

Children's Innocence Discourse: Are They Vulnerable?

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Abstract: Early childhood is often perceived as a time of innocence in their perception of the world; however, questions arise about whether this innocence truly makes them vulnerable to risky situations. This research aims to provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing children's innocence and its connection to their vulnerability to risky situations. The research method employed is a Systematic Literature Review. Data analysis techniques involve thematic data analysis. Article collection was conducted for three months from October to December 2023, utilizing secondary data. The secondary data sources consist of high-quality journal articles nationally and proceedings with a predefined focus. These articles were obtained from the Google Scholar database using keywords such as "innocence discourse," "Michael Foucault," "truth regimes," and "early childhood education." These findings offer crucial insights for parents, educators, and practitioners in carefully handling child development, emphasizing environmental factors influencing children's perceptions of risky situations. In the context of the discourse on children's innocence, the importance of protecting and ensuring the welfare of children as human individuals demands serious attention. A holistic perspective is required to comprehend the complexity of children, emphasizing a comprehensive focus on their rights, needs, and welfare as they grow and develop.

Kata Kunci:

Wacana kepolosan anak, rezim
kebenaran.

Abstrak: Anak usia dini sering dianggap sebagai masa kepolosan dalam persepsi mereka terhadap dunia. Namun, timbul pertanyaan apakah kepolosan ini benar-benar membuat mereka rentan terhadap situasi berisiko. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan pemahaman lebih dalam mengenai faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kepolosan anak dan kaitannya dengan kerentanan mereka terhadap situasi berisiko. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah Tinjauan Pustaka Sistematis. Teknik analisis data melibatkan analisis data tematik. Pengumpulan artikel dilakukan selama tiga bulan pada bulan Oktober hingga Desember 2023, dengan menggunakan data sekunder. Sumber data sekunder terdiri dari artikel jurnal berkualitas tinggi secara nasional dan prosiding dengan fokus yang telah ditentukan. Artikel-artikel ini diperoleh dari database Google Cendekia dengan menggunakan kata kunci seperti "wacana kepolosan", "Michael Foucault", "rezim kebenaran", dan "pendidikan anak usia dini". Temuan ini memberikan wawasan penting bagi orang tua, pendidik, dan praktisi dalam menangani perkembangan anak secara hati-hati, dengan menekankan faktor lingkungan yang mempengaruhi persepsi anak terhadap situasi berisiko. Dalam konteks wacana kepolosan anak, pentingnya melindungi dan menjamin kesejahteraan anak sebagai individu manusia perlu mendapat perhatian yang serius. Perspektif holistik diperlukan untuk memahami kompleksitas anak, dengan menekankan fokus komprehensif pada hak, kebutuhan, dan kesejahteraan mereka saat mereka tumbuh dan berkembang.

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INTRODUCTION

Talking about the discourse of children's innocence is one of the important topics regarding child welfare that has become relevant. Argument Taylor (2010) says that the child is an innocent holy concept, he needs deep attention from adults in maintaining his innocence and vulnerable existence in the process of growth and development. The existence of the discourse of children's innocence is related to the universal values of innocence, goodness and innocence. Arguments Duschinsky (2013) argues that childhood innocence is



seen as an undeniable moral status. This relates to the existence of a discourse of child innocence being a child's lack of understanding of complex matters and children needing special protection from adults. In research Garlen (2019) The idea that children are born with a purity that needs to be preserved for their comfort and well-being, as well as society's view of them as sacred, gave rise to the concept of innocence as a form of protection. Innocence is seen as a way to preserve the child's helplessness and is likened to a blank paper that has not been scratched, implying a purity that must be preserved. Adults believe that preserving children's innocence is to protect their development from a world full of dangers. The idea of children's innocence explains their natural innocence, emphasizing the need to provide protection and education in the early phases of a child's life. Children, who initially have no knowledge, need direction and knowledge through education to keep them away from harm. Education is the key to preserving children's innocence, enabling them to develop optimally in all areas (Fauzi, 2018). The inherent innocence of children can make holistic education the most appropriate way to ensure the safety and development of children, a principle that also applies to childhood in the West.

Views of childhood in the West are often colored by varying views of children's innocence. According to Duschinsky (2013) The discourse on children's innocence becomes a moral norm that is difficult to question, innocence does exist in childhood (Garlen, 2019). However, in reality, this discourse can be misleading, appearing to protect children from the evils of the world (Templeton & Cheruvu, 2020). The meaning behind the concept of innocence is often a tool for strategies that seem to protect and nurture children's innocence, but may actually have the opposite effect.

