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Nurturing Moral Development of Children Aged 5-6 Years Through Interpersonal Communication with a Mindfulness-Based Empathetic Communication Approach (Qualitative Study)

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ABSTRAK:

This study explores the cultivation of morals in children aged 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa through interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic communication approach. Using qualitative research methods with a case study approach, this study involved early childhood educators as key participants. This study concludes that the implementation of interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic communication approach is very effective in instilling morals in children aged 5- 6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004. This approach can improve prosocial behavior and healthy emotional expression in children. It plays a significant role in shaping the character and moral values of children in the PAUD environment. Educators' awareness of the importance of active listening, understanding children's feelings, and responding with empathy has been proven to stimulate the development of children's morals in a positive way. Thus, this research can provide practical implications for early childhood educators, educational institutions, and policymakers in efforts to instill early childhood morals. The main supporting factors are the teacher's gentle and patient speaking style, as well as a safe and comfortable classroom environment. However, there are also some inhibiting factors, such as diverse parenting styles and differences in children's perceptions and habits at school and at home

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1. Introduction

Morals are the main foundation in the formation of individual and societal character. The cultivation of solid morals from an early age, especially in the age range of 5-6 years, is very crucial considering that in this phase children are in the golden age of development where they are very responsive to environmental stimulation, children begin to be sensitive to receive various efforts and stimuli in supporting the development of all children's potential, this period is a period when there is maturation of functions in the physical and psychological of children who are able to respond stimulation provided by the surrounding environment (Supriani, 2023). The Early Childhood Education Environment (PAUD) plays a strategic role as the first formal institution that shapes children's behavior and moral values outside the family environment.

One of the most effective mediums in the process of instilling morals in early childhood education is through interpersonal communication between educators and children. However, communication that is merely informative is not necessarily effective in instilling children's morals. A more in-depth and meaningful communication approach is needed, namely empathic communication. Empathetic communication allows educators to understand and feel the child's emotions and perspectives, which are important prerequisites in a child's intellectual and social development. Furthermore, mindfulness-based empathic communication will enrich this process, allowing educators to be fully present, listen without judgment, and respond wisely and appropriately.

This research departs from the assumption that moral installation in PAUD is not just a transfer of knowledge, but a process of internalizing values that requires personal interaction that is rich in empathy and awareness from educators. Therefore, this study will examine how interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic communication approach is applied by PAUD educators in instilling morals in children aged 5-6 years.

Morality refers to ethics or morals that reflect the spiritual and social qualities of an individual. Morality according to Islamic ethical theory has a very high position and is the core of religious teachings that not only regulate between humans and Allah, but also the relationship between humans and others and the universe (Hakim et al., 2025). In children aged 5-6 years, moral installation in PAUD focuses on the introduction of basic values such as honesty, compassion, responsibility, discipline, respect, and cooperation. This process involves habituation through daily routines, examples from educators, gentle advice, and positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors. A conducive and interactive PAUD environment strongly supports the internalization of these values.

Interpersonal communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and feelings between two or more individuals. In the context of moral instillation in early childhood education, interpersonal communication is the main channel for educators to convey values, provide guidance, resolve conflicts, and build warm and trusting relationships with children. The effectiveness of interpersonal communication depends heavily on the ability to listen, convey messages clearly, and understand children's verbal and non-verbal responses.

Empathetic communication is the ability to understand and share people's feelings and perspectives. Interpersonal communication, according to Deddy Mulyana, is face-toface communication between people that allows each participant to capture the reaction of others directly (Raudah et al., 2018). In this communication, individuals seek to put themselves in the shoes of others, feel what they feel, and respond with understanding. Empathy in communication in early childhood education allows educators to respond to children's emotional needs, understand the reasons behind certain behaviors, and build strong emotional bonds. This bond is very important in building trust and facilitating the absorption of moral values by children.

Mindfulness, or mindfulness, is the ability to be fully present in the moment, paying attention to thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations without judgment. Empathetic communication is communication that is built on the basis of mutual understanding and understanding of the conditions and feelings of the people involved in the communication (Rachmawati et al, 2025). In the context of communication in early childhood education, mindfulness allows educators to focus fully on interacting with the child, listening carefully when the child speaks or shows emotions, and responds consciously rather than reactively. A mindfulness-based approach can improve the quality of communication, reduce educator stress, and create a calmer learning environment that is conducive to moral development

