



## Character Education in Early Childhood Based on Kohlberg's Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Early Childhood learning prioritizes developing cognitive intelligence rather than affective intelligence or character building. This research is a type of exploratory descriptive research. Exploratory descriptive research aims to describe the state of a phenomenon. This research is not intended to test certain hypotheses, only to describe what a variable, symptom or condition is. This research wants to further analyze related to early childhood character education based on Kohlberg using literature studies obtained from various scientific sources. The urgency of character education for each individual is an absolute thing to do as an effort to build a generation that contributes to the progress of the nation. Character education efforts certainly cannot escape from the psychological aspects contained in individuals which may influence the process of achieving the success of character building itself. One of the most significant individual psychological aspects for the development of individual personality is the moral aspect.

### KEY WORDS

Character, Early Childhood, Kolberg's Perspective

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning in PAUD prioritizes developing cognitive intelligence rather than affective intelligence or character building. Lack of synergy between education in PAUD institutions, at home by parents/family and in the community. The three main elements of education (PAUD institutions, parents and the community) must support each other to increase the character formation of early childhood. The lack of synergy in the formation of children's character becomes partial, and not holistic, so that early childhood symptoms appear that behave and behave badly, such as being cowardly, angry, destructive, shy, depressed, likes to lie and so on. An approach is needed in building early childhood character, which can be a guide for PAUD educators, parents, and caregivers in shaping children's character from an early age.

Early Childhood Education includes physical and non-physical development by providing stimulation for physical, spiritual, motor, intellectual, emotional and social development. Then according to Hasan, added that Early Childhood Education is a level of education that focuses on aspects of physical growth and development, intelligence, intellect, creativity, emotion, spiritual, language, communication and social. Early Childhood Education is the level of education that is held before the child enters the basic education level. So that at an early age is the most important period for educators or parents in stimulating physical and spiritual growth and development so that children grow and develop optimally.

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) according to the experts above, it can be concluded that there are several similarities, including that Early Childhood Education is a process of fostering the growth and development of children from birth to the age of 6 (six) years. So it can be concluded that Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a process of growth and development of children from birth to the age of

6 (six) years, which includes physical and non-physical development including physical and spiritual development of intelligence, intellect, creativity, emotion appropriate social, spiritual, language or communication so that children can grow and develop optimally through the provision of intellectual stimulation, health maintenance, provision of adequate nutrition, provision of opportunities to explore and learn actively.

The development of religious morality is closely related to character, politeness, and willingness to carry out religious teachings in everyday life. The philosophical discussion put forward by Kilpatrick on moral education will continue to evolve with various expert opinions on aspects of character, moral and religious values (William Kilpatrick, 1993). Lawrence Kohlberg emphasizes that moral education is directed to the stages of its formation, so that moral education is based on forming each of the stages of students. Besides the stages of moral development, Lawrence Kohlberg also offers the concept of justice as the basis for implementing moral education in the West. This principle is an immanent condition in a network of social relations or a law that regulates the balance of all these social relations (Kohlberg, 2010). Therefore, Kohlberg gives stories to people of different ages and cultures that place a person in certain positions and situations that are confronted with moral issues of a certain standard. Kohlberg then asked people how they would tackle this problem and provided reasons and solutions.

Piaget suggested that children think in two very different ways about morality depending on their developmental maturity. Piaget also argued that a human being in his life will experience a range of moral development, namely: a) the heteronomous stage, namely the child's way of thinking about objective justice, meaning that it cannot be changed and cannot be eliminated by humans. b) and the autonomous stage, that is, the child begins to realize that there is



freedom not to fully accept the rule as something that comes from outside of himself (Kohlberg and Piaget, 2000). According to Kohlberg, the development of the basic morals of children ( $\geq 10$  years) is in the pre-conventional phase which is colored by moral reasoning, children determine bad behavior based on the level of punishment and the consequences of this bad behavior, while good behavior will be associated with the sensation of punishment. And good behavior is associated with satisfying one's own desires and needs without considering the needs of others (William C Campbell, Frank J Cavico, Pedro F. Pellet, Bahaudin J. Mubtaja, 2010).

