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PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN MUARA PINANG VILLAGE, EMPAT LAWANG REGENCY

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Abstract

The education that children will get is inseparable from the perceptions of parents who send or do not send their children to school and every perception conveyed by parents is influenced by several factors. Therefore, this study aims to find out how the perceptions held by parents regarding early childhood education and find out the reasons behind the perceptions conveyed. The research method used is a type of qualitative research, while the data collection techniques used are observation, interviews, and documentation. The results show that parents have similarities and differences in conveying perceptions of early childhood education, namely: Parents who send their children to school said that Early Childhood Education is very important because they can gain basic knowledge, making it easier for children to enter primary school. Meanwhile, parents who do not send their children to school say Early Childhood Education is important and quite important, but most of these parents say education can be obtained at home without having to be enrolled in PAUD. The factors underlying parents convey these perceptions in the form of internal and external factors. Internal factors include the parents-children closeness and the reasons for sending and not sending children to school. External factors are environment, educational background, work, and school fees.

Keywords: Perception, Parents, Early Childhood Education

Abstrak

Pendidikan yang akan diperoleh anak tidak terlepas dari persepsi orang tua yang menyekolahkan atau tidak menyekolahkan anaknya dan setiap persepsi yang disampaikan orang tua dipengaruhi oleh beberapa faktor. Maka dari itu, Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana persepsi yang dimiliki oleh orang tua mengenai pendidikan anak usia dini dan mengetahui alasan di balik persepsi yang disampaikan. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah jenis penelitian kualitatif, adapun teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan yaitu observasi, wawancara dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang tua memiliki persamaan maupun perbedaan dalam menyampaikan persepsi terhadap pendidikan anak usia dini, yaitu: Orang tua yang menyekolahkan anaknya mengatakan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini itu sangat penting karena dapat memperoleh pengetahuan dasar, sehingga memudahkan anak ketika memasuki jenjang Sekolah Dasar. Sedangkan, orang tua yang tidak menyekolahkan anaknya mengatakan Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini itu penting dan cukup penting, namun sebagian besar orang tua tersebut mengatakan pendidikan dapat diperoleh di rumah saja tanpa harus dimasukkan ke PAUD Kemudian faktor yang mendasari orang tua menyampaikan persepsi tersebut berupa faktor internal dan eksternal. Faktor internal yaitu kedekatan orang tua dan anak, alasan orang tua menyekolahkan dan tidak menyekolahkan anak. Sedangkan faktor eksternal yaitu lingkungan, pendidikan, pekerjaan, dan biaya sekolah

Keywords: Perception, Parents, Early Childhood Education

Introduction

Education is a conscious effort carried out systematically as a way to create a learning atmosphere or learning activities so that students will actively develop their potential (Asri, C., et al., 2021). The education received by students includes guidance, teaching, and training to cultivate personality as preparation for the future. Such education is not only obtained from institutions but also family, especially parents.

Early Childhood is the most important part of every individual's developmental process, referred to as the Golden Age, spanning the age range of 0-6 years. Golden Age means "golden years," during which a child's growth and development experience significant advancements (Aryanti, T., 2016). Therefore, special attention and stimulation from parents or their environment are needed to assist the child's growth and development process.

Each child has unique characteristics; they also have their talents and interests. Some children tend to have higher intelligence, while others may exhibit ordinary levels of intelligence with various behaviors. At this stage, different cells in a child's body develop rapidly, necessitating nutritious food and stimulation to support their growth. Suitable stimulation, such as quality education, is necessary to help nurture and enhance the child's abilities and talents (Al-Tabany, T.B.I., 2011). This education is provided by parents directly or indirectly through educational institutions, as it is the child's right to receive proper education.

The right to education for children is enshrined in Article 9, paragraph 1 of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 23 of 2002 on child protection, which states that every child has the right to receive quality education to enhance their personality development and intelligence according to their interests and talents (Indonesia, Based Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia No. 23 tahun 2002).

