being able to build on the existing cultural diversity, and is often used as a basis for addressing diversity issues both conceptually and practically [3], defines multicultural education as education about cultural diversity. Through multicultural education, students can understand cultural diversity. Multicultural education also seeks to incorporate all students regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity, race, or cultural characteristics.

In the context of Indonesia, multicultural education is very important to be given from an early age. Learning in early childhood can be used as a first step and an ideal time to accommodate differences including differences in nationality and ethnicity in a heterogeneous society. Multicultural-based early childhood education needs to be nurtured from an early age so that the future of society can be well organized in accordance with human ideals in accordance with the culture of society. Multicultural education builds existing cultural diversity, becomes a perspective that sees the world as the basis

for community diversity and becomes a part of life that bridges various ethnicities, religions and cultures in life . Therefore, early childhood education plays an important role in anticipating and contributing to being part of a society that can live in peace without looking at different backgrounds or comparing differences, so that they feel comfortable with themselves [11].

As stated [20] the multicultural education approach promotes cultural pluralism and social equality by reforming school programs for all students to make them reflect diversity . One of these reforms includes an anti-biased curriculum by combining the contributions of various social groups, teaching materials that are appropriate and relevant to students and integrated, so that multicultural education can prepare students to challenge unequal social structures and to promote cultural diversity [25]

The purpose of multicultural education in schools is to function the role of schools in viewing the existence of diverse students and to assist students in developing positive treatment of differences in culture, race, ethnicity, and religious groups. Multicultural education can also provide students with an understanding of their own cultural identity and values and how these identities and values affect their perceptions of other people who come from different cultures with them. With multicultural understanding students can also develop positive perceptions of differences so that cross-cultural dependence can be formed [25];

In addition, Lewis (1976) stated that the purpose of multicultural education should be to help minority students in dominant group cultures, such as helping to introduce certain group identities that are built on their own home culture. In addition, to be able to participate in a multi-cultural society, students must be taught a universal language, and they should also be encouraged to develop competence and knowledge of their own cultural background.

3.2 How Children Understand Diversity

The process of cultural development is a reciprocal relationship between children, peers and adults who live their lives. From birth children use cultural artifacts that shape their development (Markus & Hame Hari, 2007) Children's attitudes towards their own culture begin to form in the early years of education through their social environment (Lynch & Hanson, 1998). That's when children realize the diversity around them. For years we thought that children would automatically form positive views of difference when they didn't [15] Advocacy and exposure to diversity in children requires active promotion [15]. Children are able to understand the similarities and differences in certain ways. In fact, from the age of 6 months, children are able to categorize people based on gender and race [15]. At the age of 2 years to 3 years, children can recognize their race from the behavior of the people around them. It is also at this age that children notice and reason about differences, but children at this age do not act on the observed differences. Furthermore, at the age of 3 years, children are able to compare themselves with others such as paying attention to differences such as skin color, eyes, and hair, as part of their socialization [18]. Then by the age of 5, children express a preference for their own race . [27]

Children observe how others around them react and respond to these differences, then they see what is appreciated and what is not. They can conclude for themselves by developing a positive or negative attitude about the difference. In the end, this attitude is used as the basis for evaluating whether their attitude in responding to differences is good or bad [6] [22]

3.3 Teacher's Contribution to Understanding Diversity in the Classroom

In fact, in various countries that are said to be plural even though the practice of multicultural education does not always run smoothly [26] Families have a significant influence on early childhood services, besides that teachers also play an important role in developing attitudes and behaviors towards differences [22]. Children learn to treat others differently on the basis of race, gender, age, ability, religion and cultural heritage either directly or through a gradual process of socialization and enculturation [22]

Children learn to treat others differently on the basis of race, gender, age, ability, religion and cultural heritage either directly or through a gradual process of socialization and enculturation [22]. The teacher is a model for students to act and behave as well as being an effective and responsible supporter in learning practices in educational institutions (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). In the cultural context, the teacher is tasked with respecting differences and also being a cultural mediator in instilling an attitude of mutual acceptance of differences [12][31] [11]. In addition, teachers also need to develop a strong understanding of culture and diversity (Mitchell et al., 2015).

As in his quantitative research, [30] analyzes that teachers play an important role in educating children about the world around them. So to find some kind of guide regarding race and diversity in their social environment, children need the contribution of teachers to strengthen their understanding. On the other hand, teachers often encourage racial stereotypes, bias and inequality in classroom activities. By perpetuating this, children will indirectly assume that underestimating the voices of marginalized groups is normal and acceptable, besides that children can contribute to minority students who feel unappreciated [30].

In line with this, the results of [16] research reveal that one of the attitudes of teachers in responding to issues of diversity in the classroom is to equate children's identities or treat people the same. By equating identities, teachers feel they are able to reduce conflicts that may occur, but this actually dampens the aspirations of diversity that children bring. According to Banks (2009), this is considered to be incompatible with the dimension of equity of pedagogy, where the teacher still has the ability as a facilitator for children from any background, instead of eliminating this necessity by equating every child.

Teachers also have not fully adapted classroom teaching to the existing diversity in accordance with responsive learning [8], teachers only involve children in the development of special content listed in the curriculum guidelines. This is of course caused by the teacher's assumption, which views that early childhood has not been able to understand race and racism [30] Moreover, previous research with parents has shown that some people avoid talking about race because they feel their children are too young to understand diversity [30].

4 Conclusion

The process of cultural development is a reciprocal relationship between children, peers and adults who live their lives. From birth children use cultural artifacts that shape their development, and that is when children realize the diversity around their social activities. By analyzing how children understand diversity in their social activities, this research is expected to be able to oppose acts of discrimination and injustice experienced by children in minority groups.

Intended to give interpretation and meaning to the results of the study in accordance with the theories and references that are used. It is not merely used to present findings. Interpretation should be enriched with referencing, comparing, or contrasting with findings of previous research published in reputable, not predatory, journal. It is advisable to integrate findings into collection of theories or established knowledge, development of a new theory, or modification of existing theories. Implications of the research findings are given.

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