

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EARLY STUDENTS

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### Introduction

As an educator, we cannot be separated from education and teaching activities, apart from studying various patterns in managing teaching, we also need to study the growth and development of students. In terms of developmental psychology, it will be known at what age children can begin to speak, begin to think concretely, and think abstractly and at what age children can acquire motor and spiritual skills. Knowledge of child development will help us to respond to the problems faced by children, in addition to knowing the development and growth of children will help identify if there are deviations in normal behavior in children. By learning about child development, it will help understand the process of growth and development in early childhood in particular.

UNESCO defines early childhood as vulnerable children aged 0-8 years, in line with **NAEYC** ( *National Association for The Education of Young Children* ), defines early childhood as children aged 0 to 8 years who are included in educational programs in Indonesia. day care, *family child care home* , pre-school education both private and public, kindergarten and elementary school. Meanwhile, based on Presidential Regulation Number 60 of 2013, the definition of early childhood includes infants who have just been born to other small children whose age is not more than 6 years old . From some of the definitions above, it can be concluded that early childhood is children aged 0 to the entry limit for elementary school age. At this age is a golden age ( *golden age* ) where development and growth occurs very rapidly. Some research results show that 50% of children's intelligence is formed at the age of the first 4 years and then goes to 80% at the age of 8 years and reaches 100% at the age of 18 years.

Growth and development are two terms that have different meanings, but both have a very close relationship and cannot even be separated from one another. Growth is a quantitative process that shows changes that can be physically observed. Growth can be observed through weighing, measuring height, head circumference and so on. Meanwhile, development is a qualitative process that shows increasing abilities (skills) in more complex body structures and functions in regular and predictable patterns as a result of the maturation process.

The stages of human development have phases that are quite long. For the purpose of organizing and understanding, development is generally described in certain periods or phases. Classification of the development period of the most widely used, as stated by Santrock (1993) includes a sequence as follows: Period of antenatal (prenatal *period*), the period of the baby (infancy *period*), the initial period of the children (early *childhood period*), the period of the mid and late child the *middle and late childhood period*, the *adolescent period*, the early adulthood *period*, the middle adulthood *period*, and the late adulthood *period*.

Early childhood development is a critical period that becomes the foundation of children for their lives in the future. The results showed that some of the potential of human intelligence develops rapidly at an early age.

### Definition of Development

According to the experts that human development is very complex, Santrok and Yussen (2011) defines development *is the pattern of change that begins at conception and continues through the life span* (the development is a pattern of change that starts from the time of conception and continues throughout the life cycle). Development is oriented to mental processes; development is related to things that are functional. Developmental psychology studies behavioral changes that occur from conception to the end of human life.

Early childhood development needs to be maximized by providing appropriate stimulus and teaching so that children's growth and development can grow optimally. According to Harloch, the development process consists of evolution (growth) and involution (regression) that occur simultaneously in human life. The development can be influenced since the newborn or because of environmental influences. Early childhood education must receive special and special attention from parents, the main education is formed in the family before children get other experiences outside the family environment, so that the development of children's attitudes and behavior is very much determined from the initial education they receive as a provision for children in socializing at home. for goodness.

Early childhood has characteristics that generally can be observed carefully based on their age, as described below:

Children aged 0-1 years, the category of newborns to the age of 1 year has the following characteristics:

1. The new form of communication consists of several words, such as mentioning mama, papa, maem, bobo and others
2. Already able to perform motor movements, such as sitting, crawling, rolling, walking, climbing a chair, pushing objects and holding objects
3. Able to use the five senses it has, for example, touching, smelling, tasting, putting objects into the mouth, observing various movements around it

At this age children are still very dependent on their parents, to introduce body parts, introduce objects that are often seen around them. And children begin to recognize the first word followed by thousands of subsequent words.

Children aged 2-3 years, the category of early childhood aged 2 years to age 3 years who can do simple things independently, children at this age have the following characteristics:

1. Children have been able to develop their emotions, by looking at the surrounding environment
2. Children can explore the surrounding environment, at this age children begin to learn to socialize, children prefer to imitate what adults do.
3. Children talk more often to themselves, because they begin to develop their language skills.
4. Children can recognize objects around them with adult guidance.

