

Empathy Development in Early Grade at State Elementary Schools

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ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengukur dan menginformasikan tingkat empati (afektif dan kognitif) siswa kelas awal usia 6-8 tahun di SDN Baruga Kendari Sulawesi Tenggara. Tujuh sekolah dipilih sebagai sampel berdasarkan metodologi yang disebut *Random Sampling*. Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah anak yang berusia 6-8 tahun yang berjumlah 150 siswa. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian kuantitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data adalah dengan menggunakan angket diterapkan untuk mengumpulkan data tentang perkembangan empati anak. Kuesioner mengacu pada empati anak dengan menggunakan skala GEM (*Griffith Empathy Measure*), yang dirancang untuk menilai tingkat empati anak terhadap kondisi yang dialaminya. Skor kriteria untuk setiap pernyataan adalah "ya" dan "tidak" dan dianalisis dengan menggunakan IBM SPSS Statistics 2. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa secara umum empati siswa kelas awal usia 6-8 tahun di SDN Baruga Kendari Sulawesi Tenggara lebih berorientasi pada empati afektif/kognitif. Penelitian ini menyiratkan bahwa empati pada anak usia 6-8 tahun masih berkembang sehingga perlu perhatian lebih untuk memaksimalkan perkembangan empati anak.

Kata Kunci: *Empati; Afektif dan Kognitif; Anak Usia 6-8 Tahun*

ABSTRACT. This study aims to measure and inform the level of empathy (affective and cognitive) of early grade students aged 6-8 years at SDN Baruga Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. Seven schools were selected as the sample based on a methodology called *Random Sampling*. The sample in this study were children aged 6-8 years, totaling 150 students. The research method used in this research is quantitative research. The data collection technique is to use a questionnaire applied to collect data about the development of children's empathy. The questionnaire refers to children's empathy using the GEM (*Griffith Empathy Measure*) scale, which is designed to assess a child's level of empathy for the conditions they are experiencing. Criteria scores for each statement were "yes" and "no" and were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 2. The results showed that in general the empathy of early grade students aged 6-8 years at SDN Baruga Kendari Southeast Sulawesi was more oriented towards affective/cognitive empathy. This research implies that empathy in children aged 6-8 years is still developing so that more attention is needed to maximize the development of children's empathy.

Keywords: *Empathy; Affective and Cognitive; Children aged 6-8 years*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is defined by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as children aged 0 to 8 years (Nunik et al., 2022). Early childhood development includes components of physical and motor development, cognitive development, language development, emotional and social development, religious and moral development, and artistic development. Each of these components must be developed optimally because they are interconnected and influence one another (Shaleh et al., 2022). One aspect of early childhood development is social emotional development. Social emotional development in early childhood education has several indicators which are divided into three aspects, namely aspects of self-awareness, aspects of a sense of responsibility for oneself and others as well as aspects of prosocial behavior (Shaleh, 2023).

Humans are known as a social beings who could not live without each other. This is not only because they have the same life of goal but also because they have an external "social character" (Hantono & Pramitasari, 2018). It implies that even if they bring differences, they will interact. Therefore, men have unconsciously built emotional relationships, such as bonds of empathy, and developed a sense of mutual understanding between humans. Imuta et al, in their research on the Theory of Mind (ToM), emphasized that this will significantly impact children's interpersonal relationships, especially prosocial behaviors such as empathy. The children's empathy has to be built from the early development stage, infancy to adulthood. Thus, children with strong social and interpersonal awareness could understand themselves and their environment well, which impacts future planning and the ability to adapt to new environments (Imuta et al., 2016).

