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Reconstructing Early Childhood Education from Learning Crisis of Indonesian College Students with Inner Child Trauma

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Abstract: Inner child trauma is one of the vital aspects that disrupt early adult development, especially in learning crises in university students as how they respond to reality as adults influenced by childhood trauma. The method in this study uses autoethnography as a counselor lecturer who accompanies several college students at Gadjah Mada University who have accessed a psychologist or psychiatrist. Based on the findings of the early adult phase obtained from the university level can be used as material for reflection on the reconstruction of early childhood education in Indonesia. This study concludes with several reconstruction strategies. First, it is necessary to reformulate a family and community-based mental health awareness curriculum to support the growth and development of early childhood. Second, there is a parenting class that supports the success of early childhood education that is sensitive to mental health in the family environment. Third, increasing the capacity of early childhood education teachers and professional support for social workers susceptible to anxiety disorders in early childhood. Fourth, teaching education without cognitive competition is based on experiential learning that emphasizes morality-based resilience to accept failure from an early age.

Keywords: Inner Child Trauma; College Students; Early Childhood Education

A. Introduction

Inner child trauma is one of the vital aspects that disrupt early adult development, especially in learning crises in university students, as how they respond to reality as adults are influenced by childhood trauma. Traumatic experiences gained during childhood will impact behavior in adulthood, including meeting unmet needs with aggressive or depressive attitudes. What is often attached to this traumatic process is the critical moment when young children see domestic violence during their playing phase. Thus, when they emerge as adults, they have a weak personality pattern in terms of resilience in facing pressures in adulthood which impacts the educational process at universities where the shadows of childhood trauma still carry over into adulthood.

In a study conducted by Damayanti and Margaretha (2020) on 191 adult informants aged 18-40 years using a scale-taking method including the Traumatic Antecedent Questionnaire (TAQ), Big Five Inventory (BFI), State Adult Attachment Measure (SAAM) and Adult Disorganized Attachment (ADA) with regression analysis techniques and interaction tests, concluded that there is a solid relationship between childhood trauma and adult personality because the anxiety factor is decisive, causing social dysfunction during adulthood. During the emerging adulthood phase, children cannot build self-limits and the ability to defend

themselves because they see the powerlessness of their parents. The child's attachment to parental behavior, including the violence he experienced in childhood, causes the child in the adult phase to try to find a replacement figure for himself who did not experience a conducive childhood. Alexander (2012) mentions that in one community characteristic, "cultural trauma" is likely to occur due to similar collective behavior tendencies in that community without awareness to change behavior. Anggadewi (2020) highlighted that trauma that occurred in childhood would have long-term impacts in adulthood with the emergence of several mentally destructive behaviors such as anxiety, stress, depression, and so on. The study used to derive this conclusion is a mixed method through primary data taken in a counseling session at a higher education counseling unit in Yogyakarta in January-December 2020, which shows that physical and sexual violence is a factor in the occurrence of long-term traumatic experiences of 27.5% on the influence of emotional instability, sleep disturbances in adulthood, to the desire to commit suicide which then disrupts the learning process while in college.

From several studies conducted on the relationship between childhood trauma and an early adult perspective on seeing the world, it shows that the role of education is in reducing this view or exacerbating the trauma (Praptomojati, 2018; Santrock, 2011; Wibhowo et al., 2019). Irwanto (2020) states that one of the concerns that need to be strengthened in reducing the trauma that occurs in the childhood phase is the condition of the family environment and social environment in supporting children's cognitive and emotional learning processes. Reflecting on all the data above, this article attempts to use a reflective point of view where the author, as a lecturer at a university, tries to build reflectivity about the concept of education in Indonesia which causes trauma in childhood and can still be carried over, even exacerbated to university. In this reflection, this article offers several perspectives in reconstructing early childhood education where the root cause of trauma.

B. Methods

The method in this study uses autoethnography as a counselor lecturer who accompanies several college students at Gadjah Mada University who have accessed a psychologist or psychiatrist. Autoethnography is a set of methods used to view reflective notes while being peers for students who experience anxiety disorders due to childhood trauma. The autoethnographic method allows researchers to use observations in everyday life in the teaching-learning method as the primary source of data that needs to be re-examined as the primary data source. One of the references is dialogues originating from the process of learning resilience experienced by several college students. In the life span, the growth and development process of adult humans often brings the inner child in the childhood era, which is carried over into adulthood. This experience will only appear when in adulthood, a person still carries the perspective of trauma experiences or sees the perspective of adult life with childhood experiences; worse than that, one's soul always feels like a child in adulthood. In informal conversations, such matters always emerge as the fundamental root of problems in the Indonesian education system.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Envisioning an ideal Early Childhood Education for early adults with childhood trauma

