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The Role of Parents in Raising Children's Environmental Awareness and Attitudes

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Article History	Abstract
<p>Article Submission 10 October 2021</p> <p>Revised Submission 18 February 2022</p> <p>Article Accepted 30 March 2022</p>	<p>Environmental damage caused by human activities is an essential issue in the world. Saving the environment and protecting ecosystems are parts of the Sustainable Development Goals. Parents' role in raising environmental awareness and attitude early on to prevent environmental damage is crucial. This study describes parents' role in raising children's environmental awareness and attitude. This research used a qualitative case study design based on data collected from interviews, observations, and documentation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with parents of 4-6 years old children who implemented pro-environmental parenting in daily life. The result of the study showed that parents act as models, facilitators, and motivators in raising children's awareness and attitude toward the environment. Children learned about consumption, protecting creatures, and waste management from their parents. Environmental awareness and attitudes built from an early age were expected to help the children build positive attitudes and behaviors towards the environment in the future.</p> <p>Keywords: Attitudes, Awareness, Environmental, Role of Parents.</p>

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Introduction

One hundred ninety-three member countries of the United Nations (UN), including Indonesia, unanimously adopted a document entitled Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 2 August 2015. The Heads of State signed the document at UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York on 25- 27 September 2015. The document comprises 17 sustainable destination development and is divided into 169 targets. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the renewal of goals and indicators of universal targets for countries member UN which will frame every agenda and policy of state politics for the next 15 years (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2016).

SDGs were made to answer the world problems: people, earth, prosperity, peace, and partnership, which were interrelated. When there is a change in human behavior to protect nature, peace, and the preservation of other living things, the earth as a place to live will be well preserved. (Lana et al., 2021) Humans and the environment are two interrelated components. Humans need various environmental resources to meet their needs, and the environment will be sustainable with human intervention. However, data and research results show that environmental damage due to human behavior still occurs, especially in Indonesia.

Indonesia is the second largest country that produces and contributes plastic waste to the oceans, with total plastic waste reaching 1.29 million metric tons per year (Jambeck et al., 2015). Indonesia is said to be the country with the highest air pollution pollutant in the world after America and China because 85% of Indonesia's emissions come from forest destruction and land conversion (ICCTF, 2019). As a result of deforestation and degradation, from 2011-2018, Indonesia's forested land in forest areas and outside forest areas decreased from 98.7 hectares to 93.5 hectares (Wisnu Budi Wijaya, 2019). It shows that the environmental management system in Indonesia has not been carried out optimally and results in damaged forests and very high air pollution. Climate change that occurs in Indonesia results in Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions which are contributed by 45% from the energy sector, 26% from the forestry sector, 26% from peat fires, and 11% from agriculture. Meanwhile, GHG emissions produced by the energy sector in Indonesia are dominated by CO₂ at 94%, followed by CH₄ at 5%, and finally, N₂O at 1% (KLHK, 2018). Climate change in Indonesia impacts global warming, causes declining health quality and results in agriculture and water resources.

Environmental responsibility requires efforts to protect the environment and reduce environmental pollution and other harmful effects on the environment (Türkoğlu, 2019). All of the aforementioned conditions are extremely worrisome because of the potential damage they pose to the ecosystem, which in turn threatens the future of all living things on Earth, including humans. Continuous environmental damage will reduce the quality of human life. Therefore, efforts are needed to save the environment from damage through environmental education, which aims to instill environmental literacy at an early age. Education is essential in achieving sustainable development goals, mainly to save the earth's environment. Education is an effective means of raising awareness of environmental conservation (Koc, 2013). People with good environmental literacy and environmentally responsible behavior are the solution to environmental problems (Özsoy et al., 2012). Environmental education aims to prepare someone to have good environmental literacy (Saribas, 2015), namely having an understanding of all things related to the environment, including knowing existing problems and being able to find solutions to environmental problems that exist in Indonesia around.

In 1977 UNESCO published the Tbilisi Declaration, which contains an agreement on the importance of environmental education as a process of creating a world society that is aware and cares for the environment and all problems related to it and has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation, and commitment to work both individually and collectively to be able to solve various environmental problems (Atkinson, 2017). With the commitments agreed upon by the heads of state and implemented individually, all the world's inhabitants have the same duty to maintain the safety of the earth from damage and destruction through the implementation of environmental education to form a generation that cares for the environment.