National character is an important aspect of human resources (HR), because the quality of national character determines the progress of a nation. Quality character needs to be formed and nurtured from an early age. Character is a characteristic possessed by an object or individual. This characteristic is rooted in a person so that he will be a driving force to act, behave and speak" (Hidayatullah;

2010). Early childhood groups are very strategic and effective groups in coaching and character building, this must become a collective awareness of all elements of this nation. Some developed countries like Japan have implemented character education for a long time. For them, teaching children to read, write and count is very easy, because their brains are still developing properly. However, character is a lesson that must be applied from an early age. The formation of a child's character must begin at an early age. The purpose of character building from an early age is to form a good personality so that when he grows up he becomes a good and noble person who can benefit his fellow human beings and their environment.

Character building is one of national education purposes. Article 1 of Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System states that the goal of national education is to develop the potential of students to have intelligence, personality and noble character. The mandate of this law intends

that education does not only form intelligent Indonesian people, but also personality or character, so that later generations of nations will be born who grow and develop with the noble values of national character. Early childhood education programs to date still leave many problems. There are still many groups of early childhood who have not been able to access education, teachers lack understanding of the nature of national education goals to develop students into holistic human beings with character, faith and piety to God Almighty. In fact, our current education places more emphasis on the formation of intellectual intelligence than on the formation of social- emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence (character building). This is evidenced by the National Examination (UN) as a measure of the success of education without looking at the process of forming children's character and character.

The cause of this kind of educational process cannot be separated from the demands of parents, who want their children to be smart quickly, to be able to read, write and count quickly (calistung), so that one day their children can enter their favorite primary school (primary elementary school). They don't want to understand the condition of their children, the important thing is that their children can enter a superior school, so that their parents will be proud. Forcing young children to learn calistung will risk short-term

stress and damage to the child's mental development in the long term (Elkind, 2000: 12). Practices like this will obviously hinder the process of forming a child's character. The lack of understanding of PAUD educators in character building from an early age both in methods and in the approach of learning through play, causes the character of children not to be formed from an early age. rther understanding is better for us to understand the meaning of character first, while the definition of character according to the Ministry of National Education is "innate heart, soul, personality, character, behavior, personality, character, temperament, and character" (Sudrajat; 2010).



## METODE PENELITIAN

This research is an exploratory descriptive research. This research is a type of exploratory descriptive research. Exploratory descriptive research aims to describe the state of a phenomenon. This research is not intended to test certain hypotheses, only to describe what a variable, symptom or condition is. This research wants to further analyze related to early childhood character education based on Kohlberg using literature studies obtained from various scientific sources.

## PEMBAHASAN KOHLMBERG PERSPECTIVE'S

The stages of moral development are a measure of a person's high and low morals based on the development of his moral reasoning, as expressed by Lawrence Kohlberg. The stage was made while he was studying psychology at the University of Chicago based on a theory he created after being inspired by the work of Jean Piaget and his admiration for children's reactions to moral dilemmas. He wrote his doctoral dissertation in 1958 which laid the foundation for what is now called Kohlberg's stages of moral development. This theory holds that moral reasoning, which is the basis of ethical behavior, has six stages of development that can be identified. It follows the development of moral decisions with aging originally studied by Piaget, who argued that logic and morality develop through constructive stages.

Kohlberg expanded on this basic view, determining that the process of moral development is principally related to justice and that its development continues throughout life, although there is dialogue that questions the philosophical implications of his research. Kohlberg used stories about moral dilemmas in his research. He was interested in how people would justify their actions if they were in the same moral predicament. Lawrence Kohlberg emphasized that moral development is based primarily on moral reasoning and develops gradually. The key concept of Kohlberg's theory is internalization, namely the

developmental change from externally controlled behavior to internally controlled behavior. Kohlberg arrived at his views after 20 years of conducting unique interviews with children. In the interviews, children are presented with a series of stories in which the characters face moral dilemmas. How do children respond to each story that is carried out by each character in the story conveyed by Kohlberg

Kohlberg categorizes and classifies the responses that arise into six different stages. The six stages are divided into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. His theory is based on stages of constructive development, each stage and level providing a more qualified response to moral dilemmas than the previous stage/level. Tingkat 1 (Pra-Konvensional)

