



Freedom of Speech on Children's Right Setting Toward Prevention of Bullying in Early Childhood Education: A Literature Review of Decolonization Approach

Insan Sheny Priyandita¹, Mubiar Agustin²

^{1,2} Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Bandung, Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

The discourse on freedom of speech, in particular when expressing an opinion on the provisions of the Rights of the Child, is often ignored by a trend of change in education that is too concentrated on the authoritarian educational process that prioritizes the success of academic learning rather than the socio-emotional success of children. It is important to communicate the experiences and feelings experienced by children, particularly bullying that occurs early in childhood. This research would examine the importance of free expression in children's rights to the prevention of bullying in early childhood through a decolonization approach. This study employed a literature review approach with a transformative paradigm which take a look at critical thoughts about children's rights, particularly freedom of speech that aims at preventing the bullying that occurs in early childhood. This study argued that the process of preventing bullying and even other negative behavior is effective when parents and teacher properly enforce the rights of children, especially freedom of speech. These results further illuminate the complexities faced by teachers in the application of free expression in early childhood education in daily life.

INTRODUCTION

In a country, the most significant part is the constitutional guarantee of an individual's right, particularly the right to have an opinion. Likewise, the right to freedom of opinion in early childhood is sometimes often overlooked in early childhood. This is based on the fact that there is still no clear thinking power in early childhood to talk and choose the best choices. In line with Douvlos's (2019) view, which describes the assumption that early childhood has cognitive and verbal weaknesses, whereas early childhood, when provided through proper comprehension, is actually able to comprehend explanations from others. Children are always given the option of choosing anything, but parents react to that choice. This is taken into account because there are cognitive deficits in early childhood, making it difficult to make the best choice for themselves.

Moreover, teachers are often more concerned with academic learning than with the child's preferences. This is focused on environmental criteria such that children can better understand academic content and prioritize the cognitive development of children over other factors. This is in line with the opinion of Solehuddin & Andriany (2017), which explains that because of the demands of the environment, including parents, school is increasingly too concentrated on cognitive development. This would undoubtedly have an effect on the limitations of children in communicating their views

and feelings at school as educators pay more attention to learning programs that emphasize cognitive growth, including academic awareness of children.

If teachers pay so much attention to the instructional content of children, the thoughts and perceptions of children are often more and more sidelined and this would definitely have a negative effect on the socio-emotional growth of children. In fact, children's socio-emotional development also needs to be addressed because it significantly affects the abilities of children in their environment in the social context. In line with the opinion of Eweniyi & Ometere (2019); Guirguis (2018); Kocer & Akduman (2019) notes that educators must also recognize social-emotional abilities in children because it affects the capacity of children to adapt in the community.

Moreover, if children are able to adjust to the environment around them, they can have a sense of security and comfort. The learning curriculum provided by the instructor will be more readily adopted by the child if the child has comfort and a stable feeling, and the information that is prepared according to the learning goals will be maximally transmitted. In line with the opinion of Gaffney, et al. (2019), which describes that if the child does not have a conducive school situation, the teacher's performance in delivering the learning material that will be delivered will be diminished. This illustrates that teachers need to pay attention to the socio-emotional nature of children in order to establish a suitable circumstance for children to improve aspects of child development in line with the teacher's learning program plan.

Social-emotional development also cannot be separated from the socialization process carried out by children. This socialization commonly occurs between the teacher and the child, the parent and the child, or the child and his friends. Teachers frequently fail to ask what kids feel when they play with peers. This is because teachers are too focused on pre-planned learning programs. Meanwhile, expressing the child's opinions and feelings is one of the important things that must be considered by the teacher because educators are able to contribute to the child's psychology through caring and being responsive to children's needs (Longobardi et al., 2019; Walker & Graham, 2019; Kauffman, et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, today's teachers usually neglect the emotions experienced by kids. In fact, beyond the academic program, there are several acts that can influence the socio-emotional disposition of children, one of which is bullying in early childhood education by their peers. The occurrence of early childhood bullying has begun to happen regularly in the last few decades (Agustin et al, 2018). Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reveals that 37,381 violations have occurred against children and that number has continued to rise from 2011 to 2019. The violence was carried out in the form of both physical and psychological violence by children and their families. Meanwhile, in paragraph (1a) of Law No 35 of 2014 on child protection, it describes that every child has the right to be protected from sexual crimes and violence committed by teachers, educational staff, fellow students or other parties in an educational unit.

