# The Effectiveness of "Dialogic Reading Method" in Increasing Prosocial Behavior in Preschool Children

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Abstract— This study aims to stimulate prosocial communication through active two-way communication in dialogic reading speech method. Prosocial behavior reflected in this study consisted of: (1) Helping; (2) Sharingand (3) Comforting. Prosocial behavior is important for children to be accepted and make friends. It supports the process of teaching and learning activities. One intervention that is considered effective in improving prosocial communication is through active two-way communication. This study involved preschool children (n = 100) spread across two early childhood institutions in Bandung Regency using the-before-after-experimental study method consisting of a control group and an experimental group. The result of this study showed that Dialogic reading effectiveness test in the experimental group through dialogic reading method had a significant influence on the prosocial behavior of preschool children (Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) =  $0 < \alpha = 0.05$ ).

Keywords: dialogic reading, prosocial, pre school children

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The ability to build relationships with others is important for living in everyday life (Berns, 2010). Children who are able to build communication and social interaction well, will stimulate other aspects of development. For example, when a child is not able to recognize colors, then asks his friend, thus, s/he will get knowledge about these colors.

Conversely children who have good potential but have obstacles in their social abilities, will also hamper other development aspects. For example, when a child has a potential to recognize colors, but is reluctant to interact with his friends, then his friends are also reluctant to approach and they are shy to ask.

The children who have prosocial behavior will benefit others. (Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Prosocial behavior is considered important to be developed considering the behavior is the main requirement for a child to be accepted in the group. Kostelnik, Gregory, Soderman, and Whiren (2012) even fully describe that children who have prosocial behavior can easily socialize with the new world, create new relationships, become popular children, and even be able to improve their academic achievement. The importance of prosocial behavior shows the central position of prosocial behavior in a child's life span.

The importance of prosocial behavior, it turns out that children in the first year of life have been able to show a desire to help and to share attention with others. This ability is the basis consisting of sharing and helping others that continues to be developed at the age of 2 years old (Dunfield, Kuhlmeier, O'Connell, & Kelley 2011). It is in accordance with the fact that there are prosocial actions taken by a number of children. Lately Aisyah, an 8-year-old child, became a headline in various media since she showed a helpful attitude to care for her father in a severe illness (Harian Andalas, 2014). While in China, a 2-year-old child was willing to collect waste to collect medical expenses for his heart disease (Tribun News, 2014). Those showed that prosocial behavior has existed from an early age. Even those children did not feel awkward and lost when helping to lighten their parents' burden. Desire of children to behave prosaically becomes a good investment for further child development. Exposure to the child's prosocial development shows that children basically already have prosocial behavior, depending on the environment that surrounds them and it stimulates the child to behave prosocial or antisocial. Furthermore, the results showed that peer interaction had a significant influence on children's prosocial behavior (Hartup, Glazer & Charlesworth, 1967; Leiter, 1977; Eisenberg-Berg, Cameron, Tryon, & Dodez, 1981)

Peer interaction is the child's closest environment. Children mostly spend their time playing with their family, friends and neighbors. Through these interactions, children learn to recognize various forms of prosocial behavior such as helping, sharing and working together.

Various forms of prosocial have been revealed in previous studies. Kostelnik, Gregory, Soderman, and Whiren (2012) describe the dimensions of prosocial behavior consisting of helping, sharing, sacrificing, aiding, sympathizing, encouraging, volunteering, giving, reassuring, inviting, rescuing, defending, cooperating, comforting, donating and restoring. They are basically aimed to provide benefits to others.

Based on the result of research regarding the stimulation of prosocial behavior, it was found that the activity of reading stories is the way to communicate between adults and children. Whitehurst, Arnold, Epstein, Angell, Smith & Fischel (1994) revealed that reading stories is an effective way to transfer knowledge between adults and children.

Various studies regarding the selection of reading books in early childhood turned out to show significant results primarily to improve prosocial behavior (Bhavnagri & Samuels, 1996; Black, Seeman, & Trobaugh, 1999; Krogh & Lamme, 1985; Shepherd & Koberstein, 1989; Lessard et al., 1989). One technique for reading story books that is considered effective is the dialogic reading method which is a method of reading story books conducted by adults to children as active story readers (Whitehurst et al., 1994).