The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Indonesia in 2006 proclaimed education

environment life through the program Adiwiyata for primary and secondary education levels, intending to form schools that are cultured and care about the environment as an effort to preserve the environment and sustainable development (Desfandi & Maryani, 2017). Environmental education is better given from an early age because children's involvement in environmental programs at an early age will increase their environmental knowledge and awareness (Musthofa & Koentjoro, 2019). Environmental education is vital for early childhood because it has excellent potential to develop skills, values, and dispositions that support sustainability, creating a foundation for future environmental sensitivities, interests, and behaviors (Ernst & Burcak, 2019). Early childhood is the best period to provide the basics of positive character values because children are active learners and are in a sensitive period that quickly absorbs stimulation from the surrounding environment.

Children are not only victims of climate change but also can play a role as actors of climate change, but what is more important is how to prepare children who care and as environmental actors (Nche et al., 2019). Education environment, which is given from an early age, is expected to be a solid foundation for the growth of environmental literacy that encourages an attitude of caring for the environment. Curricula that teach children to conserve natural resources are rare, so adults must help from an early age to be actively involved in ecological practices (Honig & Mennerich, 2012).

Building a generation with environmental literacy skills is not only the school's responsibility but also of the community and family (Syafitri et al., 2021). Environmental problems are a collective responsibility involving every individual, family, community, and nation (Rusdina, 2015). Parents can influence children through two choices, namely by influencing children's preferences or by imposing restrictions on children's choices (Doepke, 2017). The involvement of parents in education supports the process of child development to have good character and support in improving their learning achievement (Edy et al., 2018). Education in the family is essential in forming children's character from an early age because the family is the closest party in the child's life. Parenting patterns affect a child's character formation. Parents were found to play a social role and were involved in shaping children's pro-environmental behavior and attitudes and developing their knowledge and skills. The formation of an environmentally literate generation must start from the family, with parents as the prominent educators, so an eco-family design is needed (Wisnu Budi Wijaya, 2019).

Environmental awareness is vital for individuals to manage and protect the environment (Hanisch et al., 2014). Environmental awareness is important to teach because it will shape children's interest and responsibility for the environment (Soydan & Ozturk Samur, 2014). Environmental awareness is a skill that needs to be taught to children because it will shape future behavior that serves to protect the environment (Buldur & Omeroglu, 2018) because the early age is a sensitive time for adopting a positive attitude environment (Wilson, 2018). Environmental education brings influences and positively builds environmental attitudes (Soydan & Ozturk Samur, 2014).

Studies about the role of parents in raising environmental attitudes in early childhood are essential because early age is a golden age, which is the right time to form the basics of behavior that will determine their development at a later stage. Research that specifically discusses the role of parents in growing environmental awareness and attitudes in children aged 4-6 years is not found yet because previous studies have discussed the role of parents in growing environmental awareness in elementary school-aged children and adolescents (Amardini et al., 2020; Collado & Corraliza, 2017; Leppänen et al., 2012; Matthies et al., 2012; Rachman et al., 2015). This study will answer the research question: what is the role of parents in raising environmental awareness and attitude in early childhood?

Methodology

This qualitative research describes the role of parents in raising environmental awareness and attitudes of children aged 4-6 years old. The study was carried out by early childhood education lecturers of child early childhood in East Jakarta.

Participants

The study involved three couples of parents with children 4-6 years old who have implemented pro-environmental parenting in daily activities. They consist of 3 mothers (M) and three fathers (F) who live in East Jakarta. Parents have agreed and are ready to become participants in this study.

Data Collection

Data were collected using 12 questions and of semi-structured interview instrument. The interview was conducted within 60-90 minutes per participant. The interview started with questions about parents' knowledge of the environment and its problems. The following questions are related to the role of parents in raising environmental awareness and attitude. Arranged questions such as: "How can you support your child to get a good environmental awareness and attitude?", "How do you facilitate your child to achieve good environmental awareness and attitude?", "How do you implement pro-environmental parenting in daily activities?", "How do you motivate the child to raise good environmental awareness and attitude?" and so on. Researchers also observed parents' daily activities related to their pro-environmental behaviors and made documentation by taking pictures and videos about their activities.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Milles and Huberman's analysis model through four activities: data collection, condensation, data display, and conclusion (Milles et al., 2014). Figure 1 illustrates that after the data was collected, the researcher performed data condensation by selecting, focusing, abstracting, and transforming to ensure that the data was already enough and could be used. The following stage was data display by combining various information from data condensation, and the final stage was the withdrawal conclusion.

