Education in Early Childhood Prosocial Behavior: Montessori Practical Life Activities at Adinda Daycare in Bandung City

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history
Received March 10, 2026
Revisied April 12, 2026
Accepted April 17, 2026

Keywords: Prosocial behavior; Montessori; Practical life; Early childhood;

ABSTRACT

The planning and implementation of learning in early childhood education still tend not to fully align with children's developmental stages, particularly regarding the development of prosocial behavior. Limited stimulation and structured programs have resulted in children's prosocial aspects not developing optimally, necessitating a learning approach better suited to children's needs. Efforts to develop prosocial behavior have been undertaken at Adinda Daycare, but their effectiveness has not yet been scientifically identified. This study aims to describe the planning, implementation, evaluation, and challenges in applying the Montessori practical life area method to develop prosocial behavior in early childhood. This study employs a qualitative approach using descriptive methods and a case study design. The research subjects are the children at Adinda Daycare who were observed. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation using a triangulation approach to ensure data validity. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and systematic conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Montessori practical life area method is effective in improving children's prosocial behavior including helping others, cooperation, sharing, and honesty to the point where it reaches the "developing as expected" category. Behavioral changes are evident in the increased initiative children demonstrate in helping peers, their ability to cooperate during group activities, their habit of sharing, and their honesty in interactions. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, such as differences in children's backgrounds and teachers' limited understanding of the Montessori method as a whole. The implications of this study suggest that the Montessori practical life method can serve as an effective learning alternative for holistically developing prosocial behavior in early childhood in alignment with their developmental stages.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the cornerstone of future human capital quality, as the success of early childhood development directly impacts a child's future success. The National Education System Law stipulates that early childhood education is delivered through formal, non-formal, and informal channels as a systematic effort to support children's optimal growth and development. Social phenomena indicate that many early childhood education institutions are still unable to provide comprehensive developmental stimulation, particularly regarding children's social-emotional aspects. This situation points to challenges in implementing education focused on children's holistic development. Children's social development is a crucial aspect as it directly relates to their ability to interact and adapt within their social environment. Real-world evidence shows that academic success alone does not guarantee a child's future social success (Marlina et al., 2023). This trend calls for a more integrative and character-development-oriented approach to

learning. Therefore, strengthening education in the area of prosocial behavior has become a need that cannot be ignored. The phenomenon of low levels of prosocial behavior among children in early childhood education institutions has become a significant issue in the current educational context. A lack of stimulation and guidance in the school environment prevents children from fully demonstrating behaviors such as sharing, cooperating, and helping others. Prosocial behavior itself encompasses actions such as sharing, cooperation, helping, honesty, and concern for the well-being of others (Mussen in Dayakisni, 1988). Empirical findings indicate that children's current social living conditions significantly influence their future behavior. The absence of prosocial behavior in early childhood has long-term implications for the quality of social relationships, adaptive abilities, and the development of an individual's character in adulthood. Children who are not accustomed to demonstrating behaviors such as sharing, empathy, and cooperation tend to face difficulties in building healthy interpersonal relationships, which can ultimately affect their academic and professional success. Psychosocially, this condition has the potential to produce individuals with egocentric tendencies, low social sensitivity, and minimal responsibility toward their surroundings (Santrock, 2007). The issues faced by children who lack prosocial behavior are also evident in everyday educational practice, particularly in early childhood education settings. Based on field observations, children tend to exhibit aggressive behavior, struggle to work in groups, and have difficulty managing their emotions when interacting with peers. This situation often triggers recurring conflicts, such as fighting over toys, refusal to share, and an inability to resolve problems collaboratively (Saefullah et al., 2023). Furthermore, the lack of structured stimulation in learning prevents the optimal internalization of social values, causing children to fail to develop sensitivity toward others' needs (Adinda et al., 2024). From a contemporary perspective, this weakness in socioemotional competencies also indicates a gap between learning practices and children's developmental needs, which calls for a more integrative and contextual approach (Lehtinen et al., 2025). Therefore, this issue underscores the urgency of systematic pedagogical interventions to instill prosocial behavior as the primary foundation of early childhood development. Suboptimal social interaction has the potential to hinder children's overall cognitive and emotional development. This is reinforced by social development theory, which states that social interaction plays a crucial role in children's cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). This phenomenon indicates that there remains a gap between expectations for children's development and the actual conditions on the ground. This situation serves as a critical foundation for examining more effective learning strategies to enhance children's prosocial behavior.