Dialogic reading method invites the children to discuss the stories in the book. It engages them to think more critically about an event and include the nature of the characters in the book, especially prosocial behavior. The nature of the characters' stories and events with regard to prosocial behavior, could be discussed with them about the impact if prosocial or antisocial behavior arises. The children are able to distinguish prosocial or antisocial behavior if it is applied in everyday life.

According to the explanation above, this study is expected to be one alternative for the stimulation of prosocial behavior. It refers to the activity of reading stories that emphasizes the activeness of children to process information and to engage them to think about something, mainly in the form of prosocial behavior such as helping, collaborating and sharing. Furthermore, the results of research conducted by Ruffo (2003) showed that the activity of reading stories in early childhood is one way to improve sharing behavior through class discussion activities, role playing, and hands-on activities regarding the stories being told.

#### 1.1 Prosocial behavior

Prosocial behavior is an important component that determines success in interacting with other people (Kostlenik, Gregory, Soderman, & Whiren, 2012). It is an action that is carried out voluntarily with the aim of helping and benefiting other individuals or groups. A more complete view is put forward by Baron and Byrne (1997), Besides providing benefits to the person being helped, the perpetrator of prosocial action does not get real physical benefits, even sometimes the perpetrator faces negative risks. Prosocial behavior can manifest in various forms of action. Previous studies have shown that prosocial behavior is manifested through various actions including helping, sharing, comforting, informing and cooperating (Brownell, Svetlova, & Nichols, 2009; Eckerman, Whatley, & Kutz, 1975; Warneken & Tomasello, 2006; Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2010). Helping is the earliest form of prosocial behavior and can be seen at the age of 14 months (Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2010). Kostelnik, Gregory, Soderman, and Whiren, (2012) explained that prosocial behavior is manifested through sacrificing, aiding, sympathizing, encouraging, volunteering, giving, reassuring, inviting, rescuing, defending, cooperating, comforting, donating and restoring.

More specifically, prosocial behavior that can appear in the context of playing in children aged 3-5 years includes playing well with other children, recognize the feelings of others and respond appropriately, share and respect the rights of others, and use thinking skills to resolve conflicts (Dodge, Colker, and Heroman, 2009). It plays well with other children, characterized by the actions of children who can join friends when playing, being able to cooperate with friends. Meanwhile, behavior recognizes the feeling of others and responds appropriately, marked by the actions of children who are able to recognize and respond to the feelings of others appropriately.

In the context of preschool children, sharing behavior is shown when children want to give something to their friends, such as giving food or toys to their friends, being able to wait their turn, not grabbing toys, and being able to play using the same toys (Dodge, Colker, and Heroman, 2009).

Kostelnik, Gregory, Soderman, and Whiren (2012) suggested a number of benefits of prosocial behavior, including: (1) Creates feelings of satisfaction; (2) Builds perceptions of competence; (3) Provides entry into social situations; (4) Promotes ongoing relationships; (5) Increases popularity among peers; (6) Increases chances of receiving help or cooperation; (7) Increases academic performance; (8) Leads to positive group atmosphere.

# 1.2 The development of prosocial behavior of preschool children

Prosocial behavior can be seen since the age of 14 months. Helping is the earliest form of prosocial behavior and can be observed at the age of 14 months (Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2010).

The results of research by Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinard (2006) explained that preschoolers show more prosocial behavior in the form of helping, sympathizing and engaging themselves. It turns out to be stable and consistent as long as the children are in preschool and elementary school (Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009)

Prosocial behavior in preschool children is also motivated by the psychosocial development theory expressed by Erik Erikson, who states that preschool children aged 3.5-6 years are in the initiative phase vs. guilt. This stage is experienced by preschoolers who face a wider social world. They also experience development related to their attitude of responsibility which fosters the initiative to try new things. They will feel very guilty and ultimately have low self-esteem when too many things are prohibited from exploring.

