



## Early Childhood Interpretation on Religion

Wantini & Suyatno

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia

**Abstract:** Every individual has a different interpretation in understanding religion because of internal factors (differences in background, education, religious experience, environment that shapes character, and socio-economic status). The pattern of individuals understanding on religion is believed to be inseparable from the basic doctrine they acquired. Although, not infrequently the religion concepts originating from the doctrine is interfered by imagination and reality based on spiritual experiences. This research aims to determine the understanding and thinking development of the early childhood age 3-6 years old about religion interpretation. This research was a qualitative descriptive research. The research subjects were early childhood at Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, Sleman, and Yogyakarta. Data collection techniques were observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis were data reduction, data display and drawing conclusion and verification. The results of the research indicate that; 1) Religion is described by early childhood with symbols and worship rituals. Regarding the divine concept, children still describe God as egocentric and anthropomorphic, followed by God's characteristics. 2) The interpretation of early childhood about religion is predominantly influenced by experiences, parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment. The findings of this research suggest that the cultivation of godliness must be able to develop children's fantasies about the infinite nature of God, and also the children's love and obedience to God associated to the problems that are close to the children's live. Therefore, in addition to develop the fantasy power, factual learning is needed.

**Keywords:** *religion interpretation, early childhood, egocentric, and anthropomorphic concrete*

### Introduction

In contrast to the traditional view that religion is a rhythmic perspective and belief essence in the human worship pattern (Abdullah, 1993), in this modern era, with the development of the pragmatic scientific method, religion becomes an essential problem in the pattern of attitudes diversity for humans, especially in cultivating the children's perspective development. Religion becomes the most important part as the main foundation in building a person's life behavior (Paul, 2002).

Every religion has the same purpose, but the inner expressions of individual are different. For example, an atheist who does not believe in the existence of God, but because of the abundance evidence of God's majesty then believes in the existence of creators of this earth (Raymond, 1996). Likewise, viewed from the perspective of the religious psychology

development, individuals have different interpretations on religion understanding. This is caused by internal factors that exist in every human individual, such as differences in educational background, religious experience, environment, and socio-economic condition. The pattern of individuals' religion understanding is inseparable from the basic doctrine they acquired. Not infrequently the religion concept originating from the doctrine is interfered by imagination and reality based on the spiritual experiences that people have.

All parents want their children to have good religiosity from an early age (Suyatno, et. al. 2019). Therefore, various efforts are made by them. The way to go is to introduce religious practices to their children as early as possible. The most important point is what children assured and believed in their religion through habituation, training, guidance, and education received from the environment, which will later change after daily experiences on a variety occasions

that increasingly broader (Daradjat, 1970). The more children get religious habituation, training, and guidance from their parents, the more positive the attitudes, actions, behaviour, and way of living as the religious teachings. The important role of religion as human needs is called a homo religious (Ramayulis, 2011). A similar statement was expressed by Murtadha Muthahhari, as quoted Ramayulis (2011), who said that religion would not die, and even would continue to emerge and live again.

Age zero to six (0-6) years old is the age range of early childhood and is often known as the golden age. At this age, the children are experienced a very rapid development process for the next stages (Sujiono, 2009). This stage becomes the most important stage for children in developing their intelligence, personality, and character.

Salkind (2009) revealed that early childhood has a very good ability to absorb information. This is the basic potential that humans have when entering the child phase. In the theory of development, this period is called the golden age that play an important role for physical and psychological growth in the future (Desmita, 2010). Santrock (2003) revealed that self-development is one of the life lessons that require brain psychomotor and also able to filter, because it includes the development of the soul, moral, emotional, social, which is summed up into a single whole unit of individual.

In order to realize a positive brain sensory, children's cognitive development from an early age needs to be accompanied by experiences of spirituality and religious habituation as the foundation for the development of the soul and emotions in the future.

These developments are very closely related to the spiritual and religion (Salkind, 2009).