Various studies on the development of empathy have been carried out by experts, including; 1) Rieffe et al. conducted a study in the Netherlands aiming to assess empathy in 109 children aged 1-5 years using an Empathy Questionnaire. Around 20 points represented three aspects of empathy, namely a) Emotion Contagion, b) Attention to Other's Feelings, and c) Prosocial Actions. This questionnaire used three measurement scales (0 = never, 1 = sometimes, and 2 = often). This scale was filled out by the parents or guardians of the sample. In this study, it was found that the main features of empathy could be assessed based on parental answers. Three levels of empathy could also be identified through the empathy questionnaire in which there was a positive relationship between prosocial behavior and the three levels of empathy assessed in the children (Rieffe et al., 2010); 2) In addition, Dadds et al. carried out other relevant research by measuring empathy in children using the GEM (Griffith Empathy Measure) scale, which consisted of two components of empathy (cognitive empathy and affective empathy). This study was conducted on 2612 children aged 4 to 16 years (3-6 years = 41.1%, 7-11 years = 39.6%, 12-16 years = 19.3%; boys = 52.8%) who were taken from elementary and Intermediate school in Brisbane and Sydney, Australia (Dadds et al., 2008); 3) Gleichgerrcht et al, studied about Selective impairment of cognitive empathy for moral judgment in adults with high functioning autism; and 4) Cox et al (2012) studied about The balance between feeling and knowing: affective and cognitive empathy are reflected in the brain's intrinsic functional dynamics (Gleichgerrcht et al., 2013).

The research above distinguishes gender, education level, family income, and stress level. Thus, the difference between this study and previous research is to describe the level of empathy (affective and cognitive) of elementary school children at SDN Baruga, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, aged 6 to 8 years, regardless of gender and position of parents/guardians and other people. Therefore, the researcher chose empathy as one of the main criteria of moral intelligence to be tested in this study on children at SDN, Baruga District, Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi Province. Researchers will focus on looking at the general picture of empathy about cognitive and affective empathy in early-grade children at SDN Baruga District. This research contributes practically and empirically. Practically teachers can find out the development of student empathy, while empirically this research contributes to teachers and schools to provide good conditions in developing student empathy.

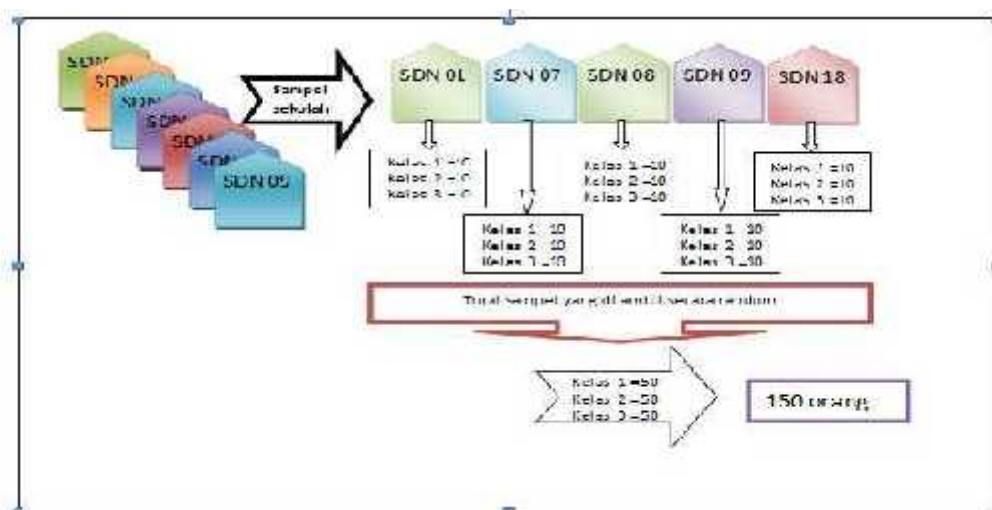
Borba stated that seven fundamental factors contribute to the formation of moral behavior: empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, compassion, tolerance, and justice. The seven factors affect the development of children's moral intelligence. Children who lack empathy grow up egocentric, perfunctory to others, and do not care about other conditions. Children with solid egocentricity could cause violence to their peers, which does not reflect obedient children. Moreover, some children become autistic and psychopathic (van Noorden et al., 2017). Van Norden et al. explain empathy could be classified into cognitive and affective empathy. Affective empathy is the ability to experience the emotions and feelings of others, while cognitive empathy is defined as the ability to understand the emotions or feelings of others (van Noorden et al., 2017). In addition, Fidrayani explained that empathy development starts in childhood when they

lack empathy or are egocentric (Kumalasari & Susanto, 2017). Children's verbal limitations make evaluating empathy in children challenging. Due to the child's lack of objectivity, parents would answer the questionnaire using a different scale in this study.

