

## **DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IN CHILDREN'S MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Wahyuni Murniati**

INState Islamic University Mataram

Email: wahyunimurniati@uinmataram.ac.id

### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of social interactions between early childhood children and elementary school children and their implications for the moral development of young children. Cross-age interactions in play environments involve reciprocal processes that may influence children's moral behavior in both positive and negative ways. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted in a natural setting in Ganti Village, Praya Timur District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. The participants consisted of three early childhood children, two elementary school children, four parents, and three teachers selected purposively. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation.

The findings indicate that cross-age social interactions occur intensively in children's daily play activities and are established through social contact and communication. The interaction dynamics include associative forms, such as cooperation and communication adaptation, as well as dissociative forms, such as conflict and contravention. These interactions are associated with the development of positive moral behaviors among young children, including obedience, honesty, responsibility, discipline, independence, courage, and self-esteem. On the other hand, they are also related to the emergence of negative behaviors, such as limited self-control, aggressive tendencies, and defiant behavior. The findings suggest that cross-age social interactions constitute one of the social contexts in which moral development takes place during early childhood.

**Keywords:** Cross-age social interaction; moral development; early childhood; play environment

### **Abstract**

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of social interactions between early childhood and elementary school children and their implications for the moral development of early childhood. Cross-age interactions in play environments involve reciprocal processes that can influence children's moral behavior, both positively and negatively. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design conducted in a natural setting in Ganti Village, East Praya District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. The research participants consisted of 3 early childhood children, 2 elementary school children, 4 parents, and 3 teachers who were selected purposively. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was obtained through source triangulation and technique triangulation.

The research findings indicate that cross-age social interactions occur intensively in daily play activities and are formed through social contact and communication. The dynamics of these interactions include associative forms such as cooperation and communication adaptation, as well as dissociative forms such as conflict and controversy. These interactions are related to the development of positive moral behavior in early childhood, such as obedience, honesty,

responsibility, discipline, independence, courage, and the ability to maintain self-esteem. On the other hand, these interactions are also related to the emergence of negative behaviors, such as low self-control, aggressive behavior, and a tendency to rebel. The research findings indicate that cross-age social interactions are one of the social contexts that play a role in the moral development of early childhood.

Keywords: cross-age social interaction; moral development; early childhood; play environment

## **INTRODUCTION**

Moral development is a crucial aspect of early childhood education because it relates to children's ability to understand values, norms, and accepted behaviors in social life. During early childhood, often referred to as the golden age, children experience rapid development, allowing various experiences gained from their environment to contribute to the formation of their behavior and character later in life (Muammar Qadafi, 2021). Morality encompasses not only an understanding of right and wrong but is also reflected in everyday behaviors such as honesty, responsibility, adherence to rules, and respect for others (Fitri, 2020; Sa'ida, 2022). Therefore, appropriate stimulation at an early age is a crucial factor in supporting optimal moral development in children.

One context that plays a role in children's moral development is social interaction. Social interaction allows children to learn to adhere to rules, values, and norms through direct experience with others (Siti Khasinah, 2015). Through social interaction, children not only develop communication and cooperation skills but also learn to control their behavior, resolve conflicts, and understand others' perspectives. Various studies have shown that the quality of social interaction is related to the development of children's social and moral behavior (Erik & Farah, 2023; Maisyarah et al., 2019). In addition to interactions with peers, the broader environment, including children's interactions with others of different ages, also has the potential to influence this developmental process.

Previous research has shown that social interactions can have both positive and negative impacts on children's development. Batinah et al. (2022) identified that the social environment and relationships with playmates are factors that influence children's social interaction skills. Meanwhile, Erik and Farah (2023) found that positive social interactions can support the development of children's communication, cooperation, and social behavior skills. Research by Fitri (2020) also confirmed that social interaction experiences contribute to children's moral development because through these interactions, children learn to understand the values and rules that apply in their social environment. Furthermore, peer interactions were found to play a role in developing social behavior in early childhood (Dwi Nur Rahma Mardiyani & Widyasari, 2023). Furthermore, it was stated that teachers have a crucial role in optimizing children's social interactions through various learning strategies (Rosidah et al., 2024). Meanwhile, Nurlatifah and Andini examines the development of social interaction skills in early childhood through counseling *transactiobal analysis* (Nurlatifah & Andini, 2022).

However, these studies have focused more on interactions between young children and their peers or on efforts to develop children's social skills in educational contexts. Studies

specifically examining the dynamics of cross-age social interactions between young children and elementary school children in community play environments and their implications for early childhood moral development are still limited. Therefore, this research was conducted to analyze the forms of social interactions that emerge in these cross-age relationships and their implications for early childhood moral development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. A qualitative approach is used to deeply understand social phenomena based on the experiences, perspectives, and meanings given by participants to an event in its natural context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The study was conducted in a natural setting in Ganti Village, Praya Timur District, Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara.