The urgency of research about early childhood interpretation on religion is to determine the religion understanding level in children so that the divinity sense development can be carried out from an early age. There are several reasons for introducing religious values to early childhood, such as children begin to have interest, all children behavior forms a behavior pattern, polishing the self positive potential, as an individual, social being, and servants of Allah. Specifically, this research answers two questions as follows; 1) What is the religion interpretation according to early childhood? 2) What are the factors that influencing the children's religion interpretation? This research was conducted at Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, Sleman, and Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

## **Literature Review**

Religious psychologists have defined the concept of religious spirit. Walter Houston Clark defined the sense of religion as "the inner experience of individual when he senses a beyond, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his behavior when he actively attempts to harmonize his life with the beyond" (Abdullah, 2006). Clark, as quoted Susilaningsih (1994), also stated that the sense of religion is developed from an early age through a process of combining religious innate potential with influences coming from outside. Therefore, it can be understood that the sense of religion has been possessed by every individual since birth. In its development, the sense of religion can be influenced by two things, which are the religious innate potential that brought from birth and the influence that come from the environment (Mansur, 2005).

Elkin (1970) explained that the development of children's religiosity is in line with the cognitive development. Elkind's three development stages of children religiosity are: 1) Search for representation, which begins at preschool (age 5-7 years old). The children acceptance toward God is accompanied by the search for real representation of God. God must be a 'real' in the children's mind so that religion is also considered an absolute gift from God that cannot be changed. 2) Search for relations, starting in the middle of childhood (age 7-9 years old). The idea of religion is 'very real' in the children's mind. Children feel that they have real relationships with God and the Holy Book that are manifested through the worship practice. When worshipping or praying, children feel confident talking to God. At this stage, children often ask for things that are tangible such as toys, clothes, and food. Children begin to build relationships with the wider social world and see religion as something inherited from the family. 3) Search for comprehension, starting at the end of childhood to adolescence (ages 10-14 years). A child begins to be able to understand the complexity of rituals and religious practices. They begin to be able to think abstractly and accept the religion concept as something that does not always seem as real such as the existence of heaven, hell, and God that is never seen.

Hurlock (2000) described several concepts of children's religion. The concept of religion according to children in Hurlock's view are; God is portrayed as a large figure in a long white robe, has a good face with a beard and long hair. God is able to see humans and will punish anyone who does evil and sends good people to Heaven. God can be known or approached by praying. Heaven is God's place to live in the clouds where people can get everything they want and live

happily and have eternal peace. An angel is a person who during his/her lifetime always did good, when he/she died, he/she would go to heaven and turn into an angel with waving white clothes. Hell is a place far below the bowels of the earth. It is a place full of suffering, intended for people who during their lives did not do well. Satan is an entity who controls hell. Satans look like a person who looked cruel.

The concept of children's thinking about religion can give an idea of the factors or things that influence their thinking. Elkind argued that age, family, social environment, and personal needs are factors that influence children's thinking (Elkin, 1970). Thus, the concept of religion proposed by Hurlock and the development of religious identity by Elkind were used as a theoretical framework in the preparation of the interview guidelines. At this age is the children initial stage towards readiness to accept religion which is characterized by a spontaneous attitude and not critical on doctrines (David, 1997).

Research on the development of religious sense in children has also been carried out by previous researchers. Ernes Harmar as quoted by Ramayulis (2011) concluded that the development of children's thinking about God (Ramayulis, 2011) consists of three stages as follows: 1) The fairy-tale stage occurs in children aged 3-6 years old. The concept of God and religion is more influenced by the children's fantasy and emotional factors. Children understanding the God concept is in accordance with the level of the intellectual development. At this stage, the parents' example is needed to influence the development of children's religious sense. 2) The Realistic Stage, occurs at the age of 6 to 11 years old. Children at this stage perceive God in a form that is more real or more

similar to humans. This stage begins when children enter primary education to adolescence. The children's religious concept at this stage begins to reflect to the concepts that are based on reality. At this stage, religious institutions role and teaching religion process are very important in influencing the development of the children's religious spirit. 3) The Individual Stage occurs in adults. Very different from the previous stages, the relationship between God and humans is very personal so that the concept of God for each individual is different.

Different with Ernes' focus, Spilka (2003) conducted research on the concept of prayer in children. The study was conducted to 160 boys and girls. The results showed that the development of the prayer concept in children is through three stages as follows; 1) Aged 5-7 years old, children pray according to what they have learned. Prayer that are spoken are prayers that they have remembered before. 2) Children aged 7-9 years old consider prayer to be a very concrete activity with a predetermined time and place. Their type of prayer is a personal request with a concrete goal. 3) Age 9-12 years, the concept of prayer becomes more abstract. Prayer is a direct conversation activity with God rather than a request. Prayer focuses more on goals that are abstract, not material.