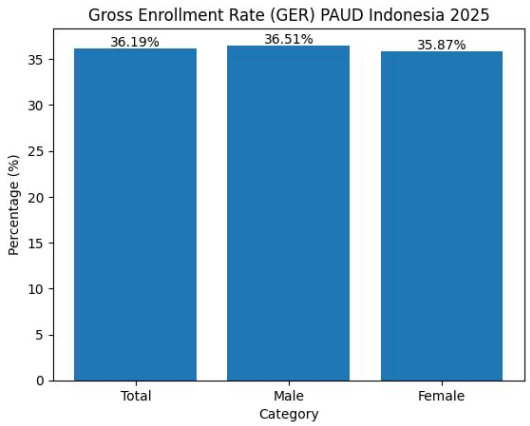

Figure 1. Early Childhood Education (ECE) Enrollment Rate in 2025
Source: National Statistics Agency, (2025) data processed

The data above shows that the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) for Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in Indonesia in 2025 remains at a relatively low level, at 36.19%. The enrollment rate for boys was slightly higher at 36.51% compared to girls at 35.87%, although the difference was not significant. This situation indicates that access to ECE services is fairly equitable in terms of gender, but overall, the level of participation of children aged 3–6 in preschool education remains suboptimal. The fact that only about three out of ten children attend ECE highlights serious challenges in expanding access and ensuring equitable distribution of early childhood education services in Indonesia. This low participation rate has the potential to impact children's readiness for primary education, particularly in terms of social, emotional, and cognitive development (Awaliyah et al., 2026). These data also highlight the need to improve the quality and appeal of early childhood education programs to make them more relevant to community needs. Thus, innovative and context-specific educational interventions are crucial for enhancing both participation and the quality of children's development. Prosocial behavior makes a significant contribution to children's cognitive and emotional development, so it needs to be fostered from an early age as part of the critical period of development. Research shows that prosocial behavior correlates with children's thinking skills and social interactions (Svetlova et al., 2010). Children's behavior during infancy and early childhood is heavily influenced by their social environment, particularly interactions with adults (Dalton, 2010). Support from family, teachers, and peers is a critical factor in shaping this behavior. Children cannot optimally develop their social skills without appropriate interventions through suitable learning programs. A gap emerges when learning programs in early childhood education institutions are not fully designed to systematically develop prosocial aspects. Many institutions still focus solely on cognitive aspects rather than social-emotional development. This situation highlights the need for innovation in learning approaches that can holistically address children's developmental needs.

Gaps in the development of prosocial aspects in early childhood education institutions indicate that instructional design has not yet been systematically structured to integrate social-emotional dimensions into daily pedagogical practices. Field findings reveal that learning activities tend to focus on basic academic achievements, while the cultivation of behaviors such as empathy, cooperation, and social concern has not yet become a top priority in the planning or implementation of learning activities. This aligns with research emphasizing that early childhood development should encompass a holistic approach that balances cognitive, social, and emotional aspects (Christiany & Anggraini, 2019). Furthermore, the weak integration of social values in learning impacts the low quality of children's interactions within the learning environment, as highlighted in studies on the importance of socio-emotional competencies in fostering meaningful dialogue and relationships (Lehtinen et al., 2025). Previous research has also shown that direct experience-based learning approaches, such as Montessori, can improve children's social skills; however, studies specifically examining the optimization of the practical life area within the daycare context remain limited.Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its effort to construct a learning implementation model that not only emphasizes practical activities but also explicitly integrates the development of prosocial behavior within the context of children's real-life interactions, thereby bridging the gap between children's developmental needs and actual learning practices in the field (Awaliyah et al., 2026). One approach considered effective in fostering prosocial behavior in children is the Montessori method, particularly in the area of practical life. This method provides children with opportunities to learn through real-life activities related to daily living (Hadian et al., 2026). Interactions among children of various age groups in a Montessori environment create a learning atmosphere that resembles a family setting. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction among individuals at different developmental levels as a means of learning (Wertsch in