Istiana (2014) in his study stated that early childhood education, which starts from birth up to the age of 6 years, has a vital role in the growth and development of personality in adulthood. The purpose of this education is to develop various potentials of children from an early age in preparation for life and being able to adapt to their environment. The law on the national education system states that early childhood education is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth up to the age of six, which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have the readiness to enter further education—continued (Law No. 20 of 2003 Chapter I Article 1 Paragraph 14). Based on some experiences experienced as learning resilience from early adulthood with trauma, this study provides several recommendations for reconstruction in early childhood education.

This study concludes with several reconstruction strategies. First, it is necessary to reformulate a family and community-based mental health awareness curriculum to support the growth and development of early childhood. The existing curriculum in Indonesia is narrated by policymakers who may have yet to experience early childhood education at their age. Then this early childhood education should be based on child-driven, which means that it focuses on educational patterns on fulfilling the ideal environment and community for the growth and development of children. The condition of developing country societies that are unequal in parenting also causes fatherlessness during the parenting period at the age of the children, which results in the absence of a role model for the child when he is approaching adulthood.

Second, there is a parenting class that supports the success of early childhood education that is sensitive to mental health in the family environment. So far, the perception of parents in Indonesia is that only by sending their children to early childhood education can they freely be irresponsible in their upbringing. At the same time, the most vital education occurs in the family environment.

Third, increasing the capacity of early childhood education teachers and professional support for social workers susceptible to anxiety disorders in early childhood. The ideal conditions are organic connections between educators and students who can maintain an intimate inner relationship between educators and students and develop inclusive education for all types of early childhood. Fourth, teaching education without cognitive competition is based on experiential learning emphasizing morality-based resilience to accept failure early on. It is concluded that based on competition-based education causes more severe worries for children who have experienced trauma in childhood.

2. Early Adulthood, Anxiety, and the Impact of Adult Educational System on Neoliberalism

This article has its strengths in terms of systematic thinking, where the data obtained from college students is used in reverse to imagine good early childhood education for the next generation. The assumption is that emerging adults who step foot in the world of university do

not experience feelings of happiness in childhood because of the experiences of violence they experienced.

"I wasn't ready to be an adult, I remember that when I was in elementary school I was always bullied by my male friends, until junior high school I preferred to be close to my school teacher rather than my friends, now in college, I still have difficulty studying" (Male informant -male, 2023)

The above is a quote from the opinion of a university student who feels he is not fully mature because his bad childhood experiences still haunt him.

"In Indonesia, to get into your favorite college, you have to study hard at high school, take various additional courses, you always come home late and that has happened since I was in junior high school, even in elementary school, even in college, we often experience anxiety. because they see insecurity in friends who are much smarter and richer," (Female informant, 2023)

One of the root problems that often arise from learning resilience at the university level is the competition associated with the neoliberal education system, which incidentally is only based on cognitive achievements. In some cases, in countries with dense populations, the university ranking system causes competition at the basic education level. For example, this applies in Indonesia, where high school background determines success in entering Indonesia's favorite tertiary institutions, and keep in mind that this process is like a successive relay process because the competition to enter high school is also determined by origin from junior high school and elementary school. As a result, a competition-based system for obtaining cognitive achievement in the neoliberalism system is the root of the anxiety problem.

Early adulthood is likened to a transitional period that is full of problems when at this time, there are still questions about self-identity, so that it creates new roots of stress which become new pressures both psychologically in dealing with changes in social and environmental conditions. In several cases, the development of children into adulthood is accompanied by the emergence of many vulnerabilities, such as anxiety about the future that originates from the past. Experiences experienced in childhood become the foundation of personality development, and when these experiences are filled with trauma, it will usually encourage the birth of a borderline personality in adulthood. In addition, childhood trauma can also be a determinant of depression and the root of several mental problems, such as self-harm to depression.

Some of the findings that arise during the period of anxiety appearing in adulthood are anxiety with the emergence of feelings of fear and anxiety that are felt by a person, such as anxiety in a physical form, namely palpitations, cold sweats, difficulty concentrating, and dizziness. Anxious feelings include excessive fear and rumination, negative thoughts about death, and social withdrawal. All these roots led to the birth of panic attacks while studying at university.