Freedom of speech, particularly in expressing opinions, is one way to prevent bullying in early childhood. In accordance with the convention on the rights of the child and the Child Protection Law 2002 and 2014, there is a principle of respect for children's views or opinions, including the principle that gives children the right to express opinions in all matters affecting children including the right to have an opinion, to

obtain consideration of their opinion, the right to obtain and knowing information and to express, the right to form a relationship and the right to obtain appropriate information and to be protected from unhealthy information. Teachers must therefore pay attention to freedom of expression, particularly in expressing opinions to avoid negative acts that affect the growth of children while in school. This is because educators have more power in guiding children to prevent deviant actions (Camodeca & Coppola, 2018; Cunningham et al., 2020; Shiakou & Piki, 2018).

However, teachers are still not paying attention to freedom of expression, specifically in expressing opinions, since it focuses so much on the academic growth of children, because then teachers are less concerned about the feelings experienced by children in school. Based on these factors, this research would concentrate on critical studies of free expression in expressing views on the rights of children to avoid bullying in early childhood education.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims at determining the description of children's rights, specifically in expressing an opinion on their feelings to prevent bullying that occurs in early childhood. This study employed the literature review method where the data collection techniques in this research come from journals that were analyzed based on the topic of freedom of speech, particularly expressing opinions to prevent bullying that occurs in early childhood. Yeni & Hartati (2020) states that literature review is a method of collecting data by collecting library data, reading, and taking notes and processing research matter. This research would critically analyze journals that were relevant to the research.

This data can be formed through research questions for literature studies, namely (1) What and how is bullying in early childhood, (2) Is there a link between early childhood bullying and children's socio-emotional skills, (3) what is the children's rights system? in expressing opinions when bullying occurs, (4) Is there a relationship between children's abilities and freedom of speech that children are entitled to, and (5) how is the decolonization approach in seeing freedom of speech in children, especially in relation to bullying in early childhood. The data that has been obtained are then compiled, analyzed, and concluded in order to obtain a research study using this literature study method. The results of these various literature reviews would be used to identify the process of implementing freedom of speech, particularly in expressing opinions that have been regulated in child rights regulations to prevent bullying in early childhood.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bullying in Early Childhood and Children Socio-Emotional Skills

Numerous educators assume that early childhood students are not possible to carry out bullying because of limitations in cognitive and verbal development in carrying out these actions (Douvlos, 2019). Meanwhile, it is clear that early childhood can trigger verbal or physical intimidation. In line with opinion by Marengo et al. (2018) that in early childhood stage, they are able to trigger verbal or physical intimidation such as statements of cruelty, hitting, etc. This opinion also support by Rose (2014)'s view that

from the age of 12 months, violent behavior can be observed, although the pinnacle of aggressiveness is at the age of 3 or 4 years, and therefore behavior will start to decline.

It is important for teachers to understand bullying in early childhood to prevent delays in early childhood development caused by bullying experienced. The mental health of children could be affected if the child continues to receive negative treatment such as bullying. Negative behavior in the form of bullying could be carried out by an individual in the form of physical, verbal or cyber bullying that is done repeatedly (Barbero, et al., 2019; Cantone, et al., 2015; Coelho & Sousa, 2018; Sanchez-Queija, 2017 ; Smith, 2016). Therefore, the role of teachers is very important to prevent bullying from occurring in early childhood.

Bullying could occur because of the imbalance of power and/or bargaining position between the perpetrator to the victim (Eldridge & Jenkins, 2019). The power and/or bargaining position in this case according to (Douvlos, 2019) is in the form of differences in social status, racial and cultural differences or the lack of sympathy and empathy perceived by the perpetrator for the victim. In addition, the ability of perpetrators to influence and control the thoughts and feelings of their friends is also one of the factors that triggers behavior bullying towards peers (Mitsopolou & Giovazolias, 2015; Palladino, et al., 2016). This is a form of oppression carried out through the influence of power which indeed requires important attention for teachers in recognizing and identifying these behaviors to prevent negative behavior such as bullying.

