

Teachers' Examples in Forming Empathy in Children at Aisyiyah Bustanul Atfhal Tamalanrea

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ABSTRACT

The ability to empathize in early childhood is essential because it is part of essential moral development. This research aims to examine teacher examples in forming a sense of empathy in children aged 5-6 years at the Aisyiyah Bustanul Atfhal Tamalanrea Kindergarten. This research is a quasi-experiment involving 8 children as respondents. The instruments used are observation sheets to measure the achievement of empathy in children, and evaluation sheets to assess the implementation of the intervention. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The research results showed that children were able to recognize and show empathy after participating in activities guided by the teacher's example, such as understanding friends' feelings, sharing, and helping. These findings imply that the exemplary method teachers apply can effectively introduce moral values and empathy to young children. Thus, teacher example is one way that can stimulate children's moral development in recognizing and responding positively to other people's emotions.

Keywords: *Exemplary Method, Moral Development, Formation of a Sense of Empathy*

1) INTRODUCTION

Fostering empathy in children requires support from various elements including parents, teachers, schools, and the community. Therefore, many factors influence the development of empathy skills in children aged 5–6 years. According to Utami (Nugraha et al., 2017) the factors that affect the cultivation of empathy in children include: (1) internal individual conditions, (2) issues in the developmental process, and (3) the environment. A teacher must also possess a high level of empathy toward children and the school community by building harmonious relationships with others. If the teacher fulfills this role effectively, it is expected that children will achieve success in their education.

According to Darta (Fransiska et al., 2023) several ways to teach empathy to young children include: (1) being empathetic, (2) serving as a role model, (3) using “I” statements, (4) understanding children’s negative emotions, (5) engaging in pretend play, (6) revising the concept of apology, (7) exercising patience, (8) avoiding punishment, and (9) meeting children’s basic needs. Instilling

Paper presented at The 2nd ICONETT, 2025
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
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empathy in children is essential, as empathy enables them to connect with others, both when interacting with peers and as a foundation for social relationships in adulthood. By nurturing empathy, children can avoid feelings of jealousy, envy, and hostility toward others. The ability to empathize helps children become pleasant individuals with strong social awareness. When playing with peers, empathetic children learn to communicate, understand others, share, manage anger, resolve conflicts (tolerate differences), and distinguish right from wrong. As a result, they can grow into kind, wise, and well-liked individuals (Fransiska et al., 2023).

For early childhood, particularly those aged 5–6 years, the development of empathy is a crucial part of social skills that supports positive interactions with peers and others around them. However, some children may face barriers in developing empathy, such as difficulty understanding others' feelings or expressing care appropriately. To address these challenges, proper stimulation through the modeling method especially by teachers can be an effective approach. The teacher's modeling method refers to behaviors demonstrated by teachers in daily interactions, such as showing concern for students' feelings, responding empathetically when students face difficulties, or listening attentively when students talk about their problems. Research shows that children tend to imitate adult behaviors. In this context, teachers' modeling can help children understand and identify others' emotions (Sukmady, 2017). A study by McAllister & Irvine (2002) found that teachers who display empathy in their interactions with students help children develop stronger empathetic abilities. By observing and imitating teachers who are caring, patient, and understanding, children aged 5–6 years learn to respond similarly to their peers' feelings, which in turn enhances their empathy. According to Nurchaili (2010) teacher modeling serves as a crucial foundation for creating an environment that supports the social and emotional development of young children.

Modeling (role modeling) is one form of parenting pattern that serves as a process for shaping an individual's character within the family. The term "modeling" derives from the Arabic word *al-uswah*, meaning a person who follows another, whether the one followed does good or bad, constructive or misleading deeds. Therefore, in education, modeling refers to *uswatun hasanah*, or "a good example" (Dewi, 2017). As we know, modeling also means example or imitation and functions conservatively (Munawwaroh, 2019). It involves providing good examples to learners by practicing them directly so that students can also perform them properly in other words, demonstrating good conduct. Modeling is an essential element for life transformation and is suitable for instilling moral and social values in

children (Cahyaningrum et al., 2022). A teacher's exemplary conduct is vital to support their professional personality competence, provided that the teacher models good behavior. According to Abdurrahman An-Nahlawi (Akbar, 2019) the principles of modeling include providing examples accompanied by explanations or instructions to emulate them. For instance, a teacher demonstrates proper recitation of *bismillah* and performs prayers correctly. According to Aviatin et al. (2023) as role models for students, teachers should exemplify good behavior in various aspects of life, including ethics and integrity, effective communication, hard work and dedication, cooperation and teamwork, fairness and empathy, and lifelong learning.