Piaget terms the cognitive developmental stages of preschool children at the pre-operational stage (Berk, 2008). The uniqueness of the pre-operational stage is the child's development to think egocentrically (Santrock, 2011). In terms of the stages of children's cognitive play, Samuel and Smilansky (1968) explained that children aged 3-7 years really enjoy playing and make them believe to play. This activity is able to stimulate the child's ability to represent the objects he finds every day.

At the age of 2-6 years, children's brain growth increases by 70%, especially at the age of 4 years, various parts of the cerebral cortex produce so many synapses that indicate brain growth increases significantly (Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman, & Levine, 2002). Preschoolers are very active in exploring various physical movements such as physical coordination, perception, attention, memory, language, logical thinking and imagination.

Prosocial behavior is not only shown in the form of action, but is also shown verbally. Preschool children could listen to simple stories and have an interest in story books (Papalia & Feldman, 2012). Prosocial behavior that is packaged through stories can attract children's attention and then represent it in everyday life. Children have been able to identify and tell events that occur in pictures.

The ability of preschoolers to describe an event in the form of a picture is also increasingly detailed and complex. Preschool children are able to tell the events they describe through simple pictures. The stages of more realistic drawing (Papalia & Feldman, 2012) allow children to describe various events that have occurred in the surrounding environment.

# 1.3 The process of learning prosocial behavior

Prosocial behavior is a learning process. Eisenberg and Mussen (1989) stated that although everyone has the potential to perform prosocial actions, it must be learned. This is based on the fact that inherited things will be influenced by the learning process from the environment.

The behavioristic view leads to children who are being able to behave prosocial through modeling either from friends, teachers, family, media, or other things that are close to the child

(Papalia & Feldman, 2012). Several studies have shown that "the effects of adult models on rate and probability of children's sharing" (Elliot & Vasta, 1970; Midlarsky & Bryan, 1967; White & Rosenhan, 1966). The effect of imitating adult behavior is that children think that they have the right to do what their parents do.

Abstract concepts of prosocial behavior can also be learned through learning by doing (Berns, 2010). One of the sharing concepts applied in this study was that children gave toys to other children when asked. It is very abstract if only shared with children. Thus, the teacher should prepare a number of activities to stimulate this. Playing together is one form of learning by doing.

The results of the study, regarding the stimulation of prosocial behavior, found that reading stories is the way to communicate between adults and children. Whitehurst et al. (1994) revealed that story reading activity is an effective way to transfer knowledge between adults and children.

Previous studies regarding the selection of reading books in early childhood have shown significant results mainly for increasing sharing behavior (Bhavnagri & Samuels, 1996; Black, Seeman, & Trobaugh, 1999; Krogh & Lamme, 1985; Shepherd & Koberstein, 1989; Lessard et al., 1989). The story book that is presented actually contains prosocial themes such as sharing, having fun playing with friends, having fun waiting in line and other prosocial behaviors.

# 1.4 Dialogic reading method on prosocial behavior of preschool children

There were studies have shown that story reading activities can influence children's prosocial behavior (Trepanier & Romatowski, 1996; Krogh & Lamme, 1985; Shepherd & Koberstein, 1989; Bhavnagri & Samuels, 1996; Black, Seeman & Trobaugh, 1999). Reading story books activity is a way of communication that is considered effective for adults to children (Whitehurst et al., 1994). In practice, the storytelling method allows two-way communication between the storyteller and the listener.

Dialogic reading might be the most effective method for reading story books (Whitehurst et al., 1994). Technically, there are four activities carried out in the dialogic reading method (Morgan and Meier, 2008), including: (1) Ask children to answer open-ended questions about a story's characters, setting, and events in the story; (2) Expand on children's answers by repeating the answer, clarifying the answer, or asking further questions; (3) Provide praise and encouragement to children for giving input into the story; (4) Build on children's interest when selecting stories and questions regarding the story.

#### **II.METHODS**

This study was an experimental quantitative research with a quasi-experimental type (Kumar, 2018). It began with testing the prosocial behavior of children before giving an intervention

(pre-test) then the stages of providing interventions and ending with testing of child prosocial behavior after giving an intervention (post-test).