However, most teachers in fact, do not take into account earnestly the tendency of bullying performed by early childhood. Most teachers, unfortunately, disregard aggressive behavior performed by early childhood. In addition, when teachers directly find out some children perform aggressive behavior, they only give lenient verbal warning to response the behavior. In line with Douvlos (2019)'s perception that teachers often do not pay much attention to the violent level of children in school and only verbally warn them several times because the action of the child is deemed to only draw the teacher's attention. If the negative behavior are continuous and not adequately handled promptly, then the child may conduct bullying that is more harmful to the child's environment.

In preventing bullying among early childhood, the role of teachers is very critical. This is because it will impact the very next life that the child will go through if the child's development is disrupted at an early age. In reality, it is clear that educational institution, including schools, must create an atmosphere free of intimidation and abuse, both physical and verbal, according to the United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization (2018), in order to become a supportive learning environment for children. When every child in school manages a conducive situation, then the success of the learning program will indirectly run according to the intended learning goals and objective.

Regrettably, teachers these days take into account students' academic performance in classroom which emphasizes cognitive development rather than social and emotional development. Learning process in school put a greater concern on developing academic capabilities of children. Consequently, other important aspects, for instance social and emotional development of children, are not sufficiently regarded by the teachers. In addition, the demand from parents and community regarding the development of

students' academic performance compel teachers to only focus on the development of cognitive abilities rather than social and emotional development (Solehuddin & Andriany, 2017). Indeed, this situation will inhibit children social and emotional development.

On the other hand, it is equally necessary for schools and teachers to recognize the social and emotional growth of children to be able to relate to the surrounding world in which the children live. When children gain less social and emotional maturity, it reduces their social skills, such as communication and interaction skills, which are important when integrating with the environment around them (Kocer & Akduman, 2019). The child will begin to engage in negative behavior, including the development of stubbornness or bullying itself, if the child is less able to develop social-emotional skills (Limber, et al., 2018). Therefore, teachers must also be able to provide a balanced program to discourage harmful behavior, including bullying in early childhood, for any aspect of child growth, including the social-emotional of children. In line with Douvlos' view (2019) that early childhood bullying can be avoided by the improvement of children's socio-emotional skills in the management of actions and emotions.

Social-Emotional Skills of Children and Freedom of Speech in Bullying

The behaviour of bullying needs to be recognized by teachers early on, one of which is through the victim's open and intense communication. This communication takes place because bullying can actually occur in a direct or indirect way (Mishna, et al., 2018). Early childhood bullying can be categorized into two types, specifically verbal (mocking, threatening, silly names, etc.) and physical (hitting, punching, pushing, etc.) aggressiveness (Coelho & Sousa, 2018). It is supported by the opinion of Marengo, et al. (2018) that bullying in early childhood often includes mocking and verbal threatening to friends, as well as physical aggressiveness such as hitting, kicking, pushing, isolating or not inviting friends to play, even threatening or coercing into undesirable actions. These actions must be understood and took into account by teachers since the child is in the early childhood stage to prevent aggressive behavior such as bullying.

In addition, it is important for teachers and parents to provide an understanding to children regarding bullying. The understanding about bullying would prevent children to not harm other people (Ey, et al. 2019). Children need to understand that bullying would have a significant negative impact to the victims. The impact of continuous bullying in school would damage the victim's mental health. When the bullying occurs in school continuously, it makes the victims of bullying tend to avoid attending to school. Indirectly, when the victim's mental health is damaged because of bullying in school, it will impact on the development of children, both academic and non-academic (Barbero, et al. 2019). In line with the opinion of Gaffney, et al. (2019), if children experience bullying in their early childhood, it will significantly impact their development, particularly their academic performance in school.

The impact of bullying does not only endure by the victims, but also, if the bullying occurs continuously, the perpetrators would also endure the impact indirectly. When the perpetrators continuously perform aggressive behavior such as bullying, it diminishes their decent feeling of human beings such as empathy, sympathy, guilt, responsibility, respect, and tenderness to other people (Olthof, 2012). The cause of lack of empathy, compassion, and remorse from the perpetrator is due to the need for social

change from within him to be more recognized by his peers (Mitsopolou & Giovazolias, 2015). (Mitsopolou & Giovazolias, 2015). In addition, bullies often lack effective communication with people in their environments (Tsaousis, 2016). (Tsaousis, 2016).