The statement above explains that parents must ensure their children's rights, including providing adequate education and care. Parents bear the responsibility for their children's education, as children are both a mandate and a blessing from God that must be raised and educated properly (Amini, M., 2015). Parents also carry the responsibility of choosing suitable educational institutions for their children. Moreover, parents are considered the first educators who understand their child's character, as they are part of the child's environment from birth.

Parents are obligated to provide proper education to their children as a duty entrusted by Allah SWT. The Quran emphasizes that parents have a responsibility to educate and provide quality education for their children, as stated in Surah Luqman [31]: 16-17.

This verse contains Luqman al-Hakim's advice that even the slightest injustice or wrongdoing will be rewarded. Allah will reveal it on the Day of Judgment when He establishes the scales of justice and gives due recompense – good for good and bad for bad (Abdullah, 2017). Therefore, parents are obligated to educate their children to the best of their ability, instilling good habits and avoiding bad ones so that the children

can honor their parents and become a generation of service for their faith. It is crucial for parents to provide quality education for their children. As the child's first educator is the family, this responsibility continues as the child progresses to higher levels of education, where their learning will also be influenced by the external environment determined by the parents and family.

The early childhood education received by children is influenced by the perceptions and opinions of parents. These perceptions stem from parents' evaluations of education forms, which serve as a reference for expressing opinions (Sari, 2022). Such perceptions may determine whether parents consider early childhood education important or not. Some parents still believe that early childhood education is not crucial because they assume education begins when children enter elementary school.

Perception is a cognitive process derived from observing or experiencing a particular event or object in the environment through hearing, sight, smell, or feeling (Siregar, 2013). This process begins with information received from the environment, followed by selecting relevant information and interpreting it.

Perception and thinking patterns originate from one's experience with objects or events, whether directly or indirectly experienced. This information is processed in the central nervous system to form a perception as a response to the received information. Perception is also a way for someone to communicate with the conditions in their surroundings (Suciati, 2015), as exemplified by parents. Parents react to what happens around them, including the education that will be provided to their children.

Many studies have examined the relationship between parental perception and early childhood education. However, these studies differ in aspects such as research methods, subjects, field situations, and others.

For instance, a study by Devi Chairunnissa in 2023 titled "Parental Perception of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in the Thousand Islands" explored parental perceptions of early childhood education. While this research also discussed parental views on early childhood education, its goal differed, as it aimed to measure percentage or perspectives alone. In contrast, the present study seeks to examine parents' perceptions more thoroughly. Differences also arise in research methods and data collection, which result in distinct data forms.

This study, therefore, aims to understand parents' perceptions or views on early childhood education, focusing on parents whose children attend PAUD or do not. These perceptions are crucial to understanding because children in their early years should receive equitable education. A lack of parental understanding or attention to the importance of early childhood education might determine the child's future educational journey.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative descriptive research aims to reveal events, facts, or circumstances occurring during the research period by presenting what actually happens. Qualitative research

intends to provide an understanding of the conditions experienced by the research subjects, whether related to behavior, perceptions, support, social life, and so on, in a holistic manner described in the form of words using several scientific methods (Lexy, M.J., 2022). This study involves eight parents with children aged 5-6 years, both those attending early childhood education (PAUD) and those not attending, residing in the village of Muara Pinang.

Two types of data sources are used: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to data directly obtained in the field from the original source without intermediaries, while secondary data is data indirectly obtained from intermediary media or other parties' records. Data collection techniques include triangulation of data, which involves methods such as interviews, observations, and documentation. After the data is collected, it will be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The activities in data analysis include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Zuchri, A., 2021).

The interview technique in this study consists of at least six questions per parent, related to the background and education of both the parents and their children. The documentation technique includes records of children's school attendance and daily activities. The Miles and Huberman model for data analysis, derived from the previously explained data triangulation technique, is used. Based on this, researchers will further analyze the results obtained in the form of descriptive explanations or narratives.