Research on the interpretation of children's religion was carried out by previous researchers. Nyhof's (2009) study with the title "God in children's perspectives on several kindergartens and elementary schools in Yogyakarta". The results showed that Muslim children have abstract thinking skills when perceiving about God. Karlina's (2009) study with the title "Children and Religion: Islamic School Students Talk about Concepts of Religion (Qualitative Study in

Muhamadiyah Karangwaru Elementary School). Karlina's research explored the understanding of the religious concepts meaning in Muslim children aged 7-12 years old in Muhammadiyah Karangwaru Elementary School. The results of the study showed that religion for children is very literal and concrete. Their understanding on religion is influenced by several factors such as age, gender, parents, school, teachers, and wider social life. The results also showed that children aged 5-7 years old still tend to think that religion is something absolute and has been determined by God.

The next research was conducted by Mulat (2012) with the title "Cultivating the Religious Values on Early Childhood in the Religious and General Early Childhood Education Institutions". The results of the study showed that ABA Kasatriyan Kinderarten Wates cultivating religious values including the values of faith, values of worship, and moral values. While religious values that being cultivated in the Early Childhood Education of Santa Theresia Wates in Kulon Progo District are the values of faith, values of role model, values of mutual love, and values of togetherness. The three schools also cultivate values of honesty and courage.

Previous researches illustrates that research on the children relativity are still dominated by researches that takes samples of children from certain religious traditions. The results of the study can still provide an overview of the religious concept in children in general. Unlike the previous research that have been described earlier, this research seeks to understand the religion interpretation held by Muslim children in Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, Sleman, Yogyakarta. Researchers tried to explore data not only from

students, but also from teachers and parents as additional informants that serve as material for analyzing the compatibility between children's religious conceptions and the things being taught by parents and teachers. This research focuses on the religious concept of early childhood.

## Methods

### Research design

This research was a naturalistic qualitative research (Nasution, 2003), namely research that was natural based on an empirical conditions in the field. This research used a religious psychological approach that emphasized the psychological and human behavior aspects which summarize two studies namely psychology and religion (Ramayulis, 2011) in understanding the data about the early childhood interpretation on religion.

### Participants

This research was conducted at Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, Sleman, Yogyakarta with subjects selected purposively from early childhood, teachers, parents, and principal. Furthermore, subjects were selected through the snowball sampling. This research was conducted in March-August 2018. Informants in this study were principal, teachers, and early childhood students who were the age range of 5-6 years old. Informants from students can be seen in detail in table 1.

Table 1

*Data of Early Childhood Informants in Rumah Ibu Kindergarten*

Informant	Age (in years)	Sex
Ak	5	Male
El	5	Male
Fi	6	Male
Ai	5	Female
Ar	6	Female
Bi	6	Male
Dy	6	Female
Ha	6	Male
Al	6	Male
La	6	Male
Lu	5	Male
Yu	5	Male
Sy	6	Female
Li	6	Female
Bi	5	Male
Fa	5	Male

### Techniques of Data Collection Observation

Observation to the informants was done to check and explore the meaning from the subject answers being studied. This observation was useful for avoiding biased answers. Through observation, researchers tried to observe phenomena in the field. Practically, the researcher observed everything related to the activities process that describing the religious and moral interpretations in Rumah Ibu Kindergarten Yogyakarta.

### **In-Depth interview**

Interviews that have been conducted were in-depth interviews that focused and open in nature. Before conducting an interview, researchers first compiled the interview guidelines or the framework of the questions. Informants in this interview were principal, teachers, and students.

### **Document Analysis**

Document analysis was expected to be able to obtain important data such as descriptions of the research objects, descriptions of supporting objects, detailed information about certain policies or rules including school profiles, organizational structures, learning activities programs, student development books, daily activities plan, and taking important pictures related to learning activities inside and outside the classroom.