The participants in this study consisted of three early childhood students, two elementary school students, four parents, and three teachers. Participants were selected purposively, considering their direct involvement in the cross-age social interactions that were the focus of the study. Therefore, the selected participants were deemed capable of providing relevant and in-depth information in line with the research objectives.

Research data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included early childhood, elementary school children, parents, and teachers. Secondary sources included documents, field notes, and documentation supporting the research process. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe the forms of social interactions that occur between early childhood and elementary school children in the play environment. Interviews were conducted to obtain participants' perspectives on cross-age social interactions and their implications for children's moral development. Documentation was used as supporting data to strengthen the results of the observations and interviews.

Data analysis was conducted interactively, referring to the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model (Miles et al., 2014), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and focused on data relevant to the research objectives. Next, the data was presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and conducting ongoing verification based on findings obtained in the field.

To ensure data validity, this study employed source triangulation and technical triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various participants, while technical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. This process aims to

increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The research results show that social interactions between early childhood and elementary school children in Ganti Village occur intensively in everyday life. These interactions occur primarily in the context of play, both in the school environment and in the neighborhood. Based on observations, early childhood and elementary school children are often seen playing together, visiting each other's homes, looking for each other when they want to play, and engaging in various activities together such as eating together and picking fruit in the neighborhood. These activities indicate the existence of social relationships that are naturally formed through ongoing social contact and communication.

Research findings indicate that the formation of social interactions begins with social contact and communication between children. In various play activities, children invite each other, talk, joke, and plan activities to do together. For example, when they want to eat together, children first gather at one of the houses and wait for their friends to arrive. Similarly, when doing fruit picking activities, children discuss activities to do afterward, such as making rujak or simply enjoying the harvest together. These findings indicate that communication is an important tool in building and maintaining social relationships between children. These results are in line with the opinion of Muslims who state that social interaction can occur if there is social contact and communication as the main requirements for forming social relationships (Muslim, 2013).

Based on the data obtained, the dynamics of social interactions that occur can be categorized into associative and disassociative forms of interaction. Associative forms of interaction are seen through the cooperative activities carried out by children in various play activities. Early childhood and elementary school children are seen helping each other when playing, lending toys, sharing food, and working together on certain activities such as picking fruit or repairing broken toys. These situations indicate the existence of relationships that lead to togetherness and social integration. These findings support Maunah's view that associative interaction is a form of interaction that leads to the creation of harmonious social relationships through cooperation and mutual assistance (Maunah, 2016).

In addition to cooperation, this study also found disassociative forms of interaction that emerged in the relationship between early childhood and elementary school children. These forms of interaction were evident in disputes and controversies. Conflicts usually arise from misunderstandings during play, differences of opinion, or teasing behavior between friends. In some situations, these conflicts

escalate into physical actions such as hitting each other. Meanwhile, controversies were seen when elementary school children showed reluctance to play with early childhood children due to differences in desires or inappropriateness of the games chosen. These findings indicate that social interactions do not always result in harmonious relationships, but can also give rise to conflict as part of a normal social process. These results align with the views of Prahastiwi and Wahyuningsih, who stated that social interactions can take the form of cooperation and conflict (Eka Danik Prahastiwi, Dian Tias Aorta, 2019).

Overall, research findings indicate that cross-age social interaction is a dynamic process involving various forms of social relationships, both integrative and conflictual. Through these interactions, young children gain a variety of social experiences that are crucial to their development.

### **Implications of Cross-Age Social Interaction on the Moral Development of Early Childhood**

The research results show that cross-age social interactions have implications for the moral development of early childhood. Findings obtained through observations and interviews indicate that interactions with elementary school children can foster both positive and negative moral behavior. This suggests that the social experiences children gain through everyday interactions contribute to the formation of their moral behavior.

#### **1. Strengthening positive moral behavior**

Based on research results, social interactions with elementary school children are related to the development of a number of positive moral behaviors in early childhood. These behaviors include obedience, honesty, responsibility, discipline, independence, courage, and the ability to maintain self-esteem. In everyday life, early childhood exhibits behavior that complies with certain rules, is accustomed to asking permission when using friends' belongings, returns items that are not theirs, and tidies up after use. In addition, children also demonstrate independence in carrying out daily activities such as going to school, eating, bathing, and dressing themselves.

The development of these behaviors is inseparable from the process of observation and imitation that children undertake with older playmates. Early childhood tends to observe the behaviors exhibited by elementary school children and then imitate them in various social activities. This finding aligns with Bandura's learning theory, which explains that children learn through observing models in their environment. In the context of this research, elementary school children act as social models, providing learning experiences for early childhood children through daily interactions.

Furthermore, positive social interactions also help children develop the skills to cooperate, communicate, and understand the social rules that apply within playgroups. Thus, cross-age interactions not only provide opportunities for children to participate in social activities but also serve as a means of learning moral values that develop in society.

## 2. The Emergence of Negative Moral Behavior

Besides its positive impact, this study also shows that cross-age social interactions can be linked to the emergence of behaviors that are inappropriate for early childhood moral development. Some of the behaviors identified include low self-control, aggressive tendencies, defiance of authority, and teasing of peers.