Results and Discussion

Perception is a process that begins with sensory activities, involving the processing of information by an individual, which is then processed sensorily because perception is related to sensory mechanisms. The sensory process occurs continuously as a person receives information through the senses (Walgito, 2003). The management of perception is also influenced by how much knowledge a person has about what is perceived. Similarly, the perception of parents is based on how much understanding they have regarding early childhood education.

Parental perception is the perspective held by parents when conveying information they possess while interpreting their thoughts about known phenomena or events. In this study, there are similarities and differences in perceptions among parents.

Many studies have explored the relationship between parental perception and early childhood education. However, this study differs from others in terms of research methods, subjects, field situations, and other factors.

As in the study conducted by Devi Chairunnissa in 2023, titled Parental Perception of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in the Thousand Islands. While this study also discusses parental perceptions of early childhood education, its objective differs. The study aimed to measure percentages or views, whereas this research seeks to thoroughly understand parents' perceptions. Moreover, research methods and data collection approaches are also different, leading to distinct data outcomes.

Another study was conducted by Cahayanengdian (2021), titled Parental

Perception of Early Childhood Education, in Banjar Jaya Timur Village. However, this research aimed to determine the percentage level of parental perceptions using questionnaire techniques. Consequently, the results obtained are inevitably different. In addition, the subjects and field situations are also very different from those in this study. From this study, it can be observed that parental perceptions of early childhood education fall into a high category (70%), which indicates a generally positive perspective.

From the above studies, it is evident that while the topic revolves around parental perceptions or views on early childhood education, the selection of research subjects differs. Additionally, the methods and data collection procedures also vary, resulting in different data outcomes. These studies reveal that parents generally hold quite positive views about early childhood education. However, there are still instances where parents fail to provide adequate education for their children.

Currently, early childhood education is relatively accessible, including in Muara Pinang Village, which already has a PAUD institution. Initial observations indicate that the total number of children in this village within the early childhood age range of 5–6 years is 41, as recorded from birth data for 2018–2019 at the Muara Pinang Community Health Center (Puskesmas Muara Pinang). There is one PAUD institution in Muara Pinang Village, namely PAUD Abdurrahman 2, consist of 19 students. Additionally, 9 children attend PAUD in a neighboring village, while 13 early childhood-aged children in Muara Pinang Village have yet to attend any PAUD.

Children not attending early childhood education (PAUD) are not solely due to parents' lack of understanding about early childhood education but are also influenced by various factors such as work, parents' lack of interest in enrolling their children in PAUD, and other reasons. However, some parents enroll their children in PAUD but do not pay much attention to their children's activities either at school or at home. Yet, children's growth and development are not only gained from school but also require attention and stimulation from the family, especially parents.

Therefore, this study was conducted to clearly understand parents' perceptions or views regarding early childhood education and the reasons underlying those perceptions. The research informants include 8 individuals: 4 parents whose children are attending PAUD and 4 parents whose children are not attending PAUD.

Parental perception is the viewpoint held by parents when conveying information they possess while interpreting their thoughts regarding known phenomena or events. In this study, there are similarities and differences in perceptions among the parents.

The research results indicate that each parent has different perceptions. Although most parents state that early childhood education (PAUD) is important, not all of them enroll their children in PAUD institutions. This is due to certain supporting factors that influence parents not to enroll their children, which simultaneously align with their expressed perceptions.

Some parents understand the importance of PAUD and choose to enroll their children, while others have not fully grasped what PAUD is and the various benefits it offers. Early childhood education is indeed crucial to provide to children before they enter primary school. However, such education is not only obtained through PAUD institutions – it also comes from parents and families as primary educators.