Teachers need to recognise issues that are barriers to the development of the skills of children in schools at an early age through in-depth communication and engagement, both with victims and with bullying perpetrators. To find out the emotions encountered by children while in school, something needs to be done. But, sadly, teachers have become excessively focused on children's academic and cognitive development, thus they frequently neglect the emotions and barriers that children encounter in school or at home. A significant part of preventing and overcoming bullying is understanding the emotions and feelings encountered by children (Alexander, 2020). If teachers are able to communicate and foster open feelings encountered by victims or offenders, teacher involvement may be accomplished in preventing or coping with bullying. This is focused on the fact that educators can deliver meaningful connections to children through the treatment and responsiveness of educators (Longobardi et al., 2019).

In preventing bullying from an early age, the function of communication is very critical. Through freedom of expression, this dialogue may be carried out by children in the form of sharing views about their feelings encountered by children at school or at home. Teachers need to be sensitive to children's thoughts because it is necessary for educators to read the child's circumstance and feelings. In line with Quin (2017), teachers need to pay attention and consider the feelings of children to acquire an understanding of children's learning, lives, and perceptions in order to express their thoughts to educators. In addition, teachers might develop effective communication if teachers are willing to value the views of children, contribute to the needs of children, and educate themselves to consider the situation of children (Eldridge & Jenkins, 2019; Wang, et al., 2018). In order to be able to develop intense and deep contact with the feelings and thoughts encountered by children, educators must also be able to listen and respond well to the opinions expressed by children.

In developing social justice, communication plays an important role (Simpson, 2019). This is because the dialogue established by communication would be the key to communicating everything, including sharing feelings about children's thoughts and barriers, so that the decision-making process to solve issues is properly created. In addition, the Children's Rights Convention and the Child Protection Legislation of 2002 and 2014 also clarify that there are rules that grant children the right to express opinions on all topics concerning children, including the right to have an opinion, to take their views into account, the right to access, know and communicate information, the right to establish a relationship, the right to obtain relevant information and the right to be protected against unhealthy information. In this regulation, it can be understood that children need to have the ability to share their views about their thoughts and emotions in order for later parents around the child to be able to understand and resolve the child's obstacles.

Children's needs are also the underlying motivation for teachers and parents to listen to the viewpoints of children therefore children's emotions and opinions can be expressed and treated properly. This is also endorsed by the Regional Government's Law on Child Protection (Reza & Arliman, 2018) that the best interests of children must be regarded as of paramount importance (to achieve the highest priority) in all child-

related decisions. Therefore, all children's parents and teachers must be willing to prioritize the needs of children, one of which is to prioritize children's freedom of expression, in particular by expressing the views of children accordingly the thoughts and feelings encountered by children can be communicated and parents or teachers can resolve the difficulties experienced by children.

Freedom of Speech to Prevent Bullying: Employing a Decolonization Approach

It has been generally thought that the relationship between education and colonialism is a crucial problem for academics. The U.S. laws of colonialism have commonly been referred to as the "new global government regime". The largely academic prejudices of the new imperial powers were prevalent and exercised. This is because educators are too centered in the field of education on the learning method rather than on other aspects. The new colonialism has been related to the word 'Western ideology' by many reports. This theory of the West is regarded as an instrument for the understanding and control of "non-Western" nations (Regus, 2019). Global development has been inextricably connected to colonial rule, including education. Children have become the key concern of the education sector on the basis of recent global developments. Similarly, human rights values, like early childhood education, are considered to be one of the primary portals in pushing the core role of education (2019, Regus).

In this situation, education in a nation has been seen as the fundamental key to global growth. Moving away from globalization is what allows 'non-Western' countries to implicitly follow the education system adopted as a guide for the education program being managed by 'Western' countries. This is simply a way for 'Western' nations to introduce colonization in 'Non-Western' countries through a system of logic and superior growth through development policies and educational practices. Even some internationalization studies and global developments that specialize in the growth of colonialism often conclude by recognizing that colonialism is a place for the ruling state's dominant behavior, specifically the 'West' state, to be found (Regus, 2019).

