

Gratitude in the View of Preschool Teacher

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to describe gratitude in preschool teachers' views as a moral emotion. Gratitude plays a role in increasing self-awareness, empathy, and healthy social relationships. Gratitude socialization in preschool is done not only through direct teaching but also through daily activities, such as playing and learning. However, gratitude is not always practiced in preschools because it is not important, or belief in God is personal. In general, gratitude is expressed to humans with the expression thank you. Indonesian preschool teachers instill gratitude in daily life at school by praying and thanking. This study used a descriptive qualitative method with interviews with twelve kindergarten and preschool teachers in DKI Jakarta with a range of ages from twenty to fifty years, and years of teaching from five to thirty years. We investigated their views on the concept of gratitude, namely the definition of gratitude, synonyms and antonyms of gratitude, when gratitude is practiced, with what kind of body language gratitude is practiced, is positive, negative or neutral, and when children feel grateful. The results showed that teachers' understanding of gratitude varied, with the majority understanding gratitude as a positive emotion that enhances psychological and social well-being. Teachers also emphasized that gratitude arises in a variety of situations, such as receiving awards or when children show learning progress, and when being given something or receiving kindness from others. Children can experience gratitude from the age of one to six according to their developmental stages. In conclusion, gratitude can promote positive social, moral and emotional development in teachers and young children. The implication of this study is that gratitude can be enhanced in a variety of positive activities in preschool.

Kata kunci: gratitude, teacher, preschool.

1 INTRODUCTION

Religious people consider gratitude to be very important, because in religious scriptures it is mentioned that whoever is grateful, then God will increase the world's blessings. They give thanks usually by praying to God or thanking people. In Indonesian preschools, children and teachers always pray to God when they are about to start activities, and end activities so that what they do is always blessed by God. Meanwhile, people who do not believe in religion, e.g. in western countries, they apply gratitude by saying thank you to humans. Asians who are predominantly religious can apply gratitude to both God and humans (Capellen et al., 2014). So, gratitude is the most important form of moral emotion in daily life to appreciate God and humans.

"Moral" emotions are emotions that are considered to be related to the human capacity for morality. Examples of these types of emotions include disgust, shame, pride, anger, guilt, pity, and gratitude (Haidt, 2003; Tangney, 2007; Turner & Stets, 2006). Gratitude is both general and visceral. Generalized gratitude means something that involves precisely the dispositions (motivational and affective) whose manifestations are very difficult to ignore. Deep gratitude, which is a form of recognition, falls outside the realm of things we should or should not do such as gifts, and is completely free (Robert & Telech, 2019). Gratitude as a reactive attitude is a response to a situation in which the giver of the kindness "demonstrably upholds or exceeds" a communal norm, a standard of rightness in

behavior that can be shared (McConnell, 2017). Gratitude is usually understood as a response to actions that are generous (and usually detrimental to the benefactor), and intentional. However, reactive gratitude requires only benevolence, understood as actions that express a recognition of respect, but not necessarily benevolence, and that generous actions need not harm the benefactor. Gratitude is not only consistent with a generous act out of obligation, due to the recognition of respect in following certain communal norms, but it also recognizes that obligation and potentially involves taking on a "debt" to repay that benevolence, due to gratitude, involving a commitment to the relevant norm and the generous act as a way of upholding a norm worthy of emulation. Gratitude can be justified even when the giver of the favor has no clear prior intention to do good, and that gratitude plays an important social role in inviting others to share in one's commitment to communal norms and to each other (Manela, 2015).

Gratitude, as one of the moral emotions, plays a crucial role in building self-awareness and empathy, which are important foundations for healthy social relationships in the future (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Self-awareness is the ability to understand and live the things that make a person an individual, including personality, actions, values, beliefs, emotions, and thoughts. Empathizing with others is essential for healthy relationships and communication. Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what others are feeling, see things from their point of view, and imagine oneself in their place. In essence, it's putting yourself in someone else's shoes and feeling what they feel. Self-awareness and empathy complement each other, in a beautiful cycle of growth. High self-awareness allows a person to regulate their emotions, make deliberate choices, and communicate more effectively. As a result, when involved in a relationship, individuals with strong self-awareness are better equipped to express their needs, articulate their feelings, and contribute positively to the partnership.

In preschool, children interact with peers and adults and begin to understand the importance of sharing, appreciating and valuing what they have. This socialization process involves not only direct teaching of the concept of gratitude, but also through everyday experiences, such as play, learning, and group interactions (Froh et al., 2011). Through this context, children are invited to realize the positive values contained in gratitude, such as appreciating the kindness of others and feeling happy for achievements, no matter how small. Socialization of the moral emotion of gratitude in preschool can be done through various methods, including stories, games and creative activities. Stories that contain moral messages about gratitude can help children understand this concept in a fun and engaging way (Seligman, 2002). For example, through stories about characters who are always grateful for small things, children can learn to appreciate the simple things in their lives. In addition, group games that involve cooperation and mutual appreciation can increase the sense of empathy and cooperation among children, for example role-playing, blocks, whisper words etc. In group games, children will follow group rules, communicate, share, cooperate, and be responsible for completing the game. Children aged 2-5 years are able to say thank you politely (Burdelski, 2010).