The study involved 100 children aged 4-6 years who were divided into the experimental group (n = 50) and the control group (n = 50). Non Probability-purposive sampling technique (Kumar, 2018) was used to determine samples in Pangalengan Subdistrict, because of the needs of each early childhood institution in Bandung Regency to apply dialogic reading methods to children's prosocial behavior.

Prosocial behavior measured in this study consisted of sharing, comforting and helping (Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2010) consisting of 16 indicator items measured through observation and interview guidelines. Items number 1 to 5 measure sharing behavior, while items number 6 to 12 measure helping behavior and items number 13 to 18 measure comforting behavior. Sharing and helping behavior were measured using observation guidelines while comforting behavior was measured using interview guidelines.

In this study, participants were divided into two groups consisting of one experimental group and one control group (Kumar, 2018). The control group was needed to confirm and to obtain a clearer picture of the effectiveness of the method of storytelling in improving prosocial behavior. Each group was given a different intervention. In the experimental group, researchers gave an intervention in the form of prosocial-themed stories with questions that discussed prosocial behavior and activities carried out by children to practice prosocial behavior.

In the control group, participants did not get the intervention in the form of storybook reading through the dialogic reading method, while the experimental group received interventions in the form of story reading. The intervention would take place for seven meetings in each experimental group and control group. This is based on research by Ruffo (2003) which provided an intervention in the form of story reading to improve the prosocial abilities of preschool children. There were seven story books that were delivered consisting of the following titles: (1) *Kelinci Bilang Terimakasih* (Rabbit Saying Thank You); (2) *Ketika Cican Bahagia* (When the Cican is Happy); (3) *Harimau Suka Menolong* (Tigers Like Helping); (4) *Ketika Cican Malu* (When Cican isShy); (5) *Macan Tutul suka Berbagi* (Leopards love to share); (6) *Ketika Cican Sedih* (When Cican is Sad); and (7) *Ketika Cican Takut* (When Cican is Afraid).

Table 1. The results of observing the behavior of each group

Group	Pre test	Post test
Experiment	39,96	67, 38
Control	32,32	37,96

The results of the objective conditions of prosocial behavior in the two research groups were considered homogeneous, meaning that the two research groups were considered to have relatively the same prosocial behavior. The results of the pre-test and post-test in both groups showed that the experimental group had higher post-test scores than the control group had. Based on the average score of acquisition, it can be concluded that the dialogic reading method

had a two times greater impact on children's prosocial behavior than the study participants who were not given interventions in the form of the dialogic reading method. So that a temporary conclusion, the dialogic reading method could improve children's prosocial behavior.

#### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study used two groups of participants consisting of a control group and an experimental group. The results of the effectiveness test showed that prosocial behavior in the control group did not show significant results (Asymp.Sig. = 0.959). In detail based on aspects of prosocial behavior consisting of helping behavior (Asymp.Sig. = 0.528), comforting (Asymp.Sig. = 0.534) and sharing (Asymp.Sig. = 0.303). Those aspects of prosocial behavior also did not show a significance.

Hypothesis test results in the control group showed that there was no significant effect of dialogic reading methods on prosocial behavior of preschoolers both in general and per aspect of prosocial behavior. This is because the control group did not get an intervention in the form of applying dialogic reading methods.

Based on the results of the effectiveness test, it turned out that prosocial behavior needs to be intervened using dialogic reading methods so that preschoolers could know and recognize sharing, helping and making comfortable feelings.

The results of the effectiveness test in the experimental group showed significant results mainly in prosocial behavior (Z = -5,582), in more detail shown through the significance of each aspect of prosocial behavior consisting of helping behavior (Z = -5,381), comforting (Z = -5,338) and sharing (Z = -4.295).

Based on the results of test statistics, it showed that the dialogic reading method had the most influence on prosocial aspects of comforting aspects, namely the behavior to recognize emotional expressions and use them in accordance with existing conditions, including happy, sad, angry, fearful, shocked and disgusted experiments. While dialogic reading method had the second biggest influence on helping behavior, namely the child's ability to have the desire to help others, which was presented through the form of the story "Tigers Like Helping". While prosocial sharing behavior was influenced by dialogic reading methods that intervene in the child's ability to share objects, food, ideas and turn to his friends.