3. Working Memory in the Play Phase: primary needs and the Roots of early life stress in early childhood development

This article then attempts to see that early childhood education should have integrated characteristics. Still, it pays attention to the subjective well-being of each individual by looking at it in several detail. First, early childhood education focuses on curriculum-based child

development following the development of children close to the world of play in Froebel's perspective. Second, early childhood education focuses on the child's peers, which means that this education is not entirely individualistic but is a collective education with other peers when children begin to recognize socialization as in the Montessori perspective, which mixes across ages in their educational levels.

Early childhood development is attached to the play phase when the child grows with imagination in the brain and a desire to explore social relationships. Goodman et al. (2019), in their study of early life stress, show that this play phase is the most ambivalent in early childhood development when the need to play together with peers is the primary need for children to grow children's imagination and abilities. However, on the other hand, it can also be the root cause of the emergence of early life stress, one of which is due to the bullying experienced during this playing period. Early life stress is the definition of childhood trauma whose roots can come from physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, unhealthy social and environmental conditions, peer-to-peer violence, and witnessing violent incidents that cause long-term trauma. In some studies, early life stress strongly influences health problems in adulthood, so it interferes with the wellness of adulthood.

According to a study conducted by Jazylin et al. (2021), sexual violence that occurs in the childhood phase can be in the form of an experience that he experienced or then the possibility that the child saw adult sexual behavior during early childhood where both hurt development in adulthood. This study shows that the shadow of secure adulthood causes children who experienced childhood violence to have less adaptability than those who did not experience childhood violence.

In the early childhood phase, children have started to have a working memory, namely a cognitive system that functions to provide simple transmission of completion of tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, the stimulus that is often done is to provide a variety of stimulants in the form of toys that can encourage the imagination and creativity of children. However, this playing phase is also the most vulnerable because children can start committing violence against their peers due to a lack of emotional control, which then continues into the adolescent or early adult phases with the emergence of traits that dominate the group. Therefore it requires emotional-based learning during these phases of play.

Defective working memory due to trauma experienced in childhood causes early adulthood to be unable to perceive responsibility ideally, resulting in difficulties in completing responsibilities at work. In their study, Nurhayati and Setyani (2021), which provided notes on childhood trauma and aggressive behavior, stated that childhood trauma experiences in the form of scary, dangerous, cruel, or life-threatening events in children will have a very long-term impact on perceptions and misunderstandings. The only imperfection of working memory in early adulthood. Behavior that appears, for example, aggressive behavior or any action intended to hurt others or himself with self-harm. This happens because trauma in childhood will cause changes in the structure of the human brain, which then provides aggressive responses as a way of protection in early adulthood in remembering bitter experiences in childhood. Afifah (2015) also agrees with the emergence of this aggressive personality as a result of a protective response that arises unconsciously when reaching adulthood which incidentally has many responsibilities and various models of human interaction, especially when working professionally among other adults.

Kartono (2003) and Sarwono (2009) provide an analysis of several factors that are known to cause the emergence of aggressive behavior, such as the learning process due to coping mechanisms at the age of children who see violence and imitation, namely when children only have one experience that tends to imitate adults. Imitation of aggressive behavior in the future is then relevant to this is the link between childhood trauma and aggressive behavior related to denial of responsibility in adulthood which incidentally is the Nucleus Accumbens or the center of pleasure and appreciation in the brain experiencing problems, as well as the prefrontal cortex as impulse control which also get in trouble.

In the end, this article also sees that the experience of trauma in childhood causes changes in brain structure and physical health in terms of working memory related to brain structure causing early adulthood to experience difficulties in thinking, learning, and concentrating. Early adults need three main things in learning to be responsible so that in adulthood, they become very vulnerable to depression and suicidal ideation. It is in line with a study conducted by Ono and Devilly (2013), which states that there is a significant role for childhood and adult trauma in terms of seeing the "actual self" and "feared self" due to the inability of adults to project ideal experiences that should be faced rationally. Glenn (2014) mentions that spiritual and emotional resilience in adulthood is needed to overcome one's inability to imagine an authentic self because of the trauma cataracts faced during these childhoods.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes with several reconstruction strategies. First, it is necessary to reformulate a family and community-based mental health awareness curriculum to support the growth and development of early childhood. Second, there is a parenting class that supports the success of early childhood education that is sensitive to mental health in the family environment. Third, increasing the capacity of early childhood education teachers and professional support for social workers susceptible to anxiety disorders in early childhood. Fourth, teaching education without cognitive competition is based on experiential learning that emphasizes morality-based resilience to accept failure from an early age.

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