### a. Pre-conventional

reasoning is the lowest level in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this level, children do not show internalization of moral values, moral reasoning is controlled by external rewards and punishments. As in Piagetian's heteronomous stage, children accept the rules of authority figures, and actions are judged by their consequences. Behaviors that result in punishment are seen as bad, and those that lead to rewards are seen as good. The pre-conventional level of moral reasoning is generally present in children, although adults can also exhibit reasoning in this stage. Someone who is in the pre-conventional level judges the morality of an action based on its direct consequences. The pre-conventional level consists of two initial stages in moral development, and is purely an egocentric view of the self: Punishment and obedience orientation is the first stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this stage of moral development based on punishment, a person focuses on the direct consequences of their own actions. For example, an action is considered morally wrong if the person who committed it is punished. The harsher the punishment given, the more wrong the action is considered. In addition, he does not know that other



people's point of view is different from his own. This stage can be seen as a kind of authoritarianism. Children obey because adults demand that they obey. Children at this stage find it difficult to consider two points of view in a moral dilemma. As a result, they ignore people's intentions and instead focus on fear of authority and avoidance of punishment as reasons to behave morally.

Individualism and purpose is the second stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this stage moral reasoning is based on rewards and self-interest. Children obey when they want to obey and when it is in their best interests to obey. What is right is what feels good and what is considered to result in a reward. Children recognize that people can have different perspectives on moral dilemmas, but this understanding is, at first, very concrete. They see right action as flowing from self-interest. Reciprocity is understood as an exchange of equal favors "You do this for me and I will do it for you."

#### b. Level 2 (Conventional)

Conventional reasoning is the second or intermediate level of Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Individual internalization at this stage is intermediate, someone obeys certain (internal) standards, but they do not obey the (internal) standards of others, such as parents or society. At the conventional level, a person is concerned with conformity with important social rules, but not for reasons of self-interest. They believe that being active in maintaining the current social system ensures positive human relations and societal order. The conventional level is generally in a teenager or adult. People in this stage judge the morality of an action by comparing it with the views and expectations of society.

Interpersonal norms are the third stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Adjustment stage with the group or orientation to be a "sweet child". In the next stage, there is a process of development towards sociality and group morality.

Interpersonal norms, at this stage a person values truth, care, and loyalty to others as the basis for moral considerations. Awareness and concern for close groups, as well as creating an assessment of himself in front of the community/group. The desire to obey rules because they promote relationships of social harmony arises in the context of close personal relationships. One wants to retain the affection and approval of friends and relatives by being a "good person", trustworthy, loyal, respectful, helpful, and kind. Children often adopt the moral standards of their parents at this stage. While expecting to be appreciated by their parents as a good woman or a good man, one enters society and has a social role. Individuals are willing to accept approval or disapproval from other people because this reflects society's approval of the role they have. They try to be a "good boy" to live up to that expectation, knowing it pays to do so. Stage three reasoning judges the morality of an action by evaluating its consequences in terms of interpersonal relationships, which begin to include things like respect, gratitude. The desire to obey rules and authority exists only to serve these stereotyped social roles.

Social system morality is the fourth stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this stage, moral judgments are based on an understanding of social rules, laws, justice, and obligations. In this condition, a person has started to move towards a legal/regulatory orientation that functions to create orderly and comfortable conditions in groups/communities. One takes into account the larger perspective of the laws of society. Moral choices no longer depend on close relationships with others. Instead, rules must be enforced in the same way for everyone, and each member of society has a personal duty to enforce them and to comply with laws, decrees, and social conventions as they serve to maintain the functioning of society. Moral reasoning in stage four goes beyond the need for individual acceptance as in stage three; societal needs must exceed personal needs. Primary idealism often determines what is right and what is wrong, as in the case of fundamentalism. If





someone can break the law, maybe other people will too, so there is an obligation or duty to comply with laws and regulations.

c. Level 3 (Post-Conventional)

At this level, morality is truly internalized and not based on other people's standards. One recognizes alternative moral courses of action, explores options, and then decides on the basis of a personal moral code. Someone at the post-conventional level moves beyond unquestioning support for the rules and laws of their own society. They define morality in terms of abstract principles and values that apply to all situations and societies. The post-conventional level, also known as the principled level, consists of stages five and six of moral development. The fact that individuals are separate entities from society is becoming increasingly clear. One's perspective must be seen before society's perspective. At this level, morality is truly internalized and not based on other people's standards. One recognizes alternative moral courses, explores options, and then decides on the basis of a personal moral code.