Whaley & Kantor, 1992). A daycare environment that is heterogeneous in terms of age allows children to learn through observation and imitation. Younger children gain role models from older children, while older children learn social responsibility. Practical life activities also foster independence and sensitivity to the surrounding environment. This approach is considered relevant for addressing the issue of low levels of prosocial behavior among children in early childhood education institutions.Research conducted at the Adinda daycare center indicates that efforts to foster prosocial behavior have been made, but the results have not yet been systematically identified. The planning and implementation of learning activities have not fully aligned with the children's developmental stages in an optimal manner. The stimulation programs provided remain limited and have thus not yet yielded significant prosocial development. Teachers also face various challenges in implementing teaching methods that meet the children's needs (Hendriawan et al., 2026). This situation indicates a gap between the implementation of learning and the expected outcomes. Previous research has largely highlighted the general benefits of the Montessori approach but has not specifically examined the "practical life" area within the daycare context. These limitations present an opportunity for more in-depth and context-specific research. Therefore, a scientific study is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Montessori method in fostering children's prosocial behavior. This study aims to describe the planning, implementation, evaluation, and challenges involved in applying the Montessori practical life method to foster prosocial behavior in children at daycare centers. Based on this focus, the research questions formulated are: (1) what are the initial levels of children's prosocial behavior prior to the implementation of the Montessori practical life method; (2) how does children's prosocial behavior change after participating in practical life-based learning; (3) how does the learning process through practical life activities enhance children's ability to help others and cooperate; (4) how routines in the daycare environment contribute to the development of sharing behavior; and (5) how a supportive learning environment in the Montessori approach reinforces children's honesty. The findings are also expected to serve as a practical reference for early childhood education institutions in improving the quality of learning. This study is relevant in addressing the need for a more holistic early childhood education. Thus, this study is expected to provide solutions to the challenges of developing children's prosocial behavior in educational settings.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing and describing in depth the implementation of mixed-age classes in the development of children's prosocial behavior at Daycare Adinda Bandung. This approach was chosen because it is capable of revealing social phenomena, activities, attitudes, and the perceptions of individuals and groups holistically within a natural context through an inductive process, in which research questions emerge from data that is open to interpretation. Data were collected through careful observation, detailed contextual descriptions, and in-depth documentation of the analysis results. According to Moleong (2007), the qualitative approach aims to comprehensively understand the research subjects' experiences in a descriptive form using words within a natural context. The research design employed is a case study, as it allows the researcher to explore specific phenomena in depth at a particular location (Sulistyo-Basuki, 2006). This study also utilizes a descriptive method because the issues under examination are complex, dynamic, and rich in meaning, thus requiring a comprehensive understanding without the manipulation of variables.

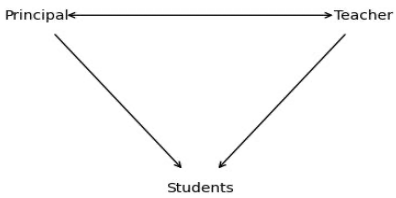

Figure 2. Data Collection Framework

This study was conducted at Adinda Daycare in Bandung, which implements the Montessori practical life area method, during the 2018–2019 school year. The research subjects included the principal, teachers, and students as informants who provided data related to the research conditions (Moleong, 2010), while the research object was the prosocial behavior of children in a Montessori classroom consisting of 16 children (Sugiyono, 2006). Data collection was conducted using triangulation through observation, interviews, documentation, literature review, and field notes to obtain comprehensive data. Observation was used to understand children's behavior (Marshall in Sugiyono, 2018), interviews for information exchange and meaning construction (Esterberg, 2002 in Sugiyono, 2018), documentation to supplement data, and literature review as a theoretical foundation (Nazir, 2005). Field notes were used to record empirical experiences during the research (Moleong in Subekti, 2013; Emzir, 2010).