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to deeply understand the phenomenon of moral instillation in the natural context of early childhood education, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of educators and children aged 5-6 years. The case study allows for intensive exploration of the application of interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling the morals of children aged 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa so as to gain a comprehensive understanding of the communication practices that occur. The selection of subjects based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. Subject criteria may include:

a. Educators or PAUD teachers who teach children aged 5-6 years.
b. Educators who have at least 2 years of teaching experience.
c. Students in the age group 5-6 years old (Class B)

Data collection in this study is through several techniques as follows:

a. In-depth interviews: conducted with educators to explore their experiences, views, and practices related to interpersonal communication, empathy, awareness, and the cultivation of children's morals in early childhood education. Questions will focus on specific examples of interactions and how they overcome challenges.

b. Participatory observation: the researcher will observe the interaction between educators and children in various situations in the PAUD classroom (i.e. when playing, learning, eating, or overcoming conflicts) to see firsthand the practice of awareness-based empathic communication that occurs.
c. Documentation: collect relevant documents in the form of early childhood education modules and field notes, and educator training materials that can provide additional information about the process of moral instilling.

The collected data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Data obtained from interviews, observations and document analysis will be analyzed to find out themes related to the cultivation of morals of children aged 5-6 years through interpersonal communication with an empathy-based communication approach based on awareness. The steps taken are data transcription, data familiarization, coding, theme grouping, theme review and naming, interpretation and report writing and data verification

3. Result And Discussion

Result

Data collection involves direct interaction between researchers and informants to explore a deep understanding of the experiences, views and perspectives of informants related to the cultivation of morals of children aged 5-6 years through interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa RW 004. The researcher conducted interviews with 3 class B teachers and 23 children in the age group of 5-6 years old (class B).

Based on the results of interviews with teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004, as follows:
a. Teachers understand the concept of awareness-based empathic communication in instilling children's morals in different ways, but basically they provide understanding and understanding to children about caring and good morals.
b. Teachers apply a mindfulness-based empathic communication approach in daily interactions with children by regulating and validating children's feelings as a form of concern for them.
c. Teachers build children's awareness of the importance of good morals by providing basic knowledge about the causes and effects of children's actions, teaching them magic words, and telling them exemplary stories.
d. Teachers handle situations when children make mistakes or behaviors that are not in accordance with good morals by communicating with children, making approaches, and providing understanding that every bad act can have bad consequences for themselves and others.
e. Teachers feel happy, happy, closer, and more meaningful in interacting with children when using an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling children's morals.
f. Teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling children's morals by observing, making notes on children's daily lives, and reflecting together with parents.
g. The challenges faced by teachers in using an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling children's morals are about diverse parenting styles, differences in children's perceptions and habits at school and at home.
h. Teachers increase children's awareness and ability to develop good morals through interpersonal communication by becoming role models, models, and facilitators for children in instilling good morals and doing it consistently.

Thus, it can be concluded that the teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 have understood and applied the concept of awareness-based empathic communication in the cultivation of children's morals well, although there are still some challenges that need to be overcome. Based on the results of interviews with children at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa, as follows:
a. Children really like the teacher's gentle and patient speaking style, as much as 100% of children respond happily when the teacher speaks softly and patiently.
b. Children feel happy when the teacher listens well to their stories, as 73.91% of children answer happily.
c. The majority of children choose to remain silent when they feel sad or angry, as many as 78.91% of children answered so. This shows that it is important for teachers to regulate children's feelings.
d. Children have a positive relationship with their friends, as many as 91.30% of children answer that they play with their friends.

e. Children have learned about good morals from teachers, especially about sharing and helping, as many as 43.48% of children answered so.
f. Children have applied good morals in daily life, especially about sharing and helping, as many as 65.22% of children answered so.
g. Children feel comfortable talking to teachers about their feelings, as many as 60.87% of children answer so.

Thus, it can be concluded that the experience of children in the age group of 5- 6 years in interacting with teachers and their friends through an empathy-based communication approach based on awareness at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa has gone well. Children have shown the ability to manage their emotions, interact positively with their friends, and apply good morals in daily life. Teachers need to continue to maintain consistency in interacting positively with children and become facilitators and motivators in instilling children's morals.

The results of observations made by the researcher on teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004, can be concluded that:
a. Teachers have used effective verbal communication with children, namely by using a moderate tone of voice and language that is simple and easy for children to understand.
b. Teachers have used positive nonverbal communication, namely by using eye contact, posture, and supportive touch, as well as showing positive facial expressions.
c. Teachers have shown dominant empathy in responding to children's feelings, namely by supporting and helping to develop awareness of children's feelings.
d. Teachers have developed children's awareness of good morals through examples that are relevant to children's daily lives, such as honesty and sharing with friends.
e. Teachers have built positive relationships with children, become motivators and facilitators for children in the classroom, and provide opportunities for children to speak and share opinions.

Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling the morals of children aged 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 has been implemented well by the teachers, although there are some terms that are not well understood by the teachers there. The results of this observation support the results of interviews that have been conducted previously

The results of observations on the moral aspects of children at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa during learning activities can be described in the following graph:



Figure 1: Moral Aspect Assessment Results

a. Honesty aspect: The majority of children (65.22%) showed excellent honest behavior in telling the truth, and 52.17% of children showed excellent honest behavior in admitting mistakes and apologizing for mistakes.
b. Empathy aspect: The majority of children (43.48%) show excellent empathetic behavior in understanding the feelings of others, and 39.13% of children show excellent empathic behavior in showing concern for others.

c. Tolerance aspect: The majority of children (34.78%) showed excellent tolerant behavior in accepting differences of opinion and belief, and 52.17% of children showed excellent tolerance behavior in showing patience and not being irritable.
d. Responsible aspect: The majority of children (60.87%) show excellent responsible behavior in completing their tasks and responsibilities, and 39.13% of children show excellent responsible behavior in showing awareness of the consequences of their actions.
e. Respectful aspect: The majority of children (69.57%) show excellent respectful behavior in showing respect for others, and 60.87% of children show excellent respectful behavior in using polite and polite language.

Thus, it can be concluded that the behavior of children in the age group of 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa shows the category of very good and good judgment that dominates, so it can be concluded that interpersonal communication with an empathy-based communication approach is effective in instilling good morals for children.

The research documentation conducted at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa004 includes various data sources, including field records containing documents that record the results of observations and direct observations in the field. Participatory Observation, the researcher was directly involved in activities at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 to obtain more in-depth data. The Researcher Reflection Journal is a personal and systematic record made by the researcher to reflect on his experiences, thoughts, feelings, and decisions during the research. A researcher's reflection journal is an important source of data because it allows researchers to document experiences and observations, analyze and evaluate decisions made and reflect on the impact of decisions on research. Thus, the documentation of this study can provide a more complete and accurate picture of the process of instilling morals for children aged 5-6 years through interpersonal communication with an awareness-basedEmpathic communication approach at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004.

Discussion

The effectiveness of interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling morals in children aged 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa showed positive results. Based on Haim Ginott's theory, mindfulness-based empathic communication can be a strong moral foundation for children. The results of the study showed that teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa have understood the concept of awareness-based empathic communication and applied it in interacting with children. They regulate and validate children's feelings as a form of concern for them. This approach makes teachers feel happy, happy, closer, and more meaningful in interacting with children. Efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of awareness-based empathic communication are carried out through observation, children's daily records, and joint reflection with parents. Teachers are also role models, models, and facilitators for children in instilling good morals.

The results showed that the practice of feeling validation and focus on behavior without negative labeling, as well as adult self-awareness in managing emotions, was shown to correlate with positive moral responses and development in children. Although consistency is still an area that needs to be strengthened, these findings reinforce the relevance of Ginott's theory in early childhood education. Overall, this study shows that interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic approach is very effective in instilling morals in children aged 5-6 years. This approach can improve prosocial behavior and healthy emotional expression in children. Therefore, Ginott's approach can be a vital strategy in early childhood character and moral formation.

The implementation of interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic approach at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 showed positive results in instilling morals in children aged 5-6 years. Based on Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014, early childhood is expected to behave politely, respectfully, help, be honest, maintain personal and environmental cleanliness, and respect each other. The results of the study show that teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 have understood and applied interpersonal communication with an empathy-based approach in interacting with children. This approach is not just a communication technique, but an effective strategy that supports the cultivation of various aspects of morals in children aged 5-6 years.

The results of interviews with children showed that they were able to understand positive feelings, actions, and conflict resolution through interpersonal communication with an empathic mindfulness-based approach. Children actively internalize moral values in the form of empathy, honesty, responsibility, and the ability to share. The researchers' observations show that teachers who have self-awareness and practice validation of feelings and focus on behavior, create an environment conducive for children to develop emotion regulation, empathy, honesty, responsibility, and

prosocial behavior. Analysis of the documentation shows that the teaching module of BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 has planned aspects of children's morals in the plan of learning activities and field notes proving the implementation of interpersonal communication with an empathy-based approach based on awareness. Overall, this study shows that interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic approach is the main pillar in moral instilling in children aged 5-6 years, which is in line with the guidelines of Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014. This approach can create a safe and supportive environment for children to develop empathy, responsibility, selfcontrol, honesty, and prosocial behavior. Therefore, this approach can be a vital strategy in early childhood character building.