It is therefore necessary for a nation to develop education without any link with the process of colonialism of a "Western" world. By forming a "anti-colonial" for the education system in "Third World" countries, the process of constructing education by "Non-Western" can be established through the process of decolonization. In this process of decolonization, the 'Third World' was coined by the Conference of Asian and African Countries in Bandung (Indonesia) in 1955 (Regus, 2019). This conference established a "non-aligned" movement that represented the post-war global world of critical thought. In creating a modern cultural tradition of early childhood education in Indonesia, this movement provides fresh understanding and inspiration. He explains that the decolonization process of Early Childhood Education is a mechanism that cuts off colonial heritage in all fields, including education, according to Regus (2019). This could have a major impact on the re-formation of modern international relations without the influence of colonialism by decolonization.

The process of decolonization moves the United Nations to form global discourse, including human rights discussions (Regus, 2019). Early childhood education was said to have been more egalitarian in gaining a broader open space for diversity and fulfilling the need to prioritize the interests of the needs of children on the basis of the decolonization process. Therefore, freedom of expression is a central component of the

decolonization program of Early Childhood Education, including sharing views on human rights. According to Regus (2019), one of the key references to the definition of Early Childhood Education from a human rights perspective is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), held on 20 November 1989. This convention offered the key concept that the education of children is often carried out through the mechanism of marginalization of children. Even though colonialism is a form of this marginalization. Because of the marginalization process, including freedom of expression in expressing views, this causes the rights of every child to begin to be ignored.

The principles and norms of children's rights provide instructions on what must be done for each person to attain freedom. The approach of children's rights to decolonization policies is through the need to increasingly apply in the development of a Early Childhood Education structure and culture that specifically provides children with wider space. The Early Childhood Education policy system for the rights of children would be able to close the distance between theory and reality and end the practice of Western dominance.

With the existence of a new strategy using the decolonization process, education with a "anti-colonialism" process can be accomplished by prioritizing the rights of children, including freedom of expression in expressing opinions, in the advancement of education. Furthermore, if educators prioritize the interests of children's rights, especially in freedom of expression, this will indirectly make it easier for children to express opinions in conveying feelings and thoughts as well as the barriers faced by children in school or even outside of school. This would definitely discourage harmful behavior, particularly bullying in early childhood, from occurring to children. Teachers will find it easier to examine and evaluate in detail the challenges that children experience, including bullying that can arise in early childhood, through children's expressions about their thoughts and feelings.

CONCLUSIONS

Freedom of speech in expressing an opinion is one of the rights of children that must be acquired in each nation for every citizen. In order to properly carry out the process, particularly in the field of early childhood education, each sector must make use of the basis of the regulation of children's rights. In contrast to other studies, this study uses a decolonization approach so that it sees the problem from a different point of view from the current general policy. By using the decolonization process, namely cutting off colonial legacies in the education process in a 'Non-Western' country, teachers must be able to enforce children's rights policies in educational programs. This process of decolonization would have an important impact without the effect of colonialism on the re-establishment of international education. The formation of an education system with a system of marginalization is one of the processes of colonialism. Furthermore, one type of colonialism is that educators concentrate too much on the cognitive and academic development of children to neglect other aspects, such as the socio-emotional aspects of children. Of course, this will have an effect on the rights of children that are acquired by and person who is not properly realized. It will provide wider opportunities for children to get their rights through the decolonization phase in the educational process, including freedom of expression in expressing opinions. When

teachers pay greater attention to children's freedom of speech, children would be able to express their thoughts and feelings and indirectly discourage harmful acts, particularly early childhood bullying, from occurring to them.

It is hoped that through this research, the current government will review and re-analyze the shortcomings of education policies by looking at the situation and education system from the other side, namely through a decolonization approach so as to allow a better discourse on new education. In addition, it is hoped that further research will be able to analyze more deeply the current development of the education system and its relation to the decolonization process in shaping the discourse of freedom of speech so that early childhoods can be obtained as a whole in education to prevent bullying in children.

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***Insan Sheny Priyandita (Corresponding Author)**

Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Jl. Dr. Setiabudi No. 229, Isola, Kecamatan Sukasari, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat, 20154

Email: insan.sheny25@gmail.com

Dr. Mubiar Agustin, M.Pd.

Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia

Jl. Dr. Setiabudi No. 229, Isola, Kecamatan Sukasari, Kota Bandung, Jawa Barat, 20154

Email: mubiar@upi.edu
