



### The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Language and Social Development for Early Childhood Children age 4-6 years in Karawang District

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#### Abstract

Children at an early age are unique people, where they have a pattern of growth and development. Language development reflects the growth and learning process of the children and it depends on maturity and learning opportunities. In early childhood education, there are 4 development aspects as a reference in stimulation for development and early childhood growth, which is language and social emotional aspects, cognitive and psychomotor. However COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the process of early childhood education, which includes assessing early childhood development from teachers to parents at home. This study endeavors to understand the impact of COVID-19 pandemic to the growth and development of 4-6 years old children, especially the language and social emotional aspects during online learning. The population in this study were teachers and parents of Islamic Early Childhood (RA or PIAUD) and Early Childhood students (PAUD) in Karawang Regency, Indonesia, and the sample size would be determined using the Slovin formula with an error tolerance limit of 5% (0.05). In the current study, the questionnaires and interviews were collected in order to get the relevant responses of parents' insight amidst COVID-19. The result indicates the impact of COVID-19 pandemic with School From Home (SFH) policy shows that SFH is affecting young children's receptive skills, Reading aspect, because online learning is related with the young children's literacy development, but not affecting Listening and Speaking aspect.

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## INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 19 in Wuhan, China, started spreading in December 2019, and on 30 January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the virus as Public Health Emergency of International Concern. The Novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has already infected 127.349.248 people, resulting in 2.787.593 deaths worldwide (WHO, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has led to enormous economic and societal challenges around the world. The national authorities worldwide have already responded to this outbreak by implementing public facilities closure, lockdown, social distancing, travel restrictions, and workplace hazard control. Preschools and kindergarten, schools, and universities have been closed both nationwide or on a local basis in 172 countries, affecting almost 98.5% of the world's student population (UNESCO, 2020), including Indonesia.

The condition of the PSBB (large-scale social restriction) due to the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in students having to study at home (SFH). In Indonesia, nationwide school began to close on 23th of March 2020, while localized closures in some provinces began to close on 16th March 2020, for instance DKI Jakarta, Central Java, Banten, West Java, and Aceh, (Kumparan, 2020).

The pandemic and its various treatments may contribute to daily activities and all aspects of children's life, threatening child growth and development. Research on the effect of prior pandemic and disaster pandemics reveals that there will be both immediate and long-term adverse consequences for children, with particular risks faced in early childhood, when brain architecture is still rapidly developing and highly sensitive to environmental difficulties (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

In education, entire generations of children have seen their education disrupted. Nationwide school closures have disrupted the education of more than 1.57 billion students - or 91% - worldwide. The effectiveness of school and educational institutions' closure in the effect of Covid-19 outbreak remains unrevealed (Viner et al., 2020), however the consequences on young children's development and growth are starting to appear. Numerous studies have reported the pros and cons of online learning (Daniel, 2020; Hodges et al., 2020; Reich et al., 2020).

The disruption of formal education may cause a negative impact on some young children's learning outcomes, specifically for disadvanta-

ged children who have unequal access to get the educational resources (UNESCO, 2020). In fact, children start to experience formal education from kindergarten and preschool and in this time young children start to develop critical thinking and literacy ability, for instance language structures and phonological perception which could set the basis of literacy skill for future acquisition (Aram, 2005; Crim et al., 2008).

In addition, Rusmaliyah, Menanti, and Simare-mare (2020) concluded that literacy is one's basic ability that includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These are a basis to develop an effective and productive learning so the young children are able to find and process the information.

Study by (Bao et al., 2020) predicted that preschool children in the United States will have 67% less literacy skill increase than they would usually have during Covid-19 school closure. According to Christodoulou et al (2017), these literacy skill loss can be reduced by educational attempts, such as library visits or intensive summer instructions, although these options are not available during Covid-19 closure.

Since the school and educational institutions start to close, parents, teachers and educators are vigorously looking for best practices to facilitate online learning (Reich et al., 2020). Reading the book aloud to preschool and kindergarten children can also be one of the best alternatives for parents in the midst of Covid-19 because the young children have limited ability to read independently. Besides, book-language, which is provided by adults, has higher sentence complexity and school vocabulary than conversation and storytelling (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Neuman et al., 2000). In addition, the advantages of reading aloud also can help children to practice word reading and interaction with text around letters and sounds, even if they read the same book a few times (Blewitt et al., 2009).

Furthermore, school and educational institutions' closure may establish social and emotional problems for young students. Recent studies by (Wang et al., 2020), found out that young children have less regular sleeping and eating habits, longer screen time, less physical activities, developed stress, and fewer social interactions during school and educational institutions closures; all of these could contribute to their physical and mental health.