### **Instruments of Data Collection**

There are three data collection instruments used in this study, namely; interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and document analysis guidelines. The interview guide contains questions raised to informants to explore students' perceptions of their religious interpretations. The observation guide is in the form of a list of student activities that can be supporting data about the interpretation of the students' religion. The guideline for analyzing documents contains a list of documents owned by the school that can show about the interpretation of students' religion.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

Qualitative data analysis was basically understanding social situations or research objects into parts, relationships between parts, relationships with the whole (Sugiyono, 2010). The researchers analyzes

secondary data first which was used to determine the research focus. Data analysis was carried out interactively and continuously until complete so that the data was saturated. Data analysis includes data reduction, data display, and conclusions drawing and verification.

## **Results**

### **Children Interpretation on Religion**

Religion interpretation in early childhood can be influenced by learning activities. Learning at Rumah Ibu Kindergarten were varies with a flexible process tailored to the characteristics and principles of early childhood learning. A method that allowed children to have space to explore, make choices, and find out for themselves (learning observation in Rumah Ibu Kindergarten Yogyakarta, 12 June 2018) in order to find out how early childhood interprets religion, researchers asked questions that are flexible and open, which was questions that were viewed from aspects of Religion, God, Worship, and Prayer.

### **Children Definition of Religion**

Every child has a different opinion regarding the definition of religion. Based on the results of interviews, some children had different views about religion, although some of the points were similar.

Researcher: What do you think religion is?

Ak: *Salah* at the mosque

El: Reading the Quran

Fi and BI: Islam

Researcher : What is Islam?

Fi: *Salah* at home and at the mosque

The results of interviews with the four informants illustrate that children understanding the religious

dimension as a worship ritual. It means that children get an understanding of religion based on concrete experiences obtained from the environment, and also formed by parents and teachers. Early childhood who have been studied were at age range of 5 to 6 years old which Piaget said was a pre-operational stage. Religion was described by children with religious symbols and worship rituals. God resembled humans but some say God did not resemble humans. Worship and *Dua* were described by all children with the religious rituals that they have been practiced so far.

### The Concept of God

The concept of God is one of the important concepts in understanding the children's religion interpretation. Based on the results of interviews with Ak, El, Fi, Ai, Ar, Bi, Dy, Ha, Sy, and Li, it was known that their God was Allah. They said that God's concept was obtained from their teacher in the class who often told them about the concept of divinity. This is also reinforced by the results of interviews with teachers in the class stating that this term was come from the teacher who teaches the concept of God every, thus the school environment influences Children's concept on God (Interview with QA, teacher of Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, 16 July 2018).

Different from other informants of information source about God the concept, Bi (5 years old) and Fa (5 years old) gave the same answer but their source was different. Bi said he got the term Allah because he saw Allah's power in the Harun Yahya film. Whereas Fa found the term Allah from his father and mother at home. (Interview with class Cemara of Rumah Ibu Kindergarten 18 July 2018). An overview of God concepts by informants in detail are describe in table 2.

Table 2

#### *Overview of God Concept According to Children*

Informants	Image of God
Fi	Allah as a big figure, loves Fi, and gives toys to Fi
Ar and Ha	God is like a human but big and has a house in the mosque.
Ys	Allah is described as greater than the transformers.
Sy	Allah has a big shape and has a house in the sky.
Li	Allah made Islam.
La	God is neither male nor female.
Li, Lu, and Dy	God has senses like humans can hear and see.
Al	Allah is not like humans but has difficulty describing it in detail

The results of the interview illustrate that the early childhood interpretation on God are as follows: (1) God is visualized as a human being, (2) God is in the sky, (3) God is not like humans, (4) High and large, (5) God seeing, hearing, guarding, praying, and granting prayers, (6) Allah God who made Islam, (7) God greater than transformers robot (Interview with Cemara class of Rumah Ibu Kindergarten 18 July 2018).

The God concepts in early childhood, as in table 2, are illustrated imaginatively which happen because it is influenced by the experiences they get in their environment. The interpretation is built by children with the absorbent mind and egocentric in nature based on the children subjective thoughts they have captured from their environment. God is perceived as a cartoon character as the development stage of the fairy tale at the age of 3-6 years old. God being

visualized with something tangible shows that early childhood is able to think concrete. In the development of the children religiosity, which enter the stage of search for representation, God must be real or often called antropomorphosis.