Research on gratitude in preschool shows that children who are taught to be grateful tend to have better emotional well-being (Froh et al., 2011). They are better able to manage stress, exhibit positive attitudes, and have better social relationships with peers. With gratitude, children are able to reduce negative thoughts and emotions when facing conflicts with other children. With positive guidance from teachers, children will be grateful that they have friends. In addition, education about gratitude can also reduce negative behaviors, such as jealousy or dissatisfaction. This suggests that teaching gratitude early on can have a significant long-term impact on children's psychological development.

Gratitude in the view of preschool teachers is something that should be done to children, for example by praising and saying thank you so that children are motivated to do good or positive behavior. This is very effective for improve aspects of child development. Thanking is one of the expressions required by schools in Indonesia to familiarize children to have a positive response to others. Thanking can be done when receiving gifts from others or when children have not followed the rules, the teacher

reminds them with the expression thank you, as if the child has done good. Therefore, this expression is important for teachers to express when children have not or have done positive behavior so that children change negative behavior to positive or increase positive behavior to be more positive.

However, being grateful in preschool is not only the responsibility of educators, but also of parents and society. Cooperation between families and schools is essential to create a supportive environment for learning moral values. By building a collective awareness of the importance of gratitude, we can help children grow into individuals who are more empathetic, happy and able to contribute positively in society. In this context, the research was developed by asking the following research questions: 1) What does it mean to be grateful? 2) What are the similarities and differences between the word gratitude? 3) When do teachers feel grateful? 4) Is gratitude positive, negative or neutral? 5) With what kind of body language does gratitude show? 6) When do preschoolers feel grateful?

2 RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study was to find out teachers' views on gratitude. Descriptive qualitative research was used to describe the respondents' questions and answers through semi-structured interviews. We obtained consent from the respondents to use their data. We found 12 PAUD teachers in DKI Jakarta with the age range of twenty to fifty years old and teaching duration of five to thirty years, and educational background of S1PGPAUD and non- PGPAUD. We collected data in the last two months (September-October 2024) by sending out a willingness form and zoom meeting. We asked about gratitude as follows: what does it mean to be grateful? what are the similarities and differences in the word grateful? when do teachers feel grateful? is grateful positive, negative or neutral? with what kind of body language is grateful shown? when do preschool children feel grateful? We checked the data with interreliability of 0.90 (Maxqda 2022 from two (student and teacher). Then we analyzed the data by data reduction, display and verification (Herreveld, et al., 2016).

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The field findings show varied answers from twelve kindergarten and early childhood teachers as follows:

According to Wood, Joseph, & Maltby (2009), gratitude is one of the factors that influence psychological well-being because gratitude is one of the characteristics of a person who always thinks positively, which is then presented in more positive behavior. In this study, it was found that seven teachers out of twelve teachers understood the synonym or equation of the word "grateful". The word grateful is described as a sense of gratitude within oneself and is expressed when feeling happy or content. Gratitude is also interpreted as a sign of , a feeling of empathy towards others, a sense of calmness, and positive feelings in general, as well as specifically when receiving appreciation, affection, or forms of appreciation from others. Five out of twelve teachers admitted to not fully understanding the meaning or synonyms of the word "gratitude". Teachers expressed difficulty in defining the feeling of gratitude in concrete terms. This illustrates the differences in understanding that may be influenced by individual backgrounds and perceptions of moral values.

Teachers differed in their views on the antonym or opposite of the word "grateful". Four out of twelve teachers believed that the antonym or opposite word of "grateful" is "ungrateful" or "dissatisfied". Teachers assume that an ungrateful attitude is the direct opposite of a grateful attitude which reflects dissatisfaction or lack of appreciation for something that is owned or received. According to Schwarz (Emmons & Shelton, 2002), a lack of gratitude can lead to feelings of envy, a tendency to complain, and create various imbalances within a person. The other five teachers had different views on the antonym or

opposite word of "gratitude". They defined the antonym of the word "gratitude" as antipathy, covetousness, nervousness, denial or even pleasure. While three of the twelve teachers did not give their specific opinions on the antonym or opposite of the word "gratitude", so it is not possible to give a conclusion about the rest of the teachers' understanding of gratitude.