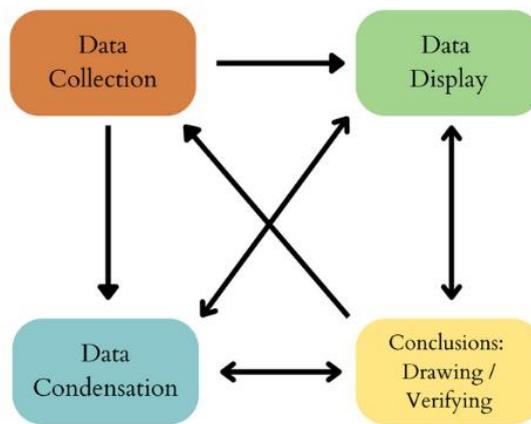


Figure 1. Components of data analysis (Milles and Huberman)

Results and Discussions

The participants of this study consisted of three couple of parents who lived in East Jakarta. They have children 4-6 years old and have to implement pro-environmental behavior in daily life. Table 1 shows that most research participants aged below 40%, a total of 66.7%. All parents who were participants did not have an educational background related to the environment but had attended seminars or environment training (Table 1). Most of them did not join an environmental community or organization, but they had implemented pro-environmental behavior in daily life.

Table 1. Participants Characteristic

	Participants (n)	Percentage
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Parent's Age		
Under 40 years old	4	66.7%
Over 40 years old	2	33.3%
Education		
Graduated from Environmental Department	0	0
Graduated from Non-Environmental Department	6	100%
Join environmental seminar/training		
Ever	6	100%
never	0	0
Join an environmental community/organization		
Yes	2	33.3%
No	4	66.7%

Parents as a Model

Family is an essential component that builds the foundation of related feelings and ideas with life and human experiences. Family is children's first influence and essential information attitude (Güven & Yılmaz, 2017). Parents who have conceived, given birth, and nurtured their children have physical and emotional proximity, so they have ample opportunity to influence their children's development in various aspects. Parents are good role models for children regarding environmental issues (Buldu, 2020). Parents are models for children at home to achieve knowledge and a sensitive environment (Duvall & Zint, 2007). Results of interviews and observations show that parents show the role of a model through an action care environment in daily activities (figure 2).

"I always bring a water bottle, lunch box, and the cutleries when traveling." (F1 interview)

"... at shopping time, I always bring reusable bags." (M2 interview)

"..... I recycle old clothes into other forms such as aprons, bags, handkerchiefs, and kids' cloth." (M3 Interview).



Figure 2. Parents Recycled Old Clothes into Useful Goods

Parents show their role as a model in household waste management. Parents realize that waste is one of the causes to environmental damage contributors. To reduce plastic waste, parents used reusable equipment, like cutleries, bottles, and lunch boxes when traveling or going to the office, and reusable bags when shopping. Figure 1 illustrates parents' activity in recycling old clothes into aprons, bags, handkerchiefs, kids' cloth, and so on. Parents hope the child will imitate their behavior to reduce waste through reuse, reduction, and recycling activities.

"... ..I always turn off the electricity and air conditioning before leaving the room." (M3, interview)

"Every morning I turn off whole light and open all window house, so that light of the sun comes in." (F2 interview)

"I hope child I imitate habit her parents always turn off electricity when no used." (F3 interview)

The energy crisis is one of the environmental problems in the world. The demand for electricity and water for humans worldwide is vast, while supplies on earth are limited. Parents hoped the children imitate their behavior in saving energy. A parent is the most potent and influential model in children (Marui, 2016). Parents are role models and are responsible for educating children (Hardianto & Haryani, 2017). A child will notice behavior shown by their parents and imitate values as well as behavior them. According to Bandura's theory of observational learning, a person can imitate the behavior of others who are models by observing and imitating them (Nelson , Groom, Ryan,, Potrac, Paul,, 2016).

Besides that, parents also show ways to protect the environment, especially animals and plants.

"We keep fish and rabbits at home. I teach child I for love animal by giving food and taking care of it." (M1 interview)

"Everyday week we do gardening activities at home. We plant vegetables and some plants in the yard home. I invite child I for watering and caring plants in the house." (M3 interview).