For this reason, parents are playing an important role in students who are studying from home, because the supervision that used to be at school, held by the teacher, is now held at home

by the parents. Study conducted by Yoshikawa, et al (2020) supported that parents could be the buffer mechanism of a crisis in the environment that may affect young students' experience. Indeed, family and parenting factors are critical on the healthy growth and development in the early age, which could determine the immediate severity of Covid-19 pandemic impacts on the young students. The first environment for children is family. Parents become the childrens' example or role model to develop their social development, especially during the pandemic.

Parents' beliefs and attitudes about the prospect and role of online learning for young childrens may influence the opportunity, learning experiences young students receive at home, the quality and quantity of online learning (Erdoğan, Johnson, Dong, & Qiu, 2019). Accordingly, another study by Lepicnik-Vodopivec & Samec (2013) identified that parents who have higher education level tend to believe that digital and online learning are able to help the development of children's learning competencies, language, self-expression, and social competencies.

Building early childhood children's language skills and emotional social intelligence is just as important as building intellectual intelligence. Emotional intelligence is related to a person's ability to see, understand, organize, and express emotional events according to circumstances. This ability could grow naturally, but of course, support from the surrounding environment is still needed so that children can develop language intelligence and social emotional intelligence.

National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003 Article 1 explains that AUD education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to 6 years of age which is carried out by providing educational stimuli to assist physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education. The study of experts suggests that the implementation of a good Early Childhood children education will greatly affect, not only on educational activities at the next levels, but also in many aspects of children's life in the future. In particular, it will affect the productivity aspects of performance that are carried out by children later when they are adults and work (Lalompoh & Lalompoh, 2017).

It is further explained that there are 7 basic foundations used as a foundation for the implementation of Early Childhood children education, including philosophical, constitutional, scientific, historical, sociological, psychological, and religious foundations. If we pay attention to the important aspects that need to be developed

on the spiritual / mental side of Early Childhood children, then we see that moral and religious values are in the first place. Living conditions that actualize moral and religious values must be achieved in social life. The actualization will foster a positive attitude towards the natural environment which will form ideal conditions in society.

Hence, the purpose of this study is to see how much the impact of Covid-19 pandemic will have on the growth and development of 4-6 years old children, especially the language and social emotional aspects of the children. Furthermore, to overcome the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, this study offers early childhood children 4-6 years' old models of language and social emotional learning and parenting as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The PSBB (social distancing) policy which requires children to study at home (SFH = School from Home) is expected to have an impact on the development and growth of children's language skills and social emotional. The result of the current study can be advantageous for educators, parents, supervisor, teacher-training institute, government, or policymaker to determine the future guideline regarding online learning models that are corresponding with the characteristics and educational environment of the child so their skills can be improved during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## METHODS

The study is intended to explore involvement of parents of preschool years students regarding the impact of language and social emotional aspects during the times of COVID-19 pandemic. The field research used in this study allows the researchers to examine the phenomenon of parent's personal experience in varying circumstances and situations, especially on how they handle their children during School From Home. Qualitative research studies allow the researchers to explore the phenomenon from an individual's personal experiences in varying situations and circumstances.

The population in this study were teachers and parents of RA and PIAUD students in Karawang Regency and the sample size would be determined using the Slovin formula with 5% (0.05) of an error tolerance limit. The sampling technique used in this study is a simple random sample, which is a sampling technique that provides equal opportunities to every member in a population to be sampled. Questionnaires and interviews were administered in this study in order to get the relevant responses of parents' insight

amidst COVID-19. The questionnaire was given to respondents via Google Form, while the data measurement scale uses an interval scale and a ratio scale.

The data processing of the current study uses descriptive statistics, such as: (a) determining the size of the data (mode, average, and middle or median value), (b) determining the variability of the data, such as variation (variant), degree of deviation (standard deviation), and distance (range), and (c) determine the size of the shape of the data, such as skewness, kurtosis, and box plots. Some of these parametric statistical tests include: (1) z-test (1 or 2 samples), (2) t-test (1 or 2 samples), (3) simple and multiple correlation, (4) one or two way anova test, and (5) simple and multiple regression analysis.

### Data Analysis

Based on field research, we found that there are two types of development. First is social development consisting of social behavior development to the environment, social behavior to friends of the same age, social behaviour to themselves and social behaviour to the tasks. The second one is emotional development which has three aspects such as understanding of emotion themselves, understanding people's emotions and maintaining relationships with others.

This study also considers language development. There are two components that influence the development. The first one is listening and the second is speaking. The reason why we take into account both of these, is because we want to know how pandemic affects students to talk and listen.

### Findings

This study focuses on the Language Development and Social-Emotional Development of Early Childhood children during the Covid-19 pandemic season, where they have been absent from school for almost 8 months (March to November 2020). Researchers want to see the impact of SFH (School from Home) which is implemented by the government, including the age of Early Childhood children.