Views on when the emotion of gratitude arises in a person vary. There are six out of twelve teachers who stated that gratitude arises in certain situations, such as when seeing students able to understand the material taught, receiving a gift, position, money, appreciation or appreciation from others or recognition of the efforts he has made. Then there was one out of twelve teachers who revealed that they did not know exactly when the emotion of gratitude arose in . This indicates confusion or doubt in understanding a particular event that triggers gratitude. The other five teachers have different views on the conditions that trigger the emotion of gratitude, such as when feel irritated, involved in an argument, or when facing a stressful situation. This understanding shows that each individual or teacher has a different opinion about the conditions that can trigger the emotion of gratitude.

Gratitude can be interpreted as a positive or negative emotion according to each individual's view. Five out of twelve teachers believed that gratitude is a positive emotion that can have a good impact on an individual's psychological well-being. These teachers believe that gratitude can lead to a better quality of life both mentally and socially. The impact of gratitude has been discussed in various studies. Wood, Maltby, and colleagues (Wood et al., 2008; Stillman, et.al., 2011) stated that individuals who have gratitude are able to see the positive side in every situation and condition they face.

In the view of two out of twelve teachers, gratitude is a neutral emotion. According to three teachers, gratitude is a neutral negative emotion because humans do not forget or sometimes feel ungrateful. This is in line with what Emmons said, namely that people who are not grateful will tend to dislike kindness in any form received from others (Emmons, 2007). Ungrateful people will always respond to the kindness of others with scorn, berating, even with suspicion and anger. Therefore, always being grateful can be used as a strong basis for helping others.

Gratitude is a form of expression that a person feels. In addition, gratitude is also one of the forms of positive emotional behavior. This is in line with the thoughts of five out of twelve teachers that a person expresses the emotion of gratitude with facial expressions, for example anger, dislike, smiling, sparkling eyes, closed lips, and frowning. Two out of twelve teachers were of the opinion that gratitude can be observed through human speech, including words or shouts. Another opinion expressed by five out of twelve teachers stated that a person usually expresses the emotion of gratitude through gestures, including folding hands, looking down, tense attitude, raising thumbs, or nodding. Gratitude is a form of emotions or feelings, which then develop into an attitude, good moral traits, habits, personality traits, and ultimately influence a person to respond or react to something or a situation (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2004).

Gratitude is one of the factors that affect psychological well-being because gratitude is one of the characteristics of a person who always thinks positively, which is then presented in more positive behavior (Wood, Joseph, & Maltby, 2009). Schwarz said that ingratitude will lead to resentment, always complaining, and can also lead to many inequalities in individuals. People who are not good at being grateful only focus on what they don't have, and always compare what they have with what other people have. In other words, people who are not good at being grateful will make themselves feel alienated from their own environment.

Gratitude in early childhood is actually shown since children are less than one year old. One out of twelve teachers also believed that the emotion of gratitude is shown by children from infancy through their expressions. Another five teachers were of the opinion that the emotion of gratitude is shown by children from the age of one to six through various expressions and words. The other six preschoolers were also able to show gratitude. Early childhood is a good age for character building. If at this time the child's character can be

formed, then in the future, the child will become a successor who has a good and strong character. The better the quality of education provided at an early age, the better the child's intelligence.

People who are always grateful are more likely to empathize with others. Grateful people will also be more generous, and easily sensitive to others. With traits that are liked by others, it will make it easier to be accepted in society, because they do not feel difficult about what is a favor to others, and are able to restrain their ego. Research has shown that gratitude will have a positive impact. Improved physical and psychological qualities such as alertness, higher morale, more patience, cheerfulness, healthier physique, and higher vitality are some of the impacts found in research related to gratitude.

4 CONCLUSION

This research confirms the importance of socializing the moral emotion of gratitude in preschool as the first step in shaping children's character. Gratitude not only strengthens children's emotional well-being, but also develop empathy and positive attitudes essential for social relationships. The findings show that teachers in DKI Jakarta have a diverse understanding of the concept of gratitude, including its meaning and how to express it. Most teachers understand gratitude as a positive emotion that can be expressed through attitude, speech or body language. However, there are also teachers who have difficulty in defining this concept concretely, indicating a need for improvement in related understanding.

In addition, the study highlighted that the understanding and expression of gratitude begins to develop at an early age and can be reinforced through daily experiences in the preschool environment. Creative methods, such as storytelling and group games, have been shown to be effective in helping children understand and express gratitude. Children who are taught to be grateful tend to have better psychological well-being, are able to manage stress, and build positive social relationships. Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, there is a need for special training for early childhood teachers to deepen their understanding of the concept of gratitude and how to teach it effectively. Cooperation between schools and parents should also be strengthened so that emotion education can be consistently implemented at home and school.

Second, the ECD curriculum could expand the scope of learning moral emotions, particularly gratitude, with more experiential activities. Evaluation children's understanding of gratitude also needs to be done creatively, such as through behavioral observation or the use of picture media. Further research is needed to develop more effective methods of integrating the socialization of the moral emotion of gratitude in early childhood education. Thus, it is hoped that children can grow into individuals who are characterized, empathetic and able to contribute positively to society.

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