METHOD

The method in this study is quantitative research, where data was collected by distributing questionnaires. Therefore, this study tried to describe and represent the empathy of early-grade students at SDN Baruga, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, in a systematic, factual, and correct method based on field observations and responses to questionnaires. This analysis brought data from two sources, namely primary and secondary sources. This primary data source could be information about behavioral symptoms that appeared in the object of research (students) and were known by the respondents (parents/guardians of students who had early-grade children at SDN Baruga, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi). In contrast, secondary data was obtained from additional sources such as interviews and school documents. In addition, the respondents included five State Elementary Schools (SDN) in Baruga District, with seven State Elementary Schools in total. Each school was taken an initial class, namely, first grade to third grade, then each class from each school was assigned randomly. The following picture was an illustration of the determination of the research sample:

Figure 1. Population and school research sample



Based on the illustration above, the questionnaire was distributed to 150 students, consisting of ten first-grade students, ten second-grade students, and ten third-grade students at State Elementary School (SDN) 01. It was the same number of respondents for State Elementary School (SDN) 07, SD Negeri (SDN) 08, School (SDN) 09, and other schools in 18 Baruga Villages, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi.

The data collection technique of this research was adjusted to the type of data collected, especially quantitative data collection techniques. Quantitative data was from the questionnaire. A questionnaire technique was used to obtain data on the development of children's empathy. The questionnaire technique is an indirect method of collecting data (meaning the researcher does not ask questions directly to the respondents being studied). The questionnaire used in this study referred to children's empathy by utilizing the GEM (Griffith Empathy Measure) scale, designed to assess children's level of empathy concerning the conditions they experienced. The criteria scores for each "yes" and "no" statement was then analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 22 in the form of the percentage of Yes or No

answers by respondents on affective, cognitive, and a combination of both components (affective-cognitive), in each class and each school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collected from 150 children, data were obtained on groups of children with affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and a combination of both (cognitive, affective empathy) in early grades (first, second, and third grades), public elementary schools in Kendari, Baruga, Southeast Sulawesi. Furthermore, the summary of the data description used descriptive statistics with IBM SPSS Statistics 22 in the form of frequency/percentage of Yes or No answers by respondents on affective, cognitive, and a combination of both (affective-cognitive) components in each class and school.

The results of descriptive data analysis of empathy data for early grade students at SDN Baruga, Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi in each school were as follows. The analysis results for all schools are shown in Table 1 below.

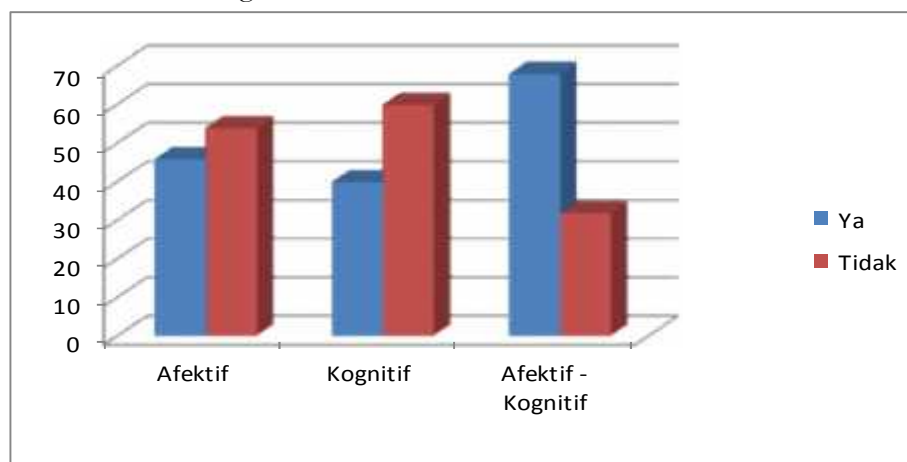
Table 1. Distribution of Respondents' Answers in All Schools

