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Social Development of Early Childhood Post-Conflict in Kariu Country

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the social development of early childhood post-conflict in Kariu Village, Central Maluku. Early childhood is in a sensitive developmental phase, so traumatic experiences resulting from conflict can impact social skills, emotional regulation, and environmental adaptation. The conflict that occurred in January 2022 forced children to flee and lose a healthy social environment, ultimately leading to psychosocial trauma. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation with 13 children, two early childhood education (PAUD) teachers, and several parents. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the conflict had a significant impact on children's social development, particularly in social interaction, emotional regulation, and self-confidence. However, with family support, the role of PAUD teachers, and community involvement, children showed potential for gradual recovery. The conclusion of this study confirms that the social recovery process cannot be achieved instantly but requires long-term interventions based on family, education, and community. The implication of this research is the need for cross-sector collaboration in supporting the social recovery of early childhood post-conflict through trauma healing programs, play-based education, and ongoing psychosocial support.
Keywords: Early Childhood; Conflict; Early Childhood Education; Social Recovery; Social Development

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is in a golden age characterized by rapid development in various aspects, including socio-emotional development. During this phase, children are highly sensitive to environmental stimuli, so the experiences they gain will significantly influence their personality development and future social adaptability. As stipulated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Early Childhood Education (PAUD) functions to provide educational stimulation from birth to six years of age to support children's physical and spiritual growth and development. One important dimension that needs to be considered in PAUD is social development, namely children's ability to establish interpersonal relationships, adapt to social norms, and participate in community life (Pujianti et al., 2021, p. 118).

Early childhood social development does not emerge naturally but is shaped through interactions with parents, teachers, and the environment.

Parenting styles, the role of educational institutions, and social environmental conditions are key factors influencing children's social skills (Mayar, 2013, p. 459; Dhani et al., 2023, p. 1). When children grow up in a stable and supportive environment, they more easily develop the ability to form positive relationships with peers and adults. Conversely, stressful environmental conditions, such as social conflict, can hinder children's socio-emotional development (Rismala et al., 2021, p. 62).

Conflict is a social phenomenon that can cause profound psychological trauma, especially for children in a sensitive developmental phase. Conflict-induced trauma is not only related to physical violence but also manifests in the form of anxiety, loss of security, and limited play and educational opportunities (Niwanatar, 2019, p. 3). This situation was also experienced by the Kariu people in Central Maluku, who on January 26, 2022, experienced an inter-state conflict with Ory and Pelau due to a territorial dispute. This incident forced most of the Kariu people, including children, to flee to emergency tents and lose access to a healthy social environment. This situation recalls a similar conflict that occurred in 1999 and is now part of the community's collective memory.

For young children, the conflict has had a serious impact on their social development. Initial interviews indicate that many children in Kariu Village experience trauma in the form of excessive fear, a tendency to isolate themselves, sleep disturbances, and difficulty establishing social relationships with peers. Limited psychosocial support from affected families, along with the suboptimal role of early childhood education institutions due to a lack of facilities and professional staff, exacerbate these conditions.

Given the complexity of these issues, research on the social development of early childhood post-conflict in Kariu Village is crucial. This research is expected to provide insight into the socio-emotional conditions of children post-conflict and provide a basis for more targeted educational interventions and psychosocial support.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This approach was chosen based on the research objective of seeking a deeper understanding of the social development of early childhood post-conflict in Kariu Village. A qualitative approach allows researchers to obtain a descriptive picture of the behavior, experiences, and interactions of early childhood in the context of daily life after the conflict. In accordance with Moleong's perspective, qualitative research is rooted in natural situations and seeks to understand phenomena holistically, so the data obtained are in the form of written words, spoken words, and observed behavior.

This research was conducted in Kariu Village, Central Maluku Regency, with the primary location being the Kariu Village Integrated Early Childhood Education (PAUD). The location was selected based on initial observations indicating post-conflict child social development issues. The study targets included early childhood education (ECE), teachers, and parents, with 13 children, two teachers, and several parents participating. Data were collected through

observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted by observing children's social behavior in daily interactions, while interviews explored the experiences of parents, teachers, and community leaders regarding the impact of the conflict and efforts to restore children's social well-being. Documentation included records of educational activities and data related to post-conflict social rehabilitation programs.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively, following the stages outlined by Miles and Huberman: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation were reduced to select relevant information, then presented in descriptive narratives and tables to provide a clearer picture. Conclusions were then drawn in stages, from preliminary to final, based on the consistency of the data. Therefore, this methodology is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding of early childhood social development in Kariu Village post-conflict, as well as the factors influencing it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that conflict has a significant impact on the social development of early childhood in Kariu Village. They experience difficulties in social interaction, emotional regulation, and environmental adaptation. However, with family support, a playful approach, and the active role of early childhood education (PAUD), children demonstrate positive recovery potential. This situation emphasizes the importance of collaboration between families, educational institutions, and the social environment in rebuilding children's sense of security post-conflict. These findings reinforce previous research (Rismala et al., 2021; Sabiah Vitry et al., 2023) that suggests that children's social development is highly dependent on environmental security and emotional support from surrounding adults.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that traumatic experiences resulting from conflict not only leave psychological scars but also hinder the social development of early childhood. However, through support from parents, teachers, and the educational environment, the social recovery process can occur gradually. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as a basis for further discussion regarding appropriate support strategies for early childhood post-conflict. Early Childhood Social Development Post-Conflict in Kariu Village

