

THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN EARLY READING DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Reading is one of the important skills that predict an individual's success in the future. Various knowledge and other skills can be acquired by mastering reading skills. However, reading skills cannot be obtained without effort. It needs stimulation from the environment at an early age. Family is the first and primary environment that dominates the interaction of children at an early age. Hence, family especially parents plays a major role in developing early reading skills. Here, parents need to perform their roles as models, mentors, organizers, and teachers to help children with their early reading development.

Keywords; Role, family, development, early reading, early childhood.

A. The definition of a family

We need to understand the definition of a family before jumping into discussion about a family's duty and responsibility. Many experts have defined the term but the definitions made are adjusted to the social condition at the respective areas of a country. According to Achmad in Aziz (2015), a family is a social group marked by one living place, cooperated in finance and reproduction, united by marriage relationship or socially-approved adoption, and mutually interacted in each social role.

Ali in Aziz (2015), explains that family normatively is a group of people tied by marriage that understand and stand as a special affiliation. This affiliation strengthens itself for the happiness, prosperity, and tranquility of all members. Further, Law of the Republic of Indonesia No 52/ 2009 chapter I Article 6 about demography development and reconstruction interprets family as the smallest unit in a society consisted of husband-wife, husband-wife and children, father and children, or mother and children.

From the definitions, we can define that a family is a group of people consisted of a head-family and members of a family that is tied by marriage and live in one place. They have rules, influence one another and possess purpose and definite program.

B. The function of a family

Based on the definition of family, we can perceive that a family carries out functions and responsibilities. When people discuss the function and responsibility of a family, they would explain in different wordings. The differences made are common as they could refer it to aspects in each role and responsibility of the member of a family.

In Indonesia, the function and responsibility of a family have been explicitly explained in the amendment in the 1945 constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article 28 B Chapter 2 that 'every child has the right to live, grow up and develop as well as the right to protection from violence and discrimination.'

Ismaniar (2018) argues that every family carries several functions to achieve its purpose and sustainability which are described as follows;

1. **Economic Function**, family earns living and operates financial activities professionally. The income and expenditure can be planned correctly to prevent greater expenditure than income.
2. **Social Function**, family is the first medium in social interaction process. It forms a close relationship among the members of the family or even larger surroundings. In other words, family in the social function is the first resource of inspiration in building communication through proper conversation process.
3. **Educational function**, family is the first educational institution for a child. Education in the family will predict the success of their educational performance in a formal institution. Educational learning given from family is the practical subject undelivered by schools such as skills for daily life, religious practice, morals practice, and act of kindness.
4. **Psychological function**, family has a major impact on the development and psychological maturity of its members. If parents raise their children rigorously, their children would follow the pattern and the nurture model, and as a consequence, they would develop stern character. On the

other hand, if parents raise their children with respect, freedom, affection, and tenderness, their children will grow up with confidence, authenticity, and righteousness.

5. **Reproduction function**, a family that is formed by a legal knot will reproduce a generation that is legally approved by religion and government. Reproduction function centers in the biological relationship of parents (mother and father), as well as their children's relationship with their partners in the future.
6. **Religious function**, according to Helmawati (2014), a religious function is implemented through values in its belief like creed and piety. This function is related to order to conduct the commands of God and avoid his bans. The best method to exercise this function is through habit, model, and immediate practice.

Children at an early age depend on their families most of the time. Their living sustainability will depend on the functions exercised by the family. Thus, to produce a generation with a great character, a family needs to implement each responsibility and function.

C. Family's Role in Early Reading Development

1. Family as the first educational environment

Family is the first and primary environment for children. When a child was born, the first surroundings they encountered and recognized is family. Besides, the early stimulation is derived from home, especially parents. Research conducted on children's growth and development has shown that early childhood is the period where human is the most sensitive, which is indicated by the great ability to absorb the knowledge from their surroundings. It is also known as the golden age of children's development.

Education expert, Montessori in Ismaniar (2019), asserts that a child at an early age is like a dry sponge. If the dry sponge is placed in clean water, then it will absorb the clean water and be clean. However, if the dry sponge is placed in dirty water, it will absorb the dirty water. And if it is placed in sweet water, it will also be sweet. That is how it is with children at an early age. They have not acquired the concept of values, so they are unable to distinguish the good from the bad.

2. Family's role in early reading development

Various studies and research have found that the role of family is important in the process of children's education. A family, controlled by parents, has a huge influence on children's growth and development, especially when they are at an early age. Family plays many roles to prepare their children for a bright future.

In relation to the family's role in children's education, Covey (1997), proposes four important roles of parents:

1. As role models; parents are models and exemplary for their children. Parents' exemplary behavior takes part in children's development. Children's development of behavior, attitude and utterance are influenced by their surroundings. In early childhood, a family is the closest one because they have limited and narrow setting of interaction. Hence, parents are the models to shape their way of life.
2. As mentors; children learn various things from their family especially parents. Children' ability to build and engage in a relationship, give affection and protect others sincerely, honestly and voluntarily is nurtured from home
3. As organizers; children learn to be organizers from home. Family is like a miniature of a company that only operates with team cooperation. Family as a team helps in solving problems, performing tasks, and fulfilling family's needs.
4. As teachers; parents as teachers in a family. The primary role of teachers for children is their family because parents teach them the basic principles and laws of life.

Family plays a great role in contributing stimulation of early reading development. As previously explained, a family is the dominant environment that engages in interaction from an early age. Emphasized by language and education experts, it is possible to begin giving stimulation for reading skills at an early age. In addition, research by Durkhin in Dhieni (2009) concludes that no negative impact made from early reading. In fact, children whose reading and writing skills are stimulated from an early age have better performance in school compared to their peers who are not given stimulation of early reading and writing.

Furthermore, Montessori affirms that children at the age of 4-5 can be taught reading and writing. Reading and writing can even be enjoyable play for them. Tom & Sobol (2003) also support the argument and state that children who are prepared and taught reading in the kindergarten have more confidence and enjoyment.

Therefore, in the context of family's role especially parents, their competence is assessed to create a conscious ability of their children. The children realize what they are doing and understand why they do it. This way, children will enjoy their work without feeling repressed by their parents. As

for parents, they need to play their role as a models, mentors, organizers, and teachers for their children to stimulate early reading development.

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