Community rights versus individual rights (community rights versus individual rights) is the fifth stage in Kohlberg's theory of moral development. At this stage, a person understands that values and rules are relative and that standards may differ from one person to another, realizes that laws are important to society, but also knows that laws can be changed. Someone believes that some values, such as freedom, are more important than laws. A person is seen as having different opinions and values. At this stage it is important that they are respected and valued impartially.

## MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN

Children's moral development is formed through phases or periods as well as the development of other aspects. Each phase of development has characteristics of morality that children can achieve, even though in this case there are no differences over clear boundaries and depend more on each

individual than on the general norms that occur in children.

a. Development of Morality in children aged 3years As explained, a newborn baby is a non-moral being. Infants or very young children do not know the norms of right or wrong. His behavior is solely controlled by impulses based on the tendency that what is pleasant will be repeated, while what is unpleasant will not be repeated in his behavior. Children at this time are still very young intellectually, to realize and interpret that a behavior is not good, except when it causes feelings of pain. At this age the basics of morality towards social groups must have been formed. The child is no longer continuously explained why this action is wrong or right, but he is shown how he should behave and if this is not done then he is subject to punishment. He performs a good deed without knowing why he should do it. He does this

to avoid punishment that may be experienced from social circles or gain praise. At the age of 5 or 6 years, children must obey the demands or rules of their parents and their social environment. Sayings of others such as; good, not allowed, naughty, will be socialized by children with the concept of right or wrong. Instilling the concept of morality in these children may experience difficulties because of the characteristics of defiance of orders and the characteristics of egoism.

b. The development of morality in children aged 6 years to adolescents

At this time, boys and girls learn to behave according to what is expected of the group. Thus the values or moral principles for the most part are more determined by the norms contained within the group environment. At the age of 10 to 12 years, children can know very well the reasons or principles that underlie a rule. His ability has developed enough to be able to distinguish between various moral values and be able to relate moral concepts regarding:



honesty, property rights, justice and honor. At the time approaching adolescence, children have developed moral values as a result of the experiences of other children. These values will partly remain throughout his life and will influence his behavior as it did when he was a child. Others gradually experience changes because their relationships with their environment lead to conflicts, because the moral values of the environment are different from the values that have been formed. (Gunarsa, 1990, pp. 46-48).

## FACTORS AFFECTING THE CHARACTER OF CHILDREN

There are many factors that influence moral development, the most important of which are: Lack of embedded religious spirit in everyone in society religious belief that is based on a real understanding and is in line with the teachings of the religion one adheres to, then accompanied by the implementation of these teachings is the strongest moral stronghold. If religious belief really has become an integral part of a person's personality, it is his belief that will control all his actions, words and even feelings if people are attracted to something that seems to move quickly to examine whether this is permissible or prohibited by their religion. If what is considered forbidden, however externally, he will not heed it for fear of carrying out what is prohibited by his religion.

### a. Unstable social conditions

The second factor that influences the morale of society is the lack of stability, both economically, socially, culturally and politically. The shock or instability of the atmosphere that surrounds a person causes anxiety and restlessness, due to the inability to achieve a sense of security and peace in life. For example, when the economy is in a state of turmoil, the prices of goods fluctuate within limits that people in society cannot foresee in advance, then in order to find balance in the soul again, people are forced to work hard. If he fails in his healthy endeavors, this is where the deviation occurs.

### b. The number of writings and pictures that do not heed the moral basis

One thing that has recently received less attention to us is the writings, readings, paintings, broadcasts, arts and games that seem to encourage young people to follow their youth. Moral and mental aspects receive less attention, art results are merely an expression of desires and needs that cannot be simply fulfilled. Then it is described very realistically, so that everything that is stored in the hearts of young people is revealed and its realization can be seen in the story of the painting or the game. This also pushes young people to the brink of moral decline. The number of writings and pictures that do not heed the moral basis. Not implementing good moral education.