This paper aims to explore the existence of the discourse of children's innocence. In this paper the author will explain the history of the discourse of children's innocence, Foucault's view of the discourse of children's innocence, sexual crimes that utilize the discourse of children's innocence, and the discourse of children's innocence that is utilized in the context of capitalism. In this paper, the author argues that children actually have an innocent nature, despite the discourse of child innocence, we must be aware that children are vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexual violence that often occurs, especially in the context of exploitation fueled by capitalism. Thus, assisting in developing the protection and well-being of young children is of paramount importance.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used the Systematic Literature Review method to conduct a thorough summary and identify the discourse of children's innocence. The collection of articles was conducted for three months from October to December 2023 using secondary data. The secondary data sources used consisted of nationally reputable journal articles and proceedings with a predetermined focus. These articles were obtained from the Google Scholar database using keywords such as "discourse of innocence," "michael foucault," "regime of truth," and "early childhood education."

In this research using thematic data, the study involved systematic steps in reviewing, analyzing, and reordering information from various relevant scholarly articles on child innocence in the available literature. The steps included identification of keywords and data sources, selection of articles that fit the research criteria, evaluation of the quality of the articles, content analysis, and synthesizing the information found. This process helps in understanding the various views, perspectives, and understandings that exist on the discourse of children's innocence from various reliable literature sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

History of Child Innocence Discourse

The history of the discourse of child innocence in Western countries. According to Garlen (2019) In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the doctrine of child innocence discourse began to develop, signaling greater attention to the child's place in society. This doctrine emphasized the need to safeguard the child from influences and dangers that could damage the child's innocence during the developmental period, thus underscoring the urgency of protecting this important stage in the child's life.

The mid-century concept of child innocence discourse was harmful to children. According to the argument Garlen (2021) In the mid-19th century, Bernstein's notion of the ideal of childhood innocence was used to justify racial subordination by turning it into a natural, harmless, even desirable concept. The concept of 'racial innocence' refers to the cause and effect of various discursive and political processes that shape perceptions and positions of racial subordination. The existence of the concept is not

natural but the result of social and political processes that shape the understanding and interpretation of children's innocence. The discourse on children's innocence carries moral value. The discourse of childhood innocence in the West is often an indisputable moral status but this perspective creates the illusion of protecting children from the dangers of the world while in reality it can be a deception that obscures the true reality (Duschinsky, 2013; Garlen, 2019; Templeton & Cheruvu, 2020). In this discourse, it is very important to be careful not to get caught up in an overly idealistic illusion of protection so that protecting children is not just preserving their innocence, but also providing effective and in-depth protection against the various risks that children will face in the real world.

Foucault's View on the Discourse of Children's 'Innocence'

Foucault's view that power, knowledge, and truth are inseparable. Foucault asserts that the nature of truth is not absolute or objective but depends on the power wielded by a particular discourse at a specific time. (Aldin, 2018; Syafiuddin, 2018). Foucault's view presents a conception to question and understand the social construction of truth in history and power. Truth in the discourse of children's innocence may not be absolute and is shaped by the power of adults who create the idea that children are naturally innocent. This happens because there is a regime of truth around children's innocence that relies on the authority of adults who organize narratives about children's innocence for their benefit.

The discourse of children's innocence creates a need for guidance from adults as a guide in dealing with the complex aspects of their lives. O'Connor & Fotakopoulou (2016) explains that children are considered vulnerable to lack of knowledge, so protection and guidance from adults who have more knowledge and become child welfare advocates to ensure children's human rights are fulfilled. The existence of a truth regime to shape the discourse. Foucault (1980) explains that the truth formed by science will regulate the creation, dissemination, and establishment of discourse. Truth regimes are often related to power, shaping discourses that legitimize what is right or wrong and have an impact on the regulation and normalization of actions so that they are considered part of something common (Pratama, 2021; Wirya A, 2017). The regime of truth related to

the discourse of children's innocence reflects the strong influence of power, knowledge and social structures in determining what is considered true or should be considered as the natural condition of children. Therefore, the discourse of child innocence can be seen as a product of the regime of truth that asserts that the nature of children is naturally innocent and vulnerable.

Sexual Crimes Utilize the Discourse of Child Innocence

The discourse of children's innocence is often a factor utilized by perpetrators of sexual crimes. In research Mukri (2015) The incident that occurred at the Jakarta International School (JIS) caught the attention of many people and according to the Chairman of the National Commission on Child Protection, Seto Mulyadi, explained that the case was extraordinary because it involved five perpetrators who sexually abused minors. Children who do have innocence become vulnerable as the main target for individuals because of the discourse of children's innocence to launch criminal acts. Ningsih & Hennyati (2018) Child sex crimes where children are used as objects to fulfill the sexual needs of an older person, often involve threats, pressure, bribery or even coercion leading to inappropriate physical contact between the perpetrator and the child. This puts the child in an extremely disadvantageous and potentially traumatizing situation, where the child is victimized by an immoral and destructive act.