No	Child's Initials	Age	Social Interaction	Expression of Emotions	Adaptability	Social Response to the Environment	Country	Career	Development Conclusion
1	IR	Still children	Easy to get along	Not easily angered	Fear of the new	Slow to adapt to the environment	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed

2	EH	Refuse to play	Easy to express fear	Unstable expression	Afraid of new people	Often silent	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed
3	HR	Less sociable	Unstable emotions	Slow to adapt	Often feel anxious	Closed in social environment	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed
4	JP	Sometimes playing	Stable emotions	Adaptable	Not clearly visible	Closed in social environment	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed
5	NN	Actively interact	Easy to express yourself	Stable expression	Adaptable	Quickly adapt to the environment	Developing Well	Developing Well	Developing Well
6	NP	Very active in interacting	Easy to express yourself	Stable expression	Quick to adapt	Easy to interact	Developing Well	Developing Well	Developing Well
7	OP	Rarely interact	A little expression	Adaptable	Often silent	Easy to adapt to new people	Developing Well	Developing Well	Developing Well
8	OR	Frequent interaction with friends	Open expression of emotions	Often emotional	Adaptable	Developing Well	Developing Well	Developing Well	
9	JP	Refuse to play	Emotions are a bit stable	Often feel anxious	Often withdrawn	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	Developing Well	
10	DW	Lack of response	The expression is slightly stable	Tends to be passive	Fear of interaction	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	Not Yet Developed	
11	TP	Tends to be quiet	More stable expression	Controlled emotions	Passive towards the environment	Tends to be passive	Not Yet Developed	Optimal Development	
12	OT	Pampering with supervision	Expression is disturbed	It takes time to solve the	Often in doubt	Easy to adapt to the environment	Developing Well	Developing Well	Developing Well

			sometimes	problem					

Based on the table above, the following is a qualitative classification of findings:

- Not Yet Developed: 7 children (58.3%)
- Not yet optimally developed: 1 child (8.3%)
- Beginning to Develop: 2 children (16.7%)
- Well Developed: 2 children (16.7%)
- Very Well Developed: 1 child (8.3%)

The percentage is obtained by dividing the number of children in each category by the total number of children (12), then multiplying by 100%. For example, for the "Not Yet Developed" category, it is (7 ÷ 12) × 100% = 58.3%. By looking at this percentage, it can be concluded that most children still face obstacles in their social development, although some have shown quite good progress. This finding provides an important basis for determining appropriate interventions to support children's social recovery after the conflict.

First, researchers argue that the process of social recovery for children after conflict cannot occur instantly but requires long-term intervention. This is because the trauma experienced by children is profound and affects emotional, cognitive, and social aspects. Therefore, recovery strategies need to be designed sustainably, not only through a family approach but also through formal programs in early childhood education (PAUD) that emphasize play, self-expression, and emotional support.

Second, researchers observed that the role of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers in Kariu Village is highly strategic, yet they still face limitations in both resources and professional support. Therefore, it is crucial for local governments and relevant institutions to provide specialized training on early childhood education-based trauma healing. With more comprehensive knowledge, teachers can act not only as educators but also as facilitators of children's social recovery.

Third, this research confirms that post-conflict social recovery for early childhood must be seen as a collective responsibility. Not only families and schools, but also indigenous communities and churches, as dominant social institutions in Kariu Village, play a crucial role in rebuilding children's sense of security. With multi-stakeholder collaboration, children will have greater space to restore trust, build positive relationships, and develop healthy social skills.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the social conflict in Kariu Village significantly impacted the social development of early childhood. Children who experienced traumatic events exhibited difficulties in social interactions with peers, impaired emotional regulation, and difficulties adapting to new post-conflict environments. These findings demonstrate that traumatic experiences not only leave psychological scars but also disrupt children's social-emotional development during their golden years. Therefore, the presence of a stable and safe environmental support is a fundamental factor in a child's recovery process.

Furthermore, this study confirms that families and teachers play a vital role in supporting children during the recovery phase. Parents serve as sources of security through affection, positive communication, and emotional support, while early childhood education teachers act as recovery facilitators through play-based learning, strengthening social interactions, and collaborating with parents. However, limited resources, infrastructure, and a shortage of educators with specialized competencies in trauma healing remain challenges that must be addressed immediately. Therefore, cross-sector collaboration between families, educational institutions, indigenous communities, and religious institutions is essential in building an ecosystem that supports early childhood recovery.

Ultimately, this research has important implications for developing more comprehensive intervention strategies for post-conflict early childhood. Social recovery cannot occur instantly; it requires structured, long-term, and sustainable efforts. Local governments, educational institutions, and communities need to work together to develop community-based child support programs that focus not only on educational aspects but also on psychosocial, spiritual, and cultural aspects. This way, children in Kariu Village can not only regain their self-confidence and social skills but also grow into a resilient, adaptive generation capable of contributing to future social development.

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