In addition to the concept of God, the concept of *Salah* (because all informants were Muslim) and *Dua* are also one of the important points in understanding the children's interpretation in religion. Based on the interviews, the concepts of *Salah* and *Dua* were obtained as follows:

Table 3  
*Children's Description on the Concept of Salah and Dua*

Informants	The concepts of <i>Salah</i> and <i>Dua</i>
Ak	<i>Salah</i> to meet Allah
El	<i>Salah</i> is <i>Dua</i> in order to come true
Fi	To be loved by Allah and given many toys
Ai	<i>Salah</i> can be at home and the mosque

Still regarding *Salah*, based on the results of the interview (July 18, 2018) when asked about the

procedures for *Salah*, children also have different views.

Table 4  
*Children's Description on Salah Procedures*

Ar	Waiting for the <i>Adhan</i> after that take <i>Wudu</i>
Bi and Dy	When <i>Salah</i> must wear <i>mukena</i> (muslim women dress for <i>Salah</i> )
Ha	Small children may not be <i>imam</i> , when the father can be an <i>imam</i>
Al	<i>Salah</i> may be alone or together
La	Like to <i>Salah</i> when in the mosque

The concept of *Salah* and *Dua* in children is that *Salah* is a *Dua* that can be done individually or together at home or in the mosque and wear *mukena* for the women. Signs of *Salah* time are by the *Adhan*, and then must take *Wudu*. The children' reasons for *Salah* are the *Dua* being granted, protected and loved by Allah. The interpretation of *Salah* and *Dua* in early childhood is described traditionally that marked by a description of rituals and symbols. The concept is concrete because it can be seen, felt, and done in the children's live. Based on the results of the interview, the concepts of *Salah* according to early childhood are described in figure 1.

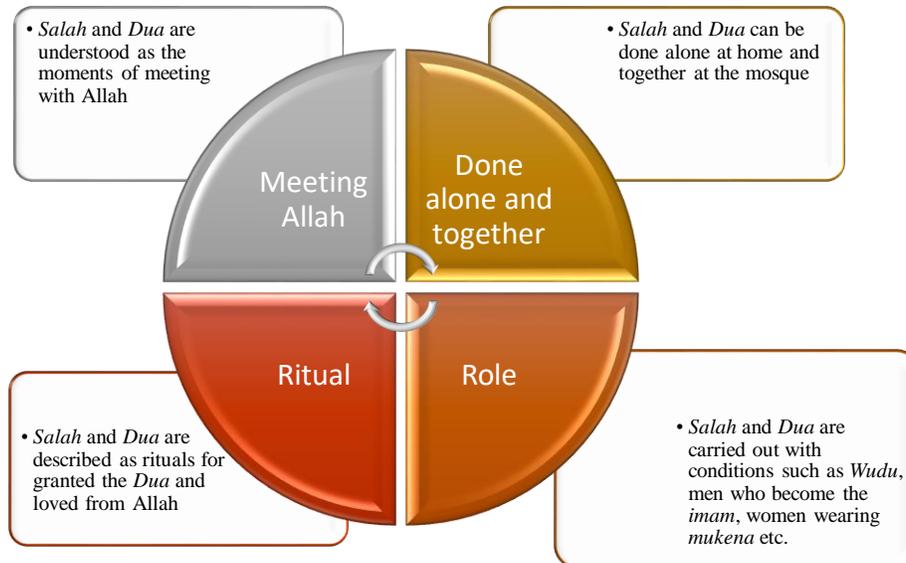


Figure 1. The Concept of *Salah* and *Dua* in Early Childhood

The concept in figure 1 is inseparable from the role of the educational institution of the Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, parents, and the children's environment. The role of educational institution in the cultivation of religious concepts in children can be seen in the vision of the Rumah Ibu Kindergarten Yogyakarta as follows: Early Childhood Education Institutions that are superior, Islamic, educative, and fun. With the description of the following Mission (1) Cultivating Islamic values (2) Establishing a scientific climate in education and childcare. (3) Providing education and care programs with multiple approaches. (4) Habituating children to be skilled and independent. (5) Habituating children to understand, share, and cooperate with each other (Profile Document of Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, taken on 2 August 2018). Learning is also a key to the formation of children's concepts. This can be seen in the activities types at the Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, which scheduled every 7:30 a.m. to 09.00 is the learning of Islamic Education in the form of daily *Dua*, short *surah* from the Quran, and

the practice of *Salah*. This learning can be seen in the appendix of the curriculum on the development of religious and moral values (Profile Documentation of Rumah Ibu Kindergarten, taken on 2 August 2018).