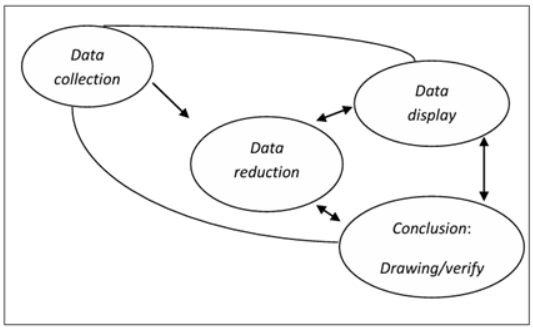

Figure 3. Source Triangulation

The data analysis techniques used in this study include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions, where data reduction is performed by summarizing and focusing on key data from interviews, observations, and documentation, while data presentation is organized in narrative form to facilitate understanding (Miles & Huberman in Sugiyono, 2018). Conclusions are new findings derived from the results of data analysis (Sugiyono, 2018). Data validity is tested through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability tests (Sugiyono, 2008), using techniques such as source triangulation, extended observation, increased persistence, peer discussion, negative case analysis, use of reference materials, and member checking to ensure the validity and reliability of the research data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Based on the observations, the data presented in the table indicate a significant improvement in all indicators of children's prosocial behavior following the implementation of the Montessori practical life area method. Before the intervention, most children were in the underdeveloped (BB) and beginning to develop (MB) categories; however, after the learning process took place, there was a shift toward the developing as expected (BSH) and developing very well (BSB) categories. This improvement is evident in the indicators of helping, cooperation,

 ISSN 2776-5229

sharing, and honesty, which developed consistently in the children's daily activities. These findings indicate that learning based on direct experience through practical life activities is effective in stimulating children's overall social development. Thus, the data in the table reinforce that the Montessori method has a positive impact on the formation of prosocial behavior in early childhood. The results of the observations are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Development of Prosocial Behavior in Children at Adinda Daycare

NO	Nama Anak	Indikator							
		Menolong		Kerjasama		Berbagi		Kejujuran	
		sebelum	Sesudah	sebelum	Sesudah	sebelum	Sesudah	sebelum	Sesudah
1	NIA	MB	BSH	MB	BSB	MB	BSH	MB	BSB
2	KSA	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	MB	BSH
3	MRR	MB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
4	MZA	MB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
5	ID	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	MB	BSH
6	TRK	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	MB	BSH
7	GNF	BB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	MB	BSB
8	AFN	MB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
9	ASN	MB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
10	RRA	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	MB	BSH
11	MRRA	BB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	MB	BSB
12	MGA	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	BB	BSH	MB	BSH
13	NCM	MB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
14	RAK	MB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
15	ESZ	BB	MB	MB	BSH	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
16	SYS	BB	BSH	BB	BSB	BB	BSH	BB	BSH
Jumlah		BB:9	BSH:15	BB:14	BSH:6	BB:15	BSH:16	BB:8	BSH:14
		MB:7	MB:1	MB:2	BSB:10	MB:1	BSB:0	MB:8	BSB:2

Based on the research results table, there was an increase in children's prosocial behavior across all indicators following the implementation of Montessori practical life activities. For the "helping" indicator, there was a shift from the BB and MB categories toward the BSH category, indicating an improvement in children's ability to assist others. The cooperation indicator showed a significant increase with the BSB category dominating after the intervention, indicating that the children's ability to cooperate developed optimally. For the sharing indicator, nearly all children reached the BSH category after the learning, demonstrating consistency in sharing behavior. Meanwhile, the honesty indicator also showed improvement, with some children reaching the BSB category and the majority in the BSH category. Overall, the data indicate that prior to the intervention, children's behavior was still dominated by the BB and MB categories; however, following the implementation of the method, there was an increase toward the BSH and BSB categories. These findings suggest that the Montessori practical life area method is effective in fostering prosocial behavior in young children.

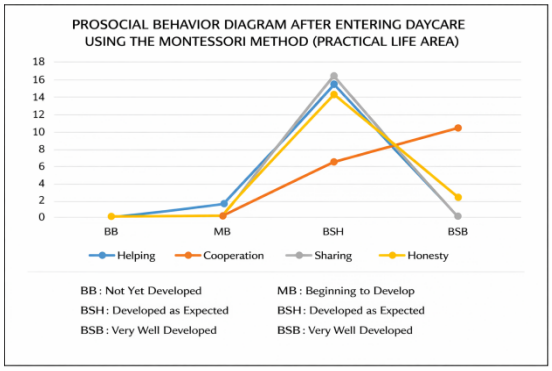

Figure 4. Diagram of Prosocial Behavior Before Starting Daycare

 ISSN 2776-5229

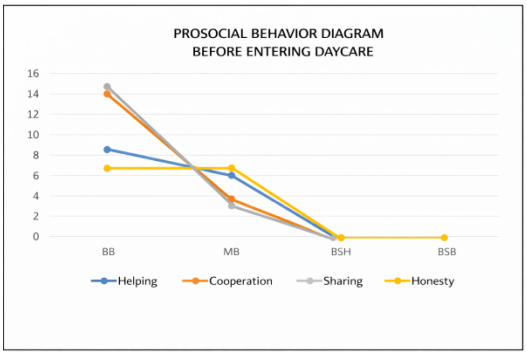

Figure 5. Diagram of Prosocial Behavior Outcomes After Starting Daycare Using the Montessori Practical Life Area Method