Language skills are divided into 2 parts, which are receptive skills: Listening and Reading; and language skills that are productive: Speaking and Writing. In this study, researchers only focused on receptive aspects of language development, which is Listening and productive aspects of language development, Speaking. This consideration is taken by keeping in mind and noting that the reading and writing components have not

been maximally provided at the Early Childhood children level.

The result of the study finds that on the language development aspect, only 41% (165 respondents out of 400 respondents) can achieve the curriculum target (K-13) set by the government (Ministry of Education and Culture). As for the listening component, only 35% (138 respondents out of 400 respondents) can achieve the curriculum target (K-13). Overall for the Speaking component aspect, it appears that only 42% (166 respondents out of 400 respondents) can achieve the curriculum target (K-13) by the government.

Social skills are divided into 4 parts, that is: (1) social skills related to environmental behavior, (2) skills related to peers (interpersonal), (3) skills related to oneself (self related), and (4) social skills related to aspects of the task. In this study, researchers focused on the four components of these social aspects.

For the social aspects of components related to the environment, it appears that only 41% (162 respondents out of 400 respondents) can achieve the curriculum target (K-13). Yet, for the social aspects of the components related to peers, it turns out that 33% of the respondents (133 respondents out of 400 respondents) have just achieved the curriculum target (K-13) set by the government. For the social aspects of the components related to oneself, it appears that there are still 35% (141 respondents out of 400 respondents) who have just achieved the K-13. As for the social aspects of the components related to the task, it shows that 41% (162 respondents out of 400 respondents) have just achieved the curriculum target.

Emotional intelligence is divided into 3 (three) parts, which is: (1) recognizing and understanding one's own emotions, (2) recognizing and understanding the emotions of others, and (3) building relationships with others. In this study, researchers focused on the three components of the emotional aspect.

For the emotional aspects of the components related to one's own emotions, it appears that 42% (168 respondents out of 400 respondents) achieve the curriculum target set by the government. for the emotional aspects of the components that are related to the emotions of others, only 38% (154 respondents out of 400 respondents) achieve a curriculum target. Besides, for the emotional aspects of the components related to building relationships with others, it turns out that 36% (144 respondents out of 400 respondents) achieved the curriculum target.

Another result of the study also finds that

parents still have difficulties (score  $\leq 3$ ), which is as much as 57%, while those who find it easy and easy (score  $\geq 4$ ) are 43%. This means that there are still many (57%) Early Childhood students who experience difficulties in terms of developing social behavior towards the environment.

## DISCUSSION

The Covid-19 has caused a sudden shift to online learning, and young students have to go to school from home, and it seems to be affecting young children and their parents. Young children are in the golden phase, where they learn faster in their first 5 years of age. School from home lacks a learning atmosphere and young students lack social interactions; they fail to engage with their friends, resulting in poor learning outcomes.

Based on the findings, it can be noted that Covid-19 pandemic affects some learning aspects of early childhood students. It is also noticeable that there are quite a lot of children who fail to achieve the K-13, the curriculum target set by the government (Ministry of Education and Culture).

The result of the current study found that School from Home is affecting young children's receptive skills, Reading, but not affecting Listening aspect. It can be concluded that Reading aspect is affected because online learning is related with the young children's literacy development. These results are supported by research conducted by Bao et al (2020) that argued formal schooling through active online learning (School From Home) is likely to result in the greatest maintenance of literacy skills. Reading daily to young children is a low-tech strategy to counter the disadvantages of school and educational institutions' closure during Covid-19. Besides, it also encourages the family bonds, which also strengthen social and emotional connection between the young children and parents. Reading to children can also promote a love for books and social-emotional connection between the children and the parents (Bao et al., 2020). As for the Listening aspect, we can conclude that because children still listen from family members, for example, when the parents tell stories or storytelling, dictate, or have interaction with the children.

Regarding the young children's productive skills, one of them is Speaking aspect, which has no effect on online learning. This concern is understandable as the children can still communicate with the parents or other family members at home. Reading and Writing aspects for young children, there is no activity, so the success is not

measured in Early Childhood children because reading and writing activities in young children are an introduction to environmental activities. For example, putting pictures in color and capital letters, making straight lines, curves, circles (this creates an environment) so that these aspects are not the focus of the current study.

## CONCLUSION

The finding of the current study can be useful for the parents as well as their early childhood children that they handle, especially to make the parents pay more attention to their children's language learning, social skills, and emotional intelligence in terms of Covid-19 Pandemic effect. The result of the study can also be equally useful for the teacher educators, supervisor, child development project, preschool or teacher-training institute so that the preschool teacher can be trained to pay more attention to social and psychological needs of the children. The findings from this study can also be beneficial for the policymakers of preschool education, or the government (Ministry of Education and Culture) to determine the policy of online learning models that are in accordance with Early Childhood's characteristic, so young children's literacy skills can be improved during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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