Room	Componen	Answers	(%)
1	Affektive	Yes	45.9
		No	54.1
	Cognitive	Yes	40.5
		No	59.5
	Affektive-Cognitive	Yes	68.3
		No	31.7
2	Affektive	Yes	41.8
		No	58.2
	Cognitive	Yes	40.0
		No	60.0
	Affektive-Cognitive	Yes	61.2
		No	38.8
3	Affektive	Yes	45.4
		No	54.6
	Cognitive	Yes	34.8
		No	65.2
	Affektive-Cognitive	Yes	58.7
		No	41.3

Based on the table above, it could be seen that in the first, second, and third grades, most respondents answered No on the affective and cognitive components but tended to answer Yes on the affective-cognitive aspects. From the table above, it could also be seen that both in class 1 (Affective = 54.1%)/(Cognitive = 59.5%), class 2 (Affective = 58.2%)/(Cognitive = 60.0%), and class 3 (Affective = 54.6%)/(Cognitive = 65.2%), the majority of respondents gave the answer No to the affective and cognitive components but managed to answer Yes to the affective-cognitive aspects of grade 1 (68.3%), grade 2 (61.2%) and grade (58.7%). The following is a diagram that portrays the results of each class examined. This affective domain by Krathwohl taxonomically further detailed into five levels: Receiving atau attending, Responding, Valuing, Organization and Value characteristics (Gusti et al., 2021). Bloom explained that in education there are three domains or domains that need attention, namely the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. In these three domains or domains, it is necessary to pay attention to

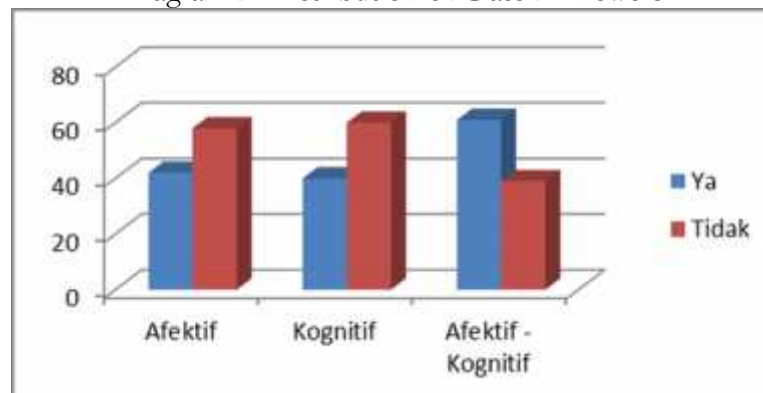
their characteristics and no one is more dominant, meaning that the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process needs to prepare learning outcomes in these three domains, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Riscaputantri & Wening, 2018).

Diagram 1. Distribution of Class 1 Answers



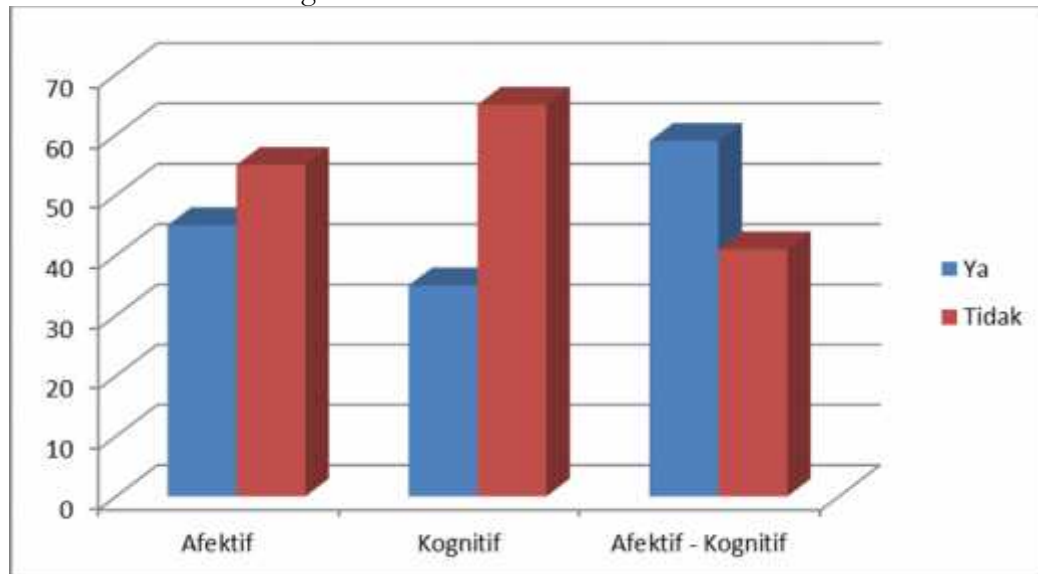
From the diagram above, it is apparent that the affective-cognitive value does have the highest points for the "yes" answer than the other two elements. When viewed from the "no" answer, the affective component held the most presentation of the other two components. This shows that first-grade students own a dominant affective-cognitive combined component when viewed from the presentation weight of the "yes" answer. Assessment of the cognitive domain is related to thinking skills which include the ability to memorize, understand, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate. Affective domain assessment relates to interests and attitudes such as honest, disciplined, and confident (Saftari & Fajriah, 2019).