Observations show that some young children display excessive anger when their desires are not met during play. In some situations, children also imitate aggressive behaviors exhibited by older children, such as hitting, pushing, or yelling at friends. Furthermore, children tend to follow the directions of playmates rather than those of teachers or parents in certain situations.

These findings indicate that the imitation process does not always result in positive behavior. Early childhood is still at a developmental stage that is heavily influenced by the social environment, so behavior observed in older individuals is potentially imitated without considering the consequences. The results of this study support the view that children's moral development is influenced by various social experiences gained through interactions with their surroundings (Fitri, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the overall findings, cross-age social interactions can be understood as one of the social contexts that plays a role in the moral development of early childhood. Through these interactions, children have the opportunity to learn social norms, values, and behaviors directly through everyday experiences. However, the resulting influences are not always positive. Therefore, the involvement of parents and teachers is still necessary to provide guidance, reinforce values, and support the social interactions children experience to support optimal moral development.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auliya, F., Pranoto, D., et al. (2020). *Moral intelligence of early childhood*. NO.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.

Batinah, B., Meiranny, A., & Arisanti, A. Z. (2022). Factors influencing social interaction in early childhood: Literature review. *Oxytocin: Scientific Journal of Midwifery*, 9(1), 31–39. <https://doi.org/10.35316/oksitosin.v9i1.1510>

- Cahyani, D. N., & Raharjo, R. P. (2024). Dissociative and associative social interactions in the short story "The Holy Family" by Sunlie Thomas Alexander. *Journal of Education, Science, and Humanities*, 1(1), 40–48.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dwi Nur Rahma Mardiyani, R., & Widyasari, C. (2023). Peer interaction in developing social behavior in early childhood. *Murhum: Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 4(2), 416–429. <https://doi.org/10.37985/murhum.v4i2.329>
- Erik, W., & Farah, N. (2023). The importance of social interaction in early childhood education. *TIFLUN: Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 1(1), 9–13.
- Fitri, M. (2020). Factors influencing moral development in early childhood. *Al Athfaal: Scientific Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 3(1), 1–15.
- Kanesa, P., & Maryana, M. E. (2021). The problem of national morals towards societal ethics. *Rechten Journal: Research on Law and Human Rights*, 3(3), 25–35. <https://doi.org/10.52005/rechten.v3i3.72>
- Khasinah, S. (2015). Extratextual interaction in the process of storytelling to early childhood. *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, 1(1), 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.22373/equality.v1i1.782>
- Maisyarah, M., Khadijah, K., & Nasution, F. (2019). The relationship between social interaction and moral development of 5–6 year old children at RA Jam'iyatush Shoolihiin in the 2018/2019 academic year. *Raudhah Journal*, 7(1), 14–25.
- Maunah, B. (2016). *Children's social interactions in the family, school and community*. IAIN Tulungagung Press.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Muammar Gaddafi. (2021). *Development of educational game tools for early childhood education*. Sanabil.
- Mulyadi, Y. Y., & Liauw, F. (2020). Social interaction platform. *Journal of Science, Technology, Urban, Design, Architecture (Stupa)*, 2(1), 37–44. <https://doi.org/10.24912/stupa.v2i1.6776>
- Muslim, A. (2013). Social interaction in multiethnic societies. *Journal of Islamic Discourse*, 1(3), 483–494. <https://doi.org/10.24252/jdi.v1i3.6642>
- Nurlatifah, I., & Andini, R. (2022). Developing social interaction skills with peers in early childhood through transactional analysis counseling. *Al-Akhbar: Islamic Scientific Journal*, 8(1), 10–14.
- Prahastiwi, E. D., & Wahyuningsih, D. (2021). Shifting patterns of Islamic social and religious interaction during the COVID-19 pandemic. *TAJDID: Journal of Islamic and Humanistic Thought*, 5(2), 109–121.
- Rita Fiantika, F., Wasil, M., Jumiyati, S., et al. (2022). *Qualitative research methodology*. PT Global Executive Technology.
- Rosidah, H. K., Mulyana, E. H., & Aprily, N. M. (2024). The role of teachers in optimizing social interactions in early childhood. *JECIE (Journal of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education)*, 8(1), 24–32. <https://doi.org/10.31537/jecie.v8i1.1329>
- Sa'ida, N. (2022). Analysis of moral values in folklore. *JP2KG AUD (Journal of Early Childhood Education, Care, Health and Nutrition)*, 1(1), 47–54.

<https://doi.org/10.26740/jp2kgaud.2020.1.1.47-54>

Islamic EduKids: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini  
Homepage:  
<https://journal.uinmataram.ac.id/index.php/IEK/index>  
E-ISSN: 2716-2516

Vol. ... No. ..., Februari 20...

Islamic EduKids: Journal of Early Childhood Education  
Homepage:  
<https://journal.uinmataram.ac.id/index.php/IEK/index> E-ISSN:  
2716-2516

---

Vol. ... No. ..., Februari 20...