The discourse of childhood innocence is used as a symbol of sexual desire and eroticism that is troubling and should not be allowed. According to Robinson (2008) The discourse of children's innocence being exploited as commodities in pornography and mainstream commercial advertising has a worrying impact on society. Child pornography is one of the most damaging forms of exploitation, where children's innocence and helplessness are used as tools to satisfy adults' sexual appetites. On the other hand, the representation of children in commercial advertisements also raises similar concerns as commercial purposes often involve the inappropriate use of children, thus utilizing the discourse of children's innocence and attractiveness as a tool for product sales. The common view of child innocence often makes child sex crimes difficult to detect or report. Probosiwi & Bahransyaf (2015) said that of the cases of sexual

abuse experienced by five children, only one was willing to report it and the rest told the story when they were teenagers. One of the causes of this incident is the doctrine of the discourse of children's innocence, which often fails to deal with problems after sexual crimes. Children are nurtured in their innocence by adults from an early age due to the discourse of child innocence, leaving children with no understanding or ability to express their experiences. Children are shaped as individuals who depend on the innocence of adults so that when experiencing sexual crimes, children do not realize that the treatment is wrong. The discourse on innocence often makes children the target and victim of sexual crimes.

The Discourse of Children's Innocence is Utilized in the Context of Capitalism

The concept of vulnerable children's innocence discourse is often utilized to create markets and increase sales. Argument Laurensius (2017) explained that one of the interesting market segments is the children's market which has the potential to be the future market, becoming a significant target market in the future. The discourse of children's innocence is often utilized in the world of marketing because the image of innocent children can increase the attractiveness of products to consumers. The concept of child innocence is used to develop products specifically for children such as toys, clothing, milk, and others. Marketers attempt to create the impression that their products are important for protecting and maintaining a child's innocence, and explain that the use of these products will secure or enhance an ideal childhood. Quality schools are an ingredient to preserve children's innocence because of the discourse of children's innocence. In the research Rinta (2022) Marketing conducted by PAUD institutions aims to provide optimal services in optimizing child development. Each school has a different vision and mission to improve and develop children's development, so in order to maintain the innocence of children, parents put their children in good quality schools to protect their children. However, what happens is that the more the quality and quantity of schools are good, the more expensive the fees that must be paid. This makes the discourse of children's innocence a commercial material in the world of education.

Child Protection and Welfare

Child protection and rights are important foundations in shaping a just and civilized society. Children are vulnerable individuals and deserve protection from all forms of exploitation from sexual crimes and discrimination. Argument Roza (2019) states that every child has the right to live in an environment free from all forms of abuse and neglect. Children's ignorance often makes them vulnerable to being victimized or even involved in dangerous conditions. Therefore, every child is legally entitled to comprehensive protection. Aiming to be able to grow and develop without being affected by harmful threats. Children have the right to grow and develop in a safe and supportive environment, where the child's needs for development and education are met. Carmela & Suryaningsi (2021) To strengthen children's rights, the Child Protection Commission must have broad authority to ensure the protection of children's rights, whether in the family, community, or surrounding environment. The nation's generation, which consists of early childhood, needs guidance and welfare from an early age so that they are ready to face the journey of life to come.. Marampa & Dethan (2022) Early childhood education is one of the efforts made to provide the necessary assistance for all early childhood children to monitor and provide welfare aimed at enhancing children's development and growth appropriately.

The author argues that child protection and welfare are closely related to the discourse of child innocence. Child welfare to be protected includes protection against the concept of innocence discourse that makes children vulnerable. The discourse of innocence creates an obligation for adults and government agencies to provide a safe environment for children's development. Therefore, child protection seeks to ensure that children's innocence is preserved, allowing children to grow and develop in a safe and supportive environment.

CONCLUSION

The discourse on children's innocence, although portraying children as naturally innocent and vulnerable beings, is actually affected by the dynamics of power and knowledge in larger power relations. Therefore, from the discussion on the discourse of children's innocence, the

importance of the protection and welfare of children as individual human beings becomes a matter of concern. This paper argues that a broader and holistic perspective is needed to understand the complexity of children and pay attention to the rights, needs and welfare of children in the process of growth and development.

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