### Factors Affecting the Early Childhood Interpretation on Religion

Factors that influence children's interpretation on religion are experiences, parents, teachers, and the environment. The results of children's thoughts themselves become one of the factors that influence the religion interpretations, but this factor is vague and not too significant in influencing the religion interpretation.

Experience is a learning process involving all five senses that helps early childhood to absorb knowledge much faster and optimal. When meeting new things from experience, children learn constructing good knowledge by adding and replacing the knowledge they already have with the results of their experiences

so as to produce new knowledge for children. This experience strengthens children's thinking about something.

The second factors are parents and educators. Both are factors that influence children's interpretation on religion. The majority of parents use the role model approach, provide understanding, and apply it in daily life when introducing religion to children. Parents and teachers are the biggest factors that influence children's knowledge about things because parents are the first teacher for children and people who are very close to children, children spending more time with parents. *Salah* and *Dua* rituals are also obtained from educational institutions that are sourced from teachers through examples and direct practice in school.

Environmental factor such as close relatives, especially those who live together with informants, and playmates also play an important role in developing the religious concept in children. Activities carried out together are the entrance to the formation of the religious concept in children. The factor of television media is the new information about the religious concept. When watching *Upin Ipin* series in television, the children know how the rituals of worship and *Dua* are performed. From the five factors above, parents and teachers factors are the dominating factors in building the religious concept in children. The four factors above are close to early childhood and are always accessible in the children lives. For this reason, it is necessary to have factual and feasible methods and strategies for early childhood learning.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Based on the results of the analysis of the data obtained, there are three conclusions which

simultaneously answer the research questions that have been proposed; first, the religion interpretation in early childhood is practical and concrete. Children aged 5-6 years old interpret God in an anthropomorphic concrete (Hurlock, 2000) that the image of God is look like a human figure who has five senses such as eyes to see and ears to hear. According to early childhood students at Rumah Ibu Kindergarten Yogyakarta, the interpretation of religion is depicted with religious symbols and worship rituals. Some children claimed that God resembles humans, but some children said that God does not resemble humans. Worship and *Dua* were described by all children with the religious rituals that have been practiced so far. Second, children's interpretation on religion is influenced by experience, parents, teachers and the environment (Elkind, 1970). The results of children's own thoughts become one of the factors that influence the religion interpretation even though it is vague and have little influence on the religion interpretation. Based on the results of the research above the factors of parents, school, and environment are the factors that most influence the children's interpretation on religion. This is slightly different from Elkind (1970) who stated that age, family, and social environment are factors that influence children's thinking. Experience has become a distinguishing factor between the findings of this research and the theory put forward by Elkind. Children learn from experience in the form of what they see and feel so that children have a natural disposition to model their environment. The results of this research suggest the need for positive space for the formation of positive religious concepts. Third, the stages of children's thinking development is progressing along with the experience, knowledge, and understanding given. Some of the results of this research support existing

theories, but some findings are not in harmony with the theories put forward by the psychologists of religious development. The general theory which stated that children under the age of 7 years old are in the concrete pre-operational stage so that they have not been able to think rationally is not fully proven in this research. The results of the research show that some early childhood children have been able to think beyond this stage so that children are able to think rationally in understanding religion.

Early childhood are in the stage of pre-operational thinking that has the characteristics of concrete and egocentric thinking, thinking in its own perspective, and not accepting the perspective of others. However, the results of this research indicate that even though still in the operational-concrete stage, some children are able to think rationally. This is because the stages of children's thinking development is progressing along with the experience, knowledge, and understanding given. The results of this research support the existing theories but also not, this is because there are children who are under the stage and some have gone beyond the stage.

The religion interpretation of early childhood, who became the informants of this research, is that they understood religion as a symbol. This answer is dominating the question on religion. Children assume that religion is a ritual that has been done both at home and school. The absolute religious identity is inherent in the children through the language expressed by the people around them. Children aged 5-6 years old have been able to remember by describing religious symbols to express the religious concept. These findings are in line with Elkind, who stated that

children 3-6 years old have been aware of their religious identity which was absolute.