Improving Helping Behavior and Cooperation through Montessori Practical Life Interventions

Research findings indicate that prior to the intervention, most children fell into the "not yet developed" (BB) and "beginning to develop" (MB) categories regarding indicators of helping behavior and cooperation. Observation and interview data revealed that children tended to be egocentric, unresponsive to peers' needs, and unaccustomed to working in groups. This behavior was evident in children's passive responses when peers faced difficulties, as well as a tendency to play individually without meaningful social engagement. These conditions indicated that previous environmental stimulation had not been optimal in fostering prosocial behavior.Following the implementation of the Montessori practical life area method, significant changes occurred, moving toward the "developing as expected" (BSH) category and even "developing very well" (BSB). Children began to show initiative in helping peers without teacher guidance, such as helping to open doors, fetching items, and completing tasks together. Contextual practical life activities encouraged children to engage directly in real-life social situations that required empathy and prosocial actions. The development of cooperation also appeared stronger compared to other indicators, with the majority of children reaching the BSB (Developing Very Well) category. Children were not only able to work together but also demonstrated skills in coordination, communication, and responsibility during group activities. The mixed-age classroom environment provided opportunities for children to learn from peers of different ages, thereby accelerating the internalization of social behavior.These findings indicate that the Montessori approach which emphasizes direct experience, guided freedom, and natural social interaction is effective in developing helping and cooperation skills in early childhood. Thus, this method can serve as a strategic alternative for enhancing the quality of children's social development within ECE (Early Childhood Education) environments.

Consistency in the Development of Sharing Behavior through Social Habituation in a Daycare Environment

Research findings indicate that prior to the intervention, children's sharing behavior was still in the BB (*Belum Berkembang* - Not Yet Developing) and MB (*Mulai Berkembang* - Starting to Develop) categories, characterized by a tendency to maintain ownership of food and toys. Children showed resistance when asked to share, and in several cases, social conflicts arose over resource competition. This condition suggests that sharing habits had not yet been internalized into the children's daily behavior. After participating in Montessori Practical Life learning, sharing behavior experienced a consistent increase, reaching the BSH (*Berkembang Sesuai Harapan* - Developing as Expected) category in nearly all research subjects. Children began to show

spontaneous awareness of sharing during mealtimes, play, and other group activities. Sharing behavior was no longer instructional but emerged as part of social habits formed through repeated experiences. The daycare environment, which resembles a family atmosphere, is a crucial factor in shaping this behavior. Intensive interaction among children of various ages creates social dynamics that encourage the emergence of empathy and concern. Practices such as sharing food from a "communal plate" or sharing play equipment reinforce the values of togetherness and social solidarity. Thus, the results of this study confirm that real-world experience-based learning in an authentic social context is capable of sustainably enhancing sharing behavior. The Montessori approach provides a significant contribution to shaping social character through structured yet flexible habituation.

Strengthening Honesty through a Learning Environment that Supports Children's Self-Expression

Regarding the honesty indicator, research findings show that before the intervention, some children were already at the MB stage, though there were still children in the BB category. Dishonest behavior or avoiding admission of mistakes was still found, especially in children who had not yet received habituation from their family environment. This indicates that the development of honesty is strongly influenced by previous social experiences.Following the implementation of the Montessori method, all research subjects showed an improvement to the BSH category, with some reaching BSB (*Berkembang Sangat Baik* - Developing Very Well). Children began to be able to express their true selves honestly, such as admitting mistakes, conveying difficulties, and providing factual information. This behavior emerged naturally without pressure, indicating a sense of security within the learning environment. The Montessori approach, which eschews punishment in favor of reflection and self-responsibility, is a primary factor in the development of honesty. Teachers act as facilitators who provide space for children to express themselves without fear. This situation allows children to learn that honesty is part of the learning process, not something to be avoided.