Reading a story as a method for improving prosocial behavior which is effective because it includes a discussion and activity component. In the reading and discussion sessions the children had the opportunity to experience the process of discovery (knowing prosocial behavior). In the question and answer or discussion about the story, children had the opportunity to experience and develop an independent experience and expression.

Knowledge and understanding of prosocial behavior exhibited by children are carried out through group activities. The activities encouraged the children to explore which prosocial behavior should be done. Additionally, the advantage of the dialogic reading method consisted of the three components of story-discussion-activities that develop the acquisition of children's knowledge and give children the opportunity to practice directly.

Considering the findings of Jalongo (2007) that story-telling factors play an important role in improving prosocial behavior, this study found the same thing with this fact. Based on the results of observations throughout the course of the research, the experimental group children were very enthusiastic listening and listening to stories and practicing them in direct activity. In this study the stage of children's play was one of the factors that was not controlled by the researcher. It causes the group's prosocial behavior scores high or low.

Children who were still at the stage of playing inactive behavior, only want to observe their friends playing without being involved in the game, which means participants cannot exhibit behavior on item number 5, namely joining friends in one activity primarily exchanging objects with friends. The stages of the game were beyond the control of the researcher, so it was possible for participants who were reluctant to join in playing with their friends. It happened because the social play stage was still incapable of being at the associative play or cooperative play stage.

Temperament factor was not the main requirement in this study since it caused an increase and decrease in scores for each group. Apart from these various factors, the researcher did not give specific criteria to each participant.

The advantages of this prosocial story program could be used for children with various types of temperament, of play development even with children with disabilities. Of course, with modifications that are adapted to the participants' conditions. For example, children with concentration problems, it may take longer to repeat stories to understand prosocial behavior, compared to normal children in general, or it may need additional props such as dolls to be better understood.

Children who have physical barriers, some activities need to be modified so that children can still practice this form of prosocial behavior. The data of study has illustrated that giving stories was not enough to increase prosocial behavior, it needs to be followed by understanding through discussion regarding prosocial behavior, and it is necessary to have systematic activities to apply prosocial behavior that is known and understood by children.

#### IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the use of dialogic reading methods on prosocial behavior of preschoolers.

Overall, all groups had increased in prosocial behavior scores in both the experimental and control groups. However, it took longer to intervene prosocial behavior in the experimental group who were given interventions in the form of reading stories and active discussion as

well as the process of data processing to determine the effectiveness and significance of research results.

Based on the research objectives to be achieved, it can be concluded as follows: (1) The objective conditions of prosocial behavior of preschool children in Bandung Regency in the control and experimental groups indicated that interventions were needed to improve prosocial behavior as the main capital of children to interact and face the challenges of learning; (2) The dialogic reading method applied to the experimental group provides a different experience for children, as evidenced by the enthusiasm of the children from the total attendance of up to 100% in participating in this study, and has shown through a significant increase; (3) The effectiveness test showed that the dialogic reading method could significantly influence the prosocial behavior of preschool children.

Based on the results of the implementation of the dialogic reading method, there are things that are suggested for further research, namely: (1) To determine the persistence of the effects of using dialogic reading methods in children, prosocial behavior needs to be measured again after a particular time (for example 1 month) after the intervention has ended; (2) Dialogic reading method is expected not only to intervene in the four prosocial behaviors contained in this study, but also other forms of prosocial behavior, such as forms of prosocial behavior in courtesy; (3) Dialogic reading methods can be applied to develop moral understanding or direct emotional interest and intelligence; (4) Dialogic reading methods can be developed to be applied to elementary school children; (5) It is necessary to do further research on how the influence of cognitive abilities on the dialogic reading method, when applied to children with concentration disorders or intellectual disability; and (6) Further assessment is needed so that the dialogic reading method can be used by parents and children at home. Thus, the benefits of an active prosocial story program can be applied more broadly, not only in the setting of activities in kindergarten.

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