### c. Not implementing good moral

Education in households, schools and communities. Moral development, should be carried out since the child is small, according to the ability of his age. Because every child is born, they do not understand what is right and what is wrong, and do not know the boundaries and moral provisions that apply in their environment. Without getting used to instilling attitudes that are considered good for moral growth, children will be raised without knowing those morals. It also needs to be reminded that moral understanding cannot guarantee moral action. Basically, morals are not a lesson or knowledge that can be achieved by studying, without getting used to living morally from childhood and that morals grow from action to understanding, not the other way around.

### d. Lack of parents' awareness of the importance of basic moral education from an early age

Moral is one of the fruits of faith, therefore, so that children have good morals, they must be based on faith and be educated to always remember to surrender to Him, that way the child will have the provision of knowledge to get used to being noble, because a religious stronghold has taken root in his heart.



e. Many people neglect manners.

Good manners are saying or doing something commendable or of good character. Planting character in the child's soul is very important. However, some parents neglect the importance of fostering children's character and manners. The poor parents are not aware that they have plunged their own children into the abyss, even though the development of character is a child's right over his parents such as the right to eat, drink and support.

The visible factor in today's society is that harmony in household life is less secure. There does not appear to be mutual understanding, mutual acceptance, mutual respect, mutual love between husband and wife. The discord between parents and parents causes anxiety for their children to become afraid, anxious and can't stand being in the midst of parents who don't get along. Children who are restless and anxious are easily driven to actions that are an expression of their feelings, usually disturbing the peace of others.

f. Lack of guidance to fill spare time.

A factor that has contributed to the moral decay of young people is the lack of guidance in filling their free time in a good and healthy way. In the early to late age range is the age when children like to fantasize, daydream about things that are far away or hard to reach. If they are left without guidance in filling their free time then many unhealthy daydreams will arise from them.

g. Lack of tutoring services

Finally, it should be noted that there is a lack of guidance and counseling services that will accommodate and channel children towards a healthy mentality. With little or no place to return to for children who are anxious and need guidance, they go in groups and join the children who are also anxious. This is where the child's behavior model that is less pleasant will come out.

Educating character, according to Lickona (in Prasetyo, 2008: 8), is educating three aspects of human personality, namely moral knowing, moral feeling or attitudes, and moral behavior. Good character consists of knowing what is ma'ruf, intending to do what is ma'ruf, and practicing good habits of thinking, being careful and acting. All three are needed to lead to a moral life and improve moral maturity. Good character education according to Lickona (in Zuchdi 2009:11), must involve not only the aspects of knowing the good' (moral knowing), but also desiring the good' or 'loving the good' (moral feeling) and 'acting the good'. good' (moral action).

Emphasizing these aspects is necessary so that students are able to understand, feel, and practice the virtues at the same time, without having to be indoctrinated or ordered to be forced. In moral knowing, there are six things that become the goal of teaching, namely: 1) moral awareness, 2) knowing moral values, 3) perspective taking, 4) moral reasoning, 5) decision making, and 6) self- knowledge. In moral feeling, there are six things which are aspects of emotion that must be felt by a person to become a human being with character, namely: 1) conscience, 2) self-esteem, 3) empathy, 4) loving the good, 5) self-control, 6) humanity. Finally, it should be noted that there is a lack of guidance and counseling services that will accommodate and channel children towards a healthy mentality. With little or no place to return to for children who are anxious and need guidance, they go in groups and join the children who are also anxious. This is where the child's behavior model that is less pleasant will come out.

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## CONCLUSION

The urgency of character education for each individual is an absolute thing to do as an effort to build a generation that contributes to the progress of the nation. Character education efforts certainly cannot escape from the psychological aspects contained in individuals which may influence the process of achieving the success of character building itself. One of the most significant individual psychological aspects for the development of individual personality is the moral aspect. Thus, Lawrence Kohlberg offers the stages

of moral development to individuals with our understanding of the stages contained in this moral development will help us or educators in actualizing effective character education with the support of this theory of moral development

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