Parents highlight that early childhood education is very important because it represents the beginning of a child's educational journey. As explained by Mrs. MU:

"In my opinion, early childhood education is the start of a child's education. From there, children will learn many things, both lessons and rules they need to follow. PAUD is therefore it is very important for children, which is why I enrolled my child in PAUD. The initial knowledge I mentioned includes things like letters, numbers, distinguishing colors, communicating with their peers, developing bravery, holding a pencil correctly, and differentiating between good and bad behaviors."

As stated by Sujiono (2013), children between the early ages of up to six years are a crucial phase for shaping their character and personality. This period also marks the rapid development of their permanent intelligence, as they can absorb information from their surroundings. Hence, early childhood necessitates proper stimulation to support their growth and development effectively.

From observations and documentation, it was seen that AA, Mrs. MU's child, does indeed attend PAUD Abdurrahman 2 in Muara Pinang Village, belonging to group B2. Developmental notes obtained from the school show that AA's physical growth is excellent, and their skills development is also very good, as evidenced by their crafted works. AA is able to socialize with peers, complete tasks thoroughly and carefully, solve simple problems and identify and differentiate Allah's commands from prohibitions. However, AA has not yet developed self-confidence, particularly when meeting strangers.

Some parents acknowledge the importance of early childhood education (PAUD) but choose not to send their children to school. As explained by Mrs. SI:

"Early childhood education includes learning letters, numbers, colors, and singing activities, among others. Therefore, PAUD is essential. I enrolled my two older children in PAUD because the PAUD in Muara Pinang Village is quite good. They were able to learn reading and writing there."

When further questioned about why Mrs. SI did not enroll her youngest child in PAUD, she explained:

"I feel a bit embarrassed to enroll Rara in PAUD because her body is smaller compared to her peers. Perhaps her growth is slightly delayed, so I prefer to wait until she is ready to enter primary school, hoping she will develop properly by then. Others have suggested my child is malnourished, but I strongly refute that as she consumes healthy food quite well."

The statement above indicates that Mrs. SI understands the importance of early childhood education even though she has not enrolled her child in PAUD. Through PAUD, children are taught the basics of learning as preparation for entering primary school. As stated by Saputra (2018), one of the objectives of PAUD is to prepare children for future challenges, such as transitioning to primary school. Early childhood education institutions provide foundational learning skills at this stage.

Additionally, other parents acknowledge that early childhood education is important but do not see enrolling their child in PAUD as necessary. This view was expressed by Mrs. SA:

"Early childhood education, as far as I know, involves common activities for children, such as learning to read and write, playing, and singing more often. So, it can be said that PAUD is quite important to ensure children are not illiterate and can recognize numbers before entering primary school. However, it does not have to involve enrollment in PAUD, as children can learn at home, like my grandchild, and I sometimes accompany them in learning. Fisya is a brave child who prefers playing outside alone or with other children nearby rather than playing at home."

When observations and documentation were conducted, it was found that the child preferred playing outside the house, often at quite a distance and continuing to play until evening. Exploring the environment is indeed beneficial for children, as stated by Ali (2023), where the environment serves as a learning resource that can contribute to quality learning processes. However, it is equally important to ensure proper supervision from adults when children are outside to avoid undesirable incidents.

While the child played outdoors, there was no supervision from their family, and even at home, it was observed that the child did not engage in any learning activities. Mrs. SA was preoccupied with caring for her youngest grandchild, who is under three years old, along with her grandchild's fondness for playing outside the house.

From the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, it can be concluded that parents share the same perception: early childhood education is important, although they have different levels of emphasis on its importance. Some believe early childhood education is very important and enroll their children in PAUD institutions, while others recognize its importance but choose not to enroll their children. Additionally, some parents consider early childhood education to be moderately important, preferring to provide education at home rather than enrolling their children in PAUD institutions.

Even so, every parent certainly desires the best for their child according to their perception. Hence, parents provide facilities to support their children's learning. However, some parents pay attention to the usefulness of what they provide, while others give toys merely for entertainment without understanding whether these toys can assist in learning or stimulate developmental aspects. Parents often do not realize that the toys they provide also have benefits for their child's development.