DISCUSSION

Research findings obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation indicate that the implementation of the Montessori practical life area significantly contributes to the development of children's prosocial behavior. These findings demonstrate an alignment between theory and field practice, particularly regarding prosocial behavior indicators, including helping, cooperation, sharing, and honesty. This concept aligns with the view that prosocial behavior encompasses acts of sharing, cooperative teamwork, helping, honesty, and concern for the welfare of others (Mussen in Dayakisni, 1988). Within this context, the prosocial indicators used in this study represent the primary dimensions of early childhood social development. Thus, the Montessori approach provides a relevant learning framework for developing children's social competence holistically. The effectiveness of the Montessori practical life method in this study is reinforced by learning principles that emphasize direct experience and daily life activities (Lehtinen et al., 2025). This approach allows children to adapt to their social environment through a process of exploration and meaningful interaction. This is consistent with Montessori's (2011) view that practical life exercises assist children in the process of social adaptation, supported by imitation theory as the foundation for the development of empathy and social behavior (Beati, 2013). Children learn through observation and imitation of behavior models demonstrated by both teachers and peers. This process creates a natural internalization of social values; therefore, the Montessori method functions not only as a learning strategy but also as a medium for shaping a child's social character.Regarding the helping indicator, research results show a significant

increase, with the majority of children reaching the "Developing as Expected" (*Berkembang Sesuai Harapan*) category. This change is evident in the emergence of children's initiative to help peers without direct instruction from the teacher. This condition reflects the success of the Montessori approach in creating a learning environment that encourages independence and social concern. Montessori (2013) emphasizes that learning success is achieved when children are able to perform activities independently, as if without teacher intervention. Furthermore, the modeling process conducted by the teacher before activities serves as a crucial factor in learning helping behavior. This aligns with the theory that children learn prosocial behavior through symbolic stimulation and observation (Beati, 2013).

In the cooperation and sharing indicators, the research findings show excellent development, even emerging as the most dominant indicators. Cooperation developed into the "Developing Very Well" (*Berkembang Sangat Baik*) category for the majority of children, while sharing behavior reached the "Developing as Expected" category across all subjects. These findings suggest that social interaction in cooperative activities and the mixed-age classroom environment contribute significantly to children's social development. This is in accordance with the view that social development is influenced by family, school, and cultural factors (Seefelt, 2008; Hurlock, 1999). Additionally, social constructivism theory emphasizes that learning occurs through meaningful social interactions (Vygotsky in Sugiyono, 2012). The teacher's role as a facilitator providing examples and opportunities for practice is key to the success of this learning process.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, the conclusions of this study are as follows: The lesson planning for the Montessori *practical life* area in developing children's prosocial behavior at Adinda Daycare has been meticulously prepared. This is evidenced by the systematic arrangement of annual programs, semester programs, and daily lesson plans. The implementation of the Montessori *practical life* area in developing prosocial behavior at Adinda Daycare aligns with the Montessori work cycle, which possesses distinct characteristics compared to other methods. These include: inviting the child, demonstrating the apparatus, handling, carrying the apparatus to the work mat, sitting on the dominant side, presentation, offering the child a turn, and allowing the child to use the apparatus whenever they wish. The research results indicate that the Montessori *practical life* area is considered effective in the context of developing prosocial behavior. This is based on the researcher's findings regarding children's prosocial behavior within Montessori classroom management, where planning and implementation are utilized to enhance prosocial actions. Observed behaviors include helping, cooperation, sharing, and honesty.The challenge faced by teachers in implementing the Montessori *practical life* method occurs when a new child joins mid-semester. In such cases, many developmental stimulations are missed, requiring both teachers and parents to work more intensively in conditioning the child.

Based on the research findings and discussion, the researcher offers several recommendations as efforts to improve the quality of learning and the development of children's prosocial behavior: For the Daycare Institution: It is recommended to enhance the understanding and implementation of the Montessori method, which is not yet optimal, by strengthening teacher competencies. This can be achieved through relevant training or by inviting competent experts to ensure a more uniform and standardized application of the method. For Teachers: Continuous efforts are required to improve professional competence, particularly in understanding aspects of child development and prosocial behavior. This can be pursued through literature studies, peer discussions, and participation in seminars or workshops. For Parents: It is crucial to strengthen collaboration with teachers in supporting the development of children's prosocial behavior, ensuring that stimulation provided at home and at school functions synergistically. For Further

Research: It is suggested that subsequent studies be conducted using similar approaches but focusing on different dimensions or variables to enrich the academic discourse and strengthen research findings in the field of early childhood education.

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