Empathy is the ability to attune oneself to another person's situation, even when that person's perspective differs from our own. According to Uno and Kudrat (Nurfazrina et al., 2020) empathy is the ability to understand others' feelings and needs so that they feel appreciated and understood. Hurlock (Dewi, 2017) defines empathy as the ability of a person to place themselves in another's position and comprehend that individual's experiences. Empathy differs from sympathy while sympathy focuses more on one's own feelings with less regard for others', empathy centers one's emotions on others' conditions (Winangsih et al., 2018). Early childhood characteristics related to empathy include a high level of egocentrism (Irma et al., 2022). Empathy is one aspect of children's social-emotional development. Each child goes through different developmental stages; therefore, teachers and parents must understand these stages in children aged 5–6 years. In line with these developmental stages, both teachers and parents should provide appropriate stimuli and reinforcement at school and at home so that children can develop their empathetic abilities. The aspects of empathy that every child should possess include caring, compassion, and cooperation (Nurfazrina et al., 2020).

Based on this explanation, the modeling method becomes a suitable stimulation strategy used in this community service program to enhance the development of empathy among students at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal. After the program, it is expected that the children will be able to practice empathy both toward their peers and within their broader environment.

2) METHODS

This study employed a quasi-experimental research design. The number of subjects was seven children, identified by the initials KN, AN, KN, SR, AS, AI, and LF, selected using random sampling/purposive sampling techniques based on the following criterion: children aged 5–6 years.

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The learning method used in this study was the demonstration method, implemented through the following steps:

1. Being a Role Model in Demonstrating Empathic Behavior;
2. Encouraging Children to Help Others;
3. Providing Opportunities for Peer Interaction;
4. Teaching the Consequences of Actions;
5. Giving Positive Reinforcement.

The implementation of the program was carried out over three days, November 21, 22, and 25, 2024. The instrument used consisted of an observation sheet measuring the achievement of the intervention, which included five indicators, each containing one or more statement items, as shown below:

Table 1. *Instrument Blueprint*

Indicator	Statements
1. Identifying others' feelings	● The child can demonstrate an understanding of a friend's feelings (e.g., recognizing when a friend is sad or happy). ● The child can ask a friend who appears uncomfortable, "What makes you sad/happy?"
2. Showing concern for others' feelings	● The child expresses care through words or actions (e.g., comforting a crying friend or sharing toys with a friend who has none). ● The child displays empathetic behavior by offering help to a friend in need.
3. Appreciating and respecting peers	● The child respects peers by listening attentively when a friend speaks without interrupting. ● The child avoids actions that could hurt a friend's feelings (e.g., refraining from using harsh words or physical aggression).

4. Demonstrating affection in social interactions	● The child expresses affection toward friends with smiles or hugs (e.g., hugging a friend who is sad). ● The child offers kind and comforting words when seeing a friend in distress.
5. Showing care for the surrounding environment	● The child participates in cleaning activities in the classroom or playground, showing concern for collective cleanliness and comfort. ● The child demonstrates responsibility in maintaining and caring for shared school items.

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings show positive outcomes. This was evidenced after the implementation of treatment through group discussion activities, where most participants met the criteria of Developing as Expected (BSH) and Very Well Developed (BSB) in terms of children's cooperative behavior. The following table presents the recapitulation data of children's achievement observation results during the implementation of the community service activities involving seven research subjects.