".... my child is always enthusiast every time I invite her to take a walk. I introduce various types of plants and animals in the environment around and how method protect her" (F3 interview)



Figure 3. Parents introduce plant and animal

Parents are responsible for educating their children to become pro-environmental individuals (Gaziulusoy, 2020). Figure 3 illustrates how parents introduced the various animals and plants into the environment and how to protect them by feeding and taking care of them. Parents took care of rabbits and goats and involved children in taking care of them. Parents also planted vegetables in the yard and invited children to take care of them by watering, maintaining, and harvesting them for consuming with family. Parents hoped the children imitate their behavior.

Parents as a Facilitator

Parents and families have an essential role in children's growth and development because they are the closest people (Lasota, 2015). Parents can act as facilitators through active collaboration by providing educational facilities and creating a home environment that supports children's academic success (Raftery et al., 2012). Parents prepared various media with use items in the house to raise children's environmental awareness and attitude.



Figure 4. Father and daughter made moneybox from the old can

Figure 4 illustrates that Father (F2) taught her daughter to recycle a used candy can to a money box. Father explained to her daughter recycling and how to make a money box. This acts as an effort to recycle the waste by turning the materials that would be thrown away as trash into a new product. Household materials that can be recycled are glass bottles, newspaper, steel cans, aluminum or plastic container, old cloth, towel, and so on.

"I provide many used papers at home. I ask my son to use the blank side." (F3 interview)

"I prepared a bottle, lunch box, and cutlery when travelling, so that there is no need to buy packaged food or drink." (M1 interview)

Parents provided many used papers to write or draw at home and taught their children to use the blank side. This is a simple action but impactful to save the earth because paper production requires electricity, water, and thousands of trees. If all families do this action, we can save the environment.



Figure 5. Parents as a facilitator

Parents prepared materials and equipment to facilitate child activities. Figure 5 illustrates some parents' and children's activities. They pounded eggshells to make organic mulch. The mulch is used to guard the humidity of the soil and push the growing weeds and diseases, making plants grow well. Besides that, parents prepare tools for cleanliness like brooms, rags, and mops that the child can use for cleaning the home. Parents also prepared tools for planting and caring for plants. Parents as facilitators provide facilities that can increase child performance (Kholiq et al., 2017), especially in raising environmental awareness and attitude.

Parents as a Motivator

Parents who are involved in parenting will affect the achievement of children's attitudes and behavior (B. McNeal Jr, 2014). Parents are essential in motivating children to have good environmental awareness and attitudes. Parents also act as motivators by providing support, attention, and appreciation for children's growth and development. Parents who provide motivation support children's achievement (Moneva et al., 2020).

"My daughter always sorts the waste. I give her appreciation for his actions." (F1 interview)

"I often record my son's daily activity, like when he throws away the trash in its place, sorting trash, tidying up toys, and so on. My son is delighted when watching the video." (M3 interview)

"We often watch movies together. One of our favorite movies is Rescue the Sea." (F3 interview)

"We have books story themed environments like, Save Coral Reef, Save Energy, Save Electricity, Lifesaver Earth, and so on. My daughter is thrilled when I read a book and discuss it with her." (F3 interviews)

Parents give support with involvement in a number of activities. Parents read story books and watch a movie about environmental protection to raise children's environmental awareness and attitude. Children were allowed to ask and reveal their idea about environmental protection. Parents' support and appreciation will increase children's self-confidence and support their environmental awareness and attitude, which is expected to lead to pro-environmental behavior.

Well-educated parents have effective techniques to motivate children to achieve good performance (Khan et al., 2010). Children need parents' motivation properly (Moneva et al., 2020), and proper motivation will raise children's environmental awareness and attitude.

Conclusion

Parents are the first teacher to their children. They are responsible for ensuring children's growth and education until they go to school. Children's achievement depends on their parents' role and their involvement in education. Parents play the role of model, facilitator, and motivator in raising environmental awareness and attitude. Being a model, parents expect children will imitate their parents' actions. Being a facilitator means parents provide media, materials, and equipment to support children's activities. Being a motivator means that parents provide support, attention, and appreciation. Children learned about consumption, protecting creatures, and waste management from their parents. Environmental awareness and attitudes built from an early age were expected to help the children build positive attitudes and behaviors towards the environment in the future.

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