In addition, findings in the field are reinforced Papalia, et al. (2008) explanation that cognitive development of children aged 3-6 years old has the ability to remember what already exists, ability to use symbols including describing religion with symbols, ability to understand and use language increases, still egocentric but understanding other people's perspectives increases. Daradjat (1970) stated that children know God and their religion through the language of words originating from their environment which are gradually followed after seeing adults' admiration on religion and God (Practical and Concrete). What children believe depends on what parents, teachers, and the environment taught. The results of the research show that the children are received all religious teachings growing verbally and not profoundly, most of the religiosity is the result of imitation and a sense of wonder and admiration. This is in accordance with the Mansur theory (2005).

In children's aged 5-6 years old, God's interpretation in several theories is concrete anthropomorphic, which is the image of God as a human figure who has five senses such as eyes to see and ears to hear. This interpretation will disappear when the children are able to think abstractly (Ramayulis, 2011). The anthropomorphic interpretation was also expressed by Hurlock that the image of God in the children eyes is like a man who is tall and big and lives in the sky (Hurlock, 2000).

There are three stages of the development of children religiosity, which are; search for representation (5-7 years old) where God must be real in thought. Likewise with the description of antropomorphosis God

that must be real, also in Ernest Harmer's theory of the stages of children's religious development about God, namely the stages of Fairy Tale (3-6 years old) where God is perceived as a cartoon character, the realistic stage (6-11 years old) when children perceive God in a form that is more real or more similar to humans and has also been accustomed to religious symbols.

Table 5  
*The Corresponding of the Theory of the Children's Thinking Development Concept*

No	Theory	Correspond	Not Correspond
1	Search for representation (5-6 years old)	God can hear, see, and grant prayer	
2	Fairy tale (3-6 years old)	God is perceived as a cartoon character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•God is perceived as more real, like humans</li> <li>•Rituals and symbols in worship</li> <li>•Egocentric and anthropomorphic concrete</li> </ul>
3	Absorbent Mind	Experience received by children	Egocentric

In this research, there is a correspondence, but some are not because in reality, God perceived more clearly by describing God as a human being and easily using religious symbols even though there were those that described God like a cartoon character. Therefore,

children aged 3-6 years old already have thoughts like children aged 6-11 years old.

God's image in the eyes of children is still egocentric and anthropomorphic concrete (Hurlock, 2000) but also with God's characteristics. Age does not really affect the differences in this interpretation. Children are basically able to accept (Absorbent Mind) things that are still considered abstract even though they have not been able to think logically and critically, leave to the readiness of parents and teachers to convey this.

Based on the findings of this research, researchers recommend the principles of early childhood learning as follows. The sense of religion developed from an early age through a process of combining religious innate potential with influences that came from outside. In this research, experience, teachers, parents, environment, and media are the things that influence the religious sense in children. The religious sense in children is more determined by external factor or environmental factor (Elkind, 1970). The religious concept that exists in children is almost entirely influenced by the environment. This is because children from birth do what the people around them do. Children's understanding, especially children in the early phase, towards God is in the first phase, namely fairy-tale stage. Children understanding about God are more on the power of fantasy and emotion rather than rational. Therefore, in cultivating a sense of divinity must be able to develop children's fantasies about the infinite nature of God, and also the children's love and obedience to God associated with problems that are close to the children lives. In this research not all children are at the fairy-tale stage, it means that children understand God more concrete. Therefore, in

addition developing fantasy power, factual learning is needed.

form of a scheme of Beginner Lecturer Research (PDP). Thank also to the managers, teachers, and students of Rumah Ibu Kindergarten Sleman, Yogyakarta.

