

Cognitive, Social-Emotional, Religious, and Moral Development in Childhood And Adolescence

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral development during childhood and adolescence. The research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design and utilizes a literature review method by collecting data from books, journals, and relevant scientific sources. The findings indicate that cognitive development from childhood to adolescence progresses from concrete to abstract thinking, influenced by biological maturation and social interaction. Social-emotional development is characterized by an increased ability to manage emotions, build social relationships, and form identity, particularly during adolescence. Meanwhile, religious and moral development shows a shift from rule-based understanding toward deeper and more independent internalization of values. These four aspects of development are interrelated and influenced by internal factors, family, school, and the social environment. Therefore, the roles of parents, teachers, and the environment are crucial in supporting optimal development in children and adolescents.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The stages of human growth and development, beginning from the prenatal period to old age, involve various aspects, including physical, mental, and social dimensions. Growth refers to measurable physical changes, while development involves more complex psychological and social processes. These processes are remarkably complex, and each stage has its own characteristics and theories developed by experts in human development. From childhood, which is a stage of initial life recognition, to adolescence, which represents a transitional phase toward maturity and adulthood, development continues dynamically.

Childhood and adolescence are critical stages in human development, as significant changes occur in cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral aspects. These developments not only influence how individuals think and understand the world but also shape personality, values, and behaviors that persist into adulthood. Human development is a long journey experienced from birth through adolescence,

where each stage has distinct characteristics involving physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects (Megawaty, 2024). These developments significantly affect a child's personality across cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral domains, all of which are interconnected and influenced by the surrounding environment.

Cognitive development refers to the improvement of thinking abilities and understanding as individuals mature. At this stage, individuals develop skills in thinking, learning, and processing information more effectively (Megawaty, 2024). It involves rational abilities such as attention, memory, and logical thinking. These abilities can be enhanced through practice and appropriate stimulation, enabling children to gain new experiences. During adolescence, individuals begin to think abstractly, critically, and reflectively, allowing them to analyze situations and make more complex decisions.

Cognitive development is not solely based on biological processes but is also constructed through interactions with adults and the environment. In line with Vygotsky's perspective, cognitive development occurs through two pathways: basic biological processes and sociocultural psychological processes (Qiptiyah, 2024). Therefore, interaction plays a crucial role in emphasizing both internal and external aspects of learning within social contexts.

Social-emotional development is an essential aspect that must be stimulated from an early age. It involves the growth of social relationships and emotional regulation, including how individuals interact with others and express their emotions (Megawaty, 2024). Children begin to recognize emotions and interact with their environment, while adolescents experience increased needs for social acceptance, identity formation, and more complex emotional regulation.

Social-emotional development reflects a child's sensitivity to understanding others' feelings in daily interactions, beginning with family and extending to broader social contexts (Muzammil, 2021). These aspects are inseparable, as emotional development is closely linked to social behavior. Children aged 5–6 years are expected to demonstrate the ability to adapt, recognize and manage emotions, understand rules, develop self-control, and take responsibility for their actions. Social skills are crucial for communication, relationship building, self-respect, and accepting feedback (Harianja, 2023).

Religious and moral development also play a vital role in shaping individual character. From early childhood, moral values and religious teachings are introduced through family and the environment. During adolescence, individuals begin to question, understand, and internalize these values more deeply, forming mature belief systems and life principles. This development reflects a transition from rule-based compliance to independent value internalization, including empathy and abstract thinking about justice.

For children, religious and moral values represent psychological changes related to understanding and practicing behaviors aligned with their religious teachings. These values serve as a foundation for guiding behavior, thoughts, and speech based on moral and religious standards derived from the Qur'an and Hadith (Nabilah, 2019).

Overall, cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral development occur gradually and are interconnected. Family plays a primary role in forming the foundation of development, while schools and peers strengthen this process. During adolescence, individuals begin to think critically and search for identity, often experiencing internal and social conflicts. Therefore, proper guidance is necessary to ensure positive development. Understanding these aspects is essential for parents, educators, and society to provide appropriate support for optimal development.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to gain an in-depth understanding of cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral development during childhood and adolescence. A qualitative approach was chosen as it enables a comprehensive exploration of phenomena within their natural context and emphasizes the meanings constructed by individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study also utilizes a literature review method by collecting relevant materials from scholarly journals, books, and credible online sources. The collected literature was systematically reviewed and synthesized to construct a comprehensive analysis, particularly concerning cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral development in children and adolescents (Sukainten et al., 2023).