Diagram 2. Distribution of Class 2 Answers



Almost the same as the results of the distribution of answers for class 1, in the distribution of answers for the second class, it could be seen clearly that the presentation of the affective-cognitive component has a more excellent value in the "yes" answer. The exact result also happened to the affective component, where the frequency of those who answered "no" also reached the highest presentation compared to the others. According to Bloom's taxonomy, all efforts that measure brain activity are included in the cognitive domain. In the cognitive domain, there are six levels of thought processes, namely: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Nurbudiyani, 2013).

Diagram 3. Distribution of Class 3 Answers



Comparable to the results in class 1 and 2 charts, the investigation on class 3 diagrams also delivered similar outcomes where the presentation of "yes" answers was found more in the affective-cognitive component, and answers "no" were found more in the affective component.

Based on the tables and diagrams, the outcomes are the results of previous research conducted by Dadds, which explained that early childhood could not distinguish between affective and cognitive empathy (Dadds et al., 2008). In other words, the empathic behavior of children described in the existing data gives us an understanding that the empathetic behavior that appears in early childhood at SDN in Baruga, Kendari, had not been able to distinguish between affective empathic behavior and cognitive empathetic behavior as stated by (Sumarni et al., 2020), dan very different from empathy simulation theory (Mischkowski et al., 2016). Thus, children still need excellent sympathetic abilities development in appropriate contexts.

The data above depicts the normal process experienced by young people. Sujiono notes that children aged 5-6 grow and develop. Children are still developing their capacity for empathy (Sujiono, 2013). In addition, Piaget asserts that children between the ages of 5 and 6 years are in the egocentric preoperational stage of cognitive development. This indicates that it is accurate that children in almost the same range, around 7 and 9, are also still experiencing developmental stages in terms of empathy (Helma & Suryana, 2022). Most important, This research implies that empathy in elementary age children is still developing so that more attention is needed to maximize the development of children's empathy.

Children's empathic abilities can be influenced by gender. Therefore, the empathy attitude possessed by girls is higher than boys in terms of cognitive and affective aspects. In addition, to develop an attitude of empathy such as caring, tolerance and tolerance can be developed through a learning process that is carried out with several methods given by the teacher appropriately (Syifa Aulia Nurfazrina et al., 2020). Hann suggests several activities that can be done in class to increase children's empathy: 1) role playing, with this activity can train children to feel other people's feelings, especially cognitive and affective empathy, 2) accept other people's views, practice to accept other people's views effectively to increase empathy, 3) provide stimulation to emotions, for example giving examples of how it feels to be less fortunate, lose rights, and pressure on others can increase feelings of empathy and response to emotions (Limarga, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion of the research results obtained, this study concludes that the empathy of early graders at SDN Baruga, Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi Province, is overall more oriented towards affective/cognitive empathy. This statement could be proven by the results of each class which shows that the highest frequency of the questionnaires answered is the affective-cognitive component. This research certainly has some limitations. In addition to the problem of the research sample, there is also the issue of the research design used. Therefore, future research can be conducted to complement this research by selecting samples based on their background and research designs and different perspectives.

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