Kids ages 4 - 5 year age categories of children between 4 years to 5 years is a group of children who have had the growth and development of cognitive, psychomotor, socio-emotional, creativity, language and communication that is specifically suited to the stages that are traversed by the child, Children of this age have the following characteristics:

1. At this age, children begin to carry out independent activities which usually start to be separated from the dependence of their parents and those around them
2. Children have limited ability to receive stimuli.
3. Children begin to develop their language skills, although their thinking is still static and cannot think abstractly.
4. Children are able to have a limited perception of time and place.

The characteristics of the typical early childhood as stated by Kellough 1996 are as follows:

1. In general, children are egocentric, early childhood tends to see and understand things from their own point of view and interests. This can be seen from his behavior such as still fighting for toys, crying when he wants something that his parents don't fulfill, or forcing something on others. These characteristics are related to cognitive development, which according to Piaget stated that early childhood is in a transition phase from the preoperational phase of 2-7 years to the concrete operational phase of 7-11 years. In the preoperational phase, children's thinking patterns are egocentric and symbolic, while in the concrete operational phase, children have begun to apply logic to understand perceptions.
  - i. According to Berk ( 1988 ), children in the transition period still think according to the two patterns mentioned above alternately or sometimes simultaneously. For example, he knows the correct answer to something, but does not understand the logic behind that answer. In understanding a phenomenon, children often understand things from their own point of view so that they often feel foreign in their environment. Because the teacher's job is to help children understand and adjust to their world in a positive way. Skills that are needed in reducing egocentricity are teaching children to listen to others, as well as understanding and empathizing with children.
2. Children have a great curiosity according to the child's perception, this world is filled with interesting and amazing things that cause a child's high curiosity. A sense of curious children vary greatly, depending on the draw perhatiann child. For example, children are more interested in objects that cause an effect than things that happen by themselves. Brooks and Brooks (1993) suggest that the advantage that can be taken from curiosity is to use unusual phenomena or events. Unusual events can cause cognitive incompatibility, so that it can provoke a child's desire to resolve the problem or discrepancy. Although it is difficult to identify the relationship between the two, it can help develop children's motivation to learn. To help develop children's ability to classify and understand their own world, teachers and parents need to help find the problem.
3. Children are social creatures, children love to be accepted and be with their peers. Children like to work together in making plans and completing work. They mutually encourage each other with their peers. Children build self-concept through social interactions in the surrounding environment.

4. Children's early childhood is unique in that each has an innate, interests, capabilities, and walks of life are different from each other. Besides having similarities, according to Bredekamp ( 1987 ) , children also have their own uniqueness such as in learning styles, interests, and family background. Although there is a general pattern of predictable sequences in a child's development, the patterns of development and learning still differ from one another.
5. Children are generally rich with imaginative fantasy, so generally children are rich with fantasy. Children can tell stories beyond their actual experiences or sometimes even ask about supernatural things. This is because the child's imagination develops beyond what he sees. For example, when a child sees a picture of a doll , his imagination develops how the doll can walk and so on. If guided by a few questions, then he can tell more than what they hear and see according to the imagination that is developing in his mind. Stories or fairy tales are activities that are much favored by children and can train children's imagination and language skills.
6. Children have short concentration power because children find it difficult to concentrate on activities for long periods of time. Early childhood is always quick to divert attention to other activities, unless these activities are not only fun but also varied and not boring. According to Berg ( 1988 ) it is stated that ten minutes is a reasonable time for children aged around 4-5 years to be able to sit and pay attention to something comfortably. Short attention span makes it very difficult for him to sit and pay attention to anything for long periods of time, except for pleasant things. Learning can be done using a varied and fun approach , so it doesn't make the child stay in place and listen for a long time.
7. Children are the most potential learning period, early childhood is called the golden age or magic years. NAEYC ( 1992 ) argues that the early years of life are learning times with the following slogan: " *Early Years are learning Years* ". This is due to that during the time span early age, children experience a variety of growth and development that's an gat quickly and rapidly on various aspects. In this period, almost all children's potentials experience a sensitive period to grow and develop rapidly and greatly. Therefore, at this time children really need stimulation and stimulation from their environment. Learning in this period is a vehicle that facilitates the growth and development of children in order to reach the stages in accordance with their developmental tasks.