Using a descriptive qualitative framework, this study aims to systematically describe the characteristics of individual development during childhood and adolescence. This approach allows researchers to understand developmental processes from the perspectives of individuals within their social contexts (Moleong, 2017). The subjects of this study include children and adolescents within specific developmental age ranges, supported by key informants such as parents and teachers. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their knowledge and relevant experience related to the research focus (Sugiyono, 2019). The object of this study focuses on the dimensions of cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral development as experienced by children and adolescents in their daily lives.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cognitive Development

The term cognitive is derived from cognition, which refers to knowing or the process of acquiring, organizing, and using knowledge. In educational taxonomy, the cognitive domain represents intellectual potential, including knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, all of which involve mental processes (Zega, 2021). Cognitive theory emphasizes efforts to optimize individuals' rational capacities. Cognitive development refers to changes in an individual's thinking abilities over time. According to Piaget (Ibda, 2015), cognitive development consists of four stages: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational. Children typically function at the concrete operational stage, whereas adolescents reach the formal operational stage, enabling them to think abstractly and logically. Vygotsky (1978) further highlights the role of social interaction in cognitive development through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where individuals learn with guidance from more knowledgeable others.

Piaget classifies cognitive development into four stages. First, the sensorimotor stage (0–2 years), during which infants move from reflexive actions to symbolic thinking. Second, the preoperational stage (2–7 years), when children begin to represent the world through language and images. Third, the concrete operational stage (7–11 years), where logical thinking about concrete objects emerges. Finally, the formal operational stage (11–15 years), in which adolescents develop abstract, logical, and hypothetical thinking abilities (Zega, 2021). Cognitive development can be viewed from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Quantitatively, it can be measured using intelligence tests administered longitudinally, such as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale (Khiyarusoleh, 2016). Qualitatively, cognitive development reflects progressive changes in thinking structures, becoming increasingly organized, with each stage building upon the previous one.

Social Emotional development

Social and emotional development are distinct yet inseparable aspects of human development. Emotional processes influence social behavior, and vice versa (Muzammil, 2021). This domain aims to foster self-confidence, social competence, and emotional regulation, which are shaped by collaboration among parents, teachers, and the environment. Social development refers to the acquisition of behaviors appropriate to social expectations, while emotional development involves complex internal feelings that accompany or precede behavior. These competencies serve as a foundation for individuals to become responsible, empathetic, and productive members of society. Therefore, social and emotional intelligence plays a critical role in determining life success.

According to Erikson (1968), social-emotional development progresses through psychosocial stages. During childhood, individuals experience the stage of *industry vs. inferiority*, while adolescence is characterized by *identity vs. role confusion*. These stages are influenced by social environments, including family, school, and peer groups. The ability to regulate emotions and establish healthy relationships is essential for successful development. Wolfinger identifies four key aspects of social-emotional development: empathy (understanding and caring for others), affiliation (interpersonal relationships and cooperation), conflict resolution, and the development of positive habits such as politeness and responsibility. Indicators of healthy social-emotional development include the ability to display positive emotional behaviors, cooperate with others, demonstrate empathy, and take responsibility in social interactions.

Religious and Moral Development

Religious and moral development is a fundamental aspect of child development, significantly influencing character formation and educational outcomes. It involves the ability to distinguish between right and wrong and is closely related to social attitudes and behavior. Individuals who internalize moral values aligned with religious teachings are more likely to demonstrate ethical behavior (Anggraini, 2015). Categorizes moral development into three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Children generally operate at the preconventional level, while adolescents begin to transition into the conventional stage. Religious development progresses alongside cognitive and moral growth. Children tend to understand religious teachings concretely, whereas adolescents develop more critical and reflective interpretations.

Three main factors influence the development of religious and moral values. First, internal factors such as genetic inheritance contribute to an individual's innate potential. Second, the family environment plays a central role as the primary source of early education, particularly in instilling religious values and moral guidance. Third, schools act as reinforcing institutions by providing structured religious education and supportive environments, including extracurricular activities and role modeling by teachers (Nabilah, 2019).

Overall, religious and moral development provides a foundational framework for guiding behavior, shaping character, and helping individuals navigate life in a structured, ethical, and meaningful way.

4. CONCLUSION

Cognitive, social-emotional, religious, and moral development during childhood and adolescence is a gradual and interconnected process influenced by various factors. Cognitively, individuals progress from concrete thinking in childhood to abstract thinking in adolescence. Social-emotionally,

they develop greater abilities in emotional regulation, social interaction, and identity formation. Meanwhile, religious and moral development evolves from rule-based obedience to independent understanding and internalization of values. The success of this development is strongly influenced by the family as the primary foundation, supported by schools and the broader community. Therefore, active involvement from parents, educators, and the environment is essential in providing guidance, role modeling, and appropriate stimulation to ensure that children and adolescents develop optimally, possess good character, and are capable of facing life's challenges.

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