### Acknowledgements

Thank to the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) UAD for funding this research in the

### Reference

- Abdullah, A. (1993). Keimanan Universal di Tengah Pluralisme Budaya Tentang Klaim Kebenaran dan Masa Depan Ilmu Agama [Universal Faith in the Middle of Cultural Pluralism about Claims of Truth and Future of Religious Sciences]. *Ulum Qur'an*. 4 (1).
- Abdullah, A. (2006). *Metodologi Penelitian Agama: Pendekatan Multidisipliner*, dalam Susilaningsih, *Pendekatan Psikologi* [Religious Research Methodology: Multidisciplinary Approach, in Susilaningsih, Psychological Approach]. Yogyakarta: Lembaga Penelitian UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Daradjat, Z. (1970). *Ilmu Djiwa Agama* [Religious Psychology]. Jakarta: Bulan Bintang.
- David, W. M. (1997). *Psychology of Religion Classic and Contemporary Views*. New York: Wiley.
- Desmita. (2010). *Psikologi Perkembangan* [Psychology of Development]. Bandung: Rosda Karya.
- Elkin, D. (1970). The Origins of Religion in the Child. *Review of Religious Research*. 12 (1). P. 35-42.
- Hurlock, E.B. (2000). *Perkembangan Anak*. [Human Development]. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Karlina, M. (2010). *Anak-Anak dan Agama: Siswa Sekolah Islam Berbicara Tentang Konsep-Konsep Agama (Studi Kualitatif di SD Muhammadiyah Karangwaru* [Children and Religion: Islamic School Students Talk about Concepts of Religion (Qualitative Study at SD Muhammadiyah Karangwaru)]. Yogyakarta: UGM.
- Mansur. (2005). *Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini dalam Islam* [Early Childhood Education in Islam]. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Mulat, T. (2012). Penanaman Nilai-Nilai Agama Anak Usia Dini pada PAUD Berbasis Agama dan Umum [Cultivating the Religious Values of Early Childhood in Religion and General Based-PAUD] *Tesis*. Yogyakarta: Pascasarjana UIN Sunan Kalijaga.
- Nasution, S. (2003). *Metode Penelitian Naturalistik Kualitatif* [Qualitative Naturalistic Research Methods]. Bandung: Tarsito.
- Nyhof, A. M. (2009). *Tuhan dalam Perspektif Anak-Anak di Beberapa TK dan SD di Yogyakarta* [God in the Perspective of Children in Several Kindergarten and Elementary Schools in Yogyakarta]. Yogyakarta: CRCS UGM.
- Papalia, D.E., Old, W.S., & Feldman, R.D. (2008). *Human Development*. Jakarta: Kencana.
- Paul, D. (2002). *Doktrin dan Rasionalitas (Dalam Debat Sains Kontemporer)* [Doctrine and Rationality (In Contemporary Science Debates)]. Yogyakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru.
- Ramayulis. (2011). *Psikologi Agama*. [Psychology of Religion]. Jakarta: Kalam Mulia.
- Raymond, P.F. (1996). *Invitation to the Psychology of Religion. Second Edition*. Boston: Allin and Bacon.

- Salkind, J. N. (2009). *Teori-Teori Perkembangan Manusia* [Theories of Human Development]. Bandung: Nusa Media.
- Santrock, W. J. (2003). *Andolesence Perkembangan Remaja*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Spilka, B. (2003). *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, New York: The Guilford Press.
- Sugiyono. (2010). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. [Educational Research Methods Quantitative, Qualitative and R & D Approaches]. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- Sujiono, N. Y. (2009). *Konsep Dasar Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* [Basic Concept of Early Childhood Education]. Jakarta: Indeks.
- Susilaningsih. (1994). “*Perkembangan Religiusitas pada Usia Anak*” [Development of Religiosity at the Age of Children]. Paper presented at The Lecturer Scientific Discussion of Tarbiyah Faculty UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta.
- Suyatno, Jumintono, Pambudi, D. I., Mardati, A., & Wantini (2019). Strategy of Values Education in the Indonesian Education System. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 607-624.  
<https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.12139a>

**Corresponding Author Contact Information:**

Author name : Wantini  
Department : Department of Islamic Education  
Faculty : Postgraduate Program  
University, Country : Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Indonesia  
Email : [wantini@mpai.uad.ac.id](mailto:wantini@mpai.uad.ac.id)

**Please Cite:** Wantini & Suyatno (2019). Early childhood interpretation on religi3n. *The European Educational Researcher*, 2 (1), 35-48. Doi: 10.31757/euer.213

*Received: January 2, 2019* ▪ *Accepted: January 27, 2019*