The challenges faced by teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 in using an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling morals are diverse parenting styles, differences in children's perceptions and habits at school and at home. Based on the results of the researcher's interview with the child, it can be concluded that the teacher's speaking style towards the child is gently and patiently liked by the child. Thus, it can be concluded that a gentle and patient teacher's approach is essential in building a positive relationship with children and improving the quality of learning. A safe classroom environment makes children dare to be honest.

Teachers facilitate role-playing activities that emphasize the importance of sharing and caring. Teachers always remind children to be patient in line when waiting for their turn in children's play activities at school. At school, teachers consistently remind and habituate children to apply magic words, like thank you, permission, I am sorry and so on. The implementation of interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling the morals of children aged 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 has been carried out by teachers, although there are some terms that are not well understood by teachers there.

In dealing with situations when children make mistakes or behaviors that are not in accordance with good morals, the efforts made by teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 are to communicate with children, approach and provide understanding that every bad act can have bad consequences for themselves and others. Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the implementation of interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach in instilling the morals of children aged 5-6 years at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 has been done well. However, there are several factors that support and hinder efforts to instill children's morals through interpersonal communication with a mindfulness-based empathic communication approach.

The main supporting factor is the teacher's gentle and patient speaking style, which is liked by 100% of children. This shows that a gentle and patient approach of teachers is essential in building positive relationships with children and improving the quality of learning. In addition, a safe and comfortable classroom environment is also a supporting factor in instilling children's morals. Teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004 have facilitated role-playing activities that emphasize the importance of sharing and caring, as well as reminding children to be patient in line when waiting for their turn in play activities.

However, there are also several inhibiting factors faced by teachers at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004, such as diverse parenting styles and differences in children's perceptions and habits at school and at home. This shows that teachers need to work together with parents to increase awareness and consistency in instilling children's morals. Overall, this study shows that the implementation of interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach can be an effective strategy in instilling the morals of children aged 5-6 years, but it needs to be balanced with cooperation between teachers and parents as well as awareness of existing supporting and inhibiting factors.

4. Conclusion

The study was conducted comprehensively examining the effectiveness of moral instilling in children aged 5-6 years through interpersonal communication with an awareness-based empathic communication approach at BKB PAUD Tunas Harapan Bangsa 004, Jatinegara Village, Cakung District, East Jakarta. Based on the triangulation of data from interviews with teachers and children, observations of teachers and children in the age group of 5-6 years (Class B), as well as the analysis of teaching module documentation and field notes, strongly supported by the interpersonal communication theories of Haim Ginott, Jalaludin Rakhmat, and Joseph A. DeVito, it can be concluded that this approach is a very relevant and effective strategy.

The implementation of awareness-based empathic communication has been proven to be able to shape various aspects of fundamental morals in early childhood. Aspects of successfully instilled morals include: empathy and caring through validation of feelings and understanding of others' perspectives, honesty and responsibility by creating a safe environment to admit mistakes and focus on behavior improvement, self-control and emotional regulation through the guidance of healthy emotional expression and the modeling of Teacher's self-awareness, as well as the ability to share and cooperate through empathic conflict mediation and positive feedback. This finding is expressly in line with the Child Development Achievement Level Standard (STPPA) in Permendikbud No. 137 of 2014, especially in the scope of religious and moral values as well as social-emotional.

The successful implementation of this approach depends heavily on several key factors. Teachers and parents who act as credible and competent communicators based on the theories of Haim Ginott, Jalaludin Rakhmat, and DeVito are able to convey a clear, validating, and non-labeled moral message. They effectively use a variety of verbal and nonverbal communications in a secure context to ensure messages are received. Providing positive and constructive feedback directly strengthens moral behavior. The most crucial supporting factor is the self-awareness of adults (Gurus), their ability to manage emotions and personal responses allows them to remain empathetic and consistent, even in challenging situations. This awareness also makes them good role models for children in terms of emotional regulation.

However, the main inhibiting factor identified is consistency in the application of this approach by teachers as a model in communication. Fatigue, stress, or old communication habits sometimes erode conscious empathic communication practices. Therefore, this study recommends the need for continuous support in the form of training and mentoring for teachers to strengthen the internalization of the principles of empathy-based communication, in order to optimize the moral instilling of children aged 5-6 years in a holistic and sustainable manner.

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