Table 2. *Observation Results of Children's Achievement*

No	Child's Name	Item										Total	Average
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J		
1	KN	1	2	3	3	2	4	3	1	3	1	23	2,3
2	APM	1	3	3	2	1	3	3	1	2	1	20	2,0
3	KZ	1	3	4	4	1	3	2	1	3	1	23	2,3
4	AL	1	4	2	3	1	3	3	1	2	1	21	2,1
5	KNR	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	3	1	31	3,1
6	AN	1	4	3	4	1	3	3	1	3	1	24	2,4
7	LF	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	15	1,5
	Average											22,4	2,24

Note:

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Score 4 = Very Well Developed (BSB)

Score 3 = Developing as Expected (BSH)

Score 2 = Beginning to Develop (MB)

Score 1 = Not Yet Developed (BM)

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that the respondents from TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal had relatively similar average scores. The child with the initials KNR achieved the highest total score among peers, with a total of 31 and an average of 3.1, indicating cooperative behavior within the Developing as Expected (BSH) category. This means the child was already capable of working well in group discussions. However, one child, LF, showed less cooperative ability, with a total score of 15 and an average of 1.5, which falls into the Not Yet Developed (BM) category. Meanwhile, five other children were categorized as Beginning to Develop (MB).

Therefore, the teacher role-modeling method is highly suitable for use in learning, particularly for fostering the development of empathy in children. As stated by Iis (2015) children's empathy can be significantly developed and enhanced through the application of teacher modeling.

The results of this study align with research by Fithriyana (2019) which found that modeling plays a major role in cultivating character education. Modeling in education is one of the most effective methods for developing empathy, particularly through teachers' example. Similarly, research by Fitriani et al. (2024) found that children taught using habituation and teacher modeling methods exhibit higher levels of empathy than those who are not. Thus, the teacher's role is crucial in shaping empathy in early childhood. Moreover, Peck et al. (2015) emphasized the importance of teacher modeling in developing empathy among children aged 5–6 years. Their findings showed that teachers who consistently demonstrate politeness and good behavior can help improve children's empathy.



Figure 1. *Implementation of Cooperative Activities*



Figure 2. *Implementation of Identifying Others' Feelings*



Figure 3. *Implementation of Providing Positive Reinforcement*

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Based on the table and documentation above, it can be concluded that the application of teacher modeling in developing empathy among children aged 5–6 years has shown positive results. The children demonstrated increased empathy, as reflected in their cooperative behavior, polite speech, and respect for others' feelings. These findings are consistent with research by Meyers et al. (2019) which revealed that teacher modeling can enhance empathy in early childhood (ages 5–6). According to Tabi'in (2017) teachers can foster empathy in children through habituation and modeling methods. Similarly, research by Fransiska et al. (2023) showed that teachers play a crucial role in instilling empathy in children aged 5–6 by serving as role models who display empathic behaviors, such as understanding children's emotions and teaching them how to apologize. Furthermore, Suciati (2019) found that teachers foster children's empathy through sharing activities by demonstrating and explaining the benefits of sharing.

Xiang et al. (2022) also highlighted that developing empathy in children is essential for enhancing social-emotional skills and building positive relationships with others. Teachers play an important role in this process through modeling, instruction, and supervision. Teacher modeling helps children understand and feel others' emotions while demonstrating concern and care.

Teacher modeling also contributes to character formation among students. Teachers who display integrity, honesty, empathy, and other positive values can influence students to internalize these values and develop good attitudes. Teachers who serve as role models can become sources of motivation and inspiration for their students. Through academic achievement, dedication, hard work, and passion for teaching, teachers can inspire students to strive for success and realize their full potential. Teacher modeling thus plays a vital role in shaping positive student attitudes and behaviors (Aviatin et al., 2023).

4) CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of the community service program at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal using a teacher modeling approach to foster empathy in children aged 5–6 years showed positive results. The children began to recognize their peers' feelings, show concern, and develop tolerance and affection in social interactions. The modeling method effectively improved children's empathic abilities, reduced aggressive behavior, and promoted values of moderation and anti-extremism. It is recommended that similar activities continue to be carried out sustainably and involve a wider range of stakeholders, including parents, to support character development in broader contexts.

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Additionally, this approach could be expanded with more in-depth materials on tolerance and understanding differences. The limitation of this study lies in the short observation period and the small sample size. Therefore, further development and wider implementation of the teacher modeling method are needed in larger contexts.

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