Each parent has different perceptions based on the level of knowledge they have regarding the subject of their perception. These perceptions are influenced by specific reasons, which act as factors shaping the parents' views. The factors underlying parental perceptions of PAUD in Muara Pinang Village, Empat Lawang Regency, are as follows:

1. Internal Factors

Internal factors refer to everything originating within the individual, whether physical or mental. In this study, internal factors include the closeness between parents and children, as well as the reasons parents choose to enroll or not enroll their children in PAUD.

The closeness between parents and children is divided into two types: physical closeness and emotional closeness. Physical closeness encompasses external physical interactions, such as touches and hugs, which provide children with a sense of security and represent mutual affection. Emotional closeness, on the other hand, is deeply meaningful to children, such as making them feel like a companion, offering encouragement, instilling self-confidence, and much more (Wulandari, 2020).

Closeness stems from the emotional bond between parents and their children. It cannot be measured by the amount of time spent but rather by how deeply parents can understand their children. This closeness allows children to feel secure, comfortable, more open, and trusting toward their parents. The more parents are able to understand their children, the better they can identify their needs – be it from the child's desires or their developmental requirements.

Parents have different reasons for deciding whether to send their children to early childhood education (PAUD), depending on their mindsets. However, parents need to understand what is essential for a child's growth and development. Therefore, building a close relationship between parents and children is crucial to assessing whether the child's developmental phase aligns with their age.

Parents who believe PAUD is necessary typically enroll their children in these schools. Conversely, some parents do not enroll their children due to a lack of confidence related to the child's growth or health conditions. Confidence can be one of the factors influencing parents' perceptions, as observed in this study. For instance, some parents lack the confidence to enroll their child in PAUD because their child's growth is slower compared to peers of the same age.

Additionally, health issues may also be a reason parents choose not to enroll their children in PAUD. They might worry that if their child is in school during a time when their illness recurs, no one will be available to care for the child.

2. External Factors

External factors refer to all factors originating outside the parents themselves, such as the environment, education, employment, and school expenses. The environment can include the family environment, school environment, and the surrounding residential area, which may influence parents in choosing a particular school. For instance, if parents have children with peers of the same age or close family members, they might prefer enrolling their children in the same school. The surrounding neighborhood also plays a role, as children with many friends tend to be more active compared to those who select only specific friends.

Parental education also significantly influences parents' aspirations regarding their children's education. Most parents expect their children and family members to achieve higher education to secure better job opportunities than they had. However, there are clear differences in the perceptions between parents with higher education levels and those with lower education levels. Parents' educational background forms the foundation of their mindset development, influencing how they interpret things based on the knowledge they possess.

Similarly, employment is a factor that impacts parental perception. It affects the amount of time parents can dedicate to their children and family, even though time alone does not guarantee closeness between individuals. Employment may also act as a supporting factor when choosing PAUD schools for children, especially if the school is near the parents' workplace.

Likewise, school expenses may shape parents' decisions to enroll or not enroll their children in PAUD. Those with high financial capacity tend to fulfill their needs and desires without worrying about expenses. In contrast, families with low to middle incomes prioritize necessities and specific essential needs. As a result, some parents refrain from enrolling their children in PAUD due to financial constraints. However, many also believe that the cost of education is reasonable given the quality of education their children receive.

Conclusion

Parental perceptions play a significant role in determining the education provided to children. This study revealed that parents who enroll their children in PAUD state that early childhood education is very important because it provides foundational knowledge, making it easier for children to transition to primary school. On the other hand, parents who do not enroll their children in PAUD acknowledge that early childhood education is important or moderately important, but most of them believe that education can be obtained at home without the need to attend PAUD.

The perceptions parents have are influenced by several factors, categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors include the closeness between parents and children, as well as the reasons why parents choose to enroll or not enroll their children in PAUD. External factors, on the other hand, include the environment, education, employment, and school expenses.

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