Based on the description above, early childhood development can be divided into eight aspects, namely:

1. Cognitive development
2. Physical development
3. Language development
4. Social development
5. Moral development
6. Emotional development
7. Personality development
8. Religious development

The above-mentioned aspects of early childhood, although the stages of development for each child are different from one another, it is the duty of teachers and parents to be able to help children's development so that they can grow optimally. Parents and teachers to be able to help children's development must also have certain methods and strategies. Child development can also be influenced by heredity and environmental factors.

However, research on the brain shows that if children are given stimulation from an early age, children will be found who have superior potential in themselves because basically every child has unlimited abilities within him. Therefore, children need educational programs that are able to open and stimulate their learning capacity and develop their potential through learning as early as possible. One of them is by providing early childhood education program services.

Parents , and the environment in which the child lives will greatly affect the child's development . So that early childhood is a period where children need to get stimulation to form the basis or foundation for further growth and development of children. Every parent and teacher should be able to provide stimulation and good education for early childhood. The potential that has been owned by the child must be developed as early as possible because if this potential cannot be realized and developed, it means that the child has lost the golden period in his life.

## **Growth**

Growth is a change that occurs in every human being related to his physique. According to Vasta (1992), the length of a baby almost doubles at the age of 4 years. Growth takes place during childhood but not at a steady pace, then slows down and increases rapidly in adolescence and then stops.

In 2006 WHO issued a standard growth curve that describes the growth of children aged 0-59 months in an environment that is believed to be able to support growth, WHO conducted research from 1997 to 2003 which aims to describe the growth of children living in an environment that does not have growth inhibiting factors. The results showed that there are factors that affect the growth of children, which causes children to grow short, thin, stunted, underweight (poor nutrition), obesity (overnutrition).

Growth early childhood among others influenced by factors such as external parenting parents, parenting will give a psychological impact on the child not only during childhood but will continue to carry into adulthood. Therefore, it must pay attention to this factor properly by giving him the right parenting pattern as the basis for how he behaves and thinks for the future and will carry over into adulthood. In addition, internal factors, namely heredity or heredity, can also affect growth, inherited factors that are inherited from both parents, such as short stature, skin color, inherited diseases and so on. This can affect the growth of children with inherited factors that are inherited from both parents to children.

Efforts can be made to increase children's growth, from several research results show by adding a variety of nutritious food intake. Entering this period, providing adequate and balanced nutrition will greatly affect the growth and development of a child's brain, immune system, and physical motor health. In addition to stimulation, nutrition is an important factor. With complete and balanced nutrition, it is expected that children's growth can grow optimally.

An understanding of children's growth is needed as knowledge or changes that occur in children, so that they can diagnose early if there is an abnormal change in early childhood, so that they can take action to prevent inappropriate growth. So that children can grow optimally, parents need additional knowledge in order to be able to do the right parenting, parenting is the best way that parents can do to educate their children as a form of responsibility for the growth and development of children.

The difference in growth and development lies in several things, according to Harlock (1982) writing these differences can be seen in the following table:

Table 1  
Differences in development and growth

Development	Growth
Development is concerned with the organism as a whole	Growth refers to changes, especially physical aspects
Development refers to the development of structural and functional maturity	Growth refers to a change in size that results in cell growth or an increase in cell-to-cell relationships
Development refers to both quantitative and qualitative changes	Growth refers to quantitative change
Development is a continuous process	Growth doesn't last a lifetime
Development may occur without growth	Growth may or may not bring development

To create a superior generation in the future, in addition to paying attention to food intake, education is needed in shaping the character of a good child. Education that is done correctly will bring excellence and quality of mind and clarity in thinking. In addition, it can also understand the nature of the truth that exists, and will get used to doing good habits and actions, always behaving well, always inviting students to think carefully and deeply, always encouraging creativity and thinking about nature and living things. All forms of education and coaching, will be very influential and effective, if given from childhood or an early age.

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