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Early Stimulation in the Psychological Development of Early Childhood: A Comprehensive Literature Review

Idi Warsah[1], Amanah Rahma Ningtyas[1*], H. M. Taufik Amrillah[1], Epni Lidya Utami[1]

[1] IAIN Curup, Indonesia

* corresponding author: amanahrahma@iaincurup.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain early detection in the psychological development of early childhood. Psychological development during early childhood serves as a critical foundation for character formation, learning abilities, and future social relationships. This research employs a library research approach with stages including scientific review, theoretical study of all research objects, and theoretical analysis. The study is expected to assist parents and educators in understanding various theories addressing early detection of psychological development in early childhood. The findings indicate that theoretically, there are two main conclusions: first, early childhood developmental psychology is the science studying mental, physical, cognitive, linguistic, moral, and socio-emotional development; second, early detection is essential in monitoring psychological development during early childhood. The study emphasizes that early childhood represents a golden period wherein rapid development occurs across all domains, making it imperative for parents and educators to understand developmental milestones and potential deviations. Early detection enables timely intervention, preventing more severe developmental challenges. The synergy between family, school, and community environments plays a pivotal role in supporting optimal psychological growth. This paper underscores the importance of understanding early childhood developmental psychology as a foundation for improving the quality of education and childcare in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study highlights that psychological development is influenced by both innate factors and environmental stimulation, necessitating a holistic approach to early childhood education that integrates cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, moral, and motor development proportionally.

1. Introduction

Every human being undergoes specific stages throughout life, and at each stage, developmental processes occur, both physically and psychologically. Children, like adults, experience growth and developmental processes, and every child has the right to develop optimally in their physical and psychological aspects. In the study of developmental psychology, various theories serve as references for parents and families to understand that a child's growth and development will proceed optimally when supported by the active roles

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of parents and family. Early childhood represents a developmental phase that significantly determines subsequent life outcomes, as during this period, rapid growth occurs in cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, moral, and motor domains (Nasution et al., 2024; Sjech et al., 2024). According to Amiliya et al. (2024), the golden age period is a critical phase where children experience rapid brain development, making early stimulation essential for optimal outcomes.

Observations in educational and family settings reveal that many parents remain unaware of the critical importance of early childhood development. Research indicates that only 25% of parents understand the significance of the first five years of life, and this lack of awareness often results in inadequate stimulation and environmental support during this crucial period (Taywade et al., 2024). A significant gap exists between theoretical understanding and practical application in daily parenting and educational practices. Many families fail to provide adequate stimulation, often due to limited knowledge about developmental milestones or socioeconomic constraints that limit access to quality early childhood education resources (Arsini et al., 2023). This observational gap underscores the urgent need for comprehensive educational interventions targeting parents and educators.

Early childhood developmental psychology examines changes in behavior, mental processes, and children's abilities from the beginning of life to preschool age, including how family, school, and social environment factors shape this growth (Nasution et al., 2024). This field of study is crucial because a proper understanding of child development enables parents and teachers to provide stimulation, parenting styles, and educational interventions aligned with the child's developmental stage. The study of early childhood developmental psychology focuses on changes in behavior, thought processes, and various abilities from early life to preschool age, emphasizing the role of family, educational institutions, and the social environment in shaping the growth process (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020; Sjech et al., 2024).

Previous research has established that a child's psychological development significantly influences personality formation, shaped by all environmental elements including family, school, and community. Among these three environments, the family environment exerts the most substantial influence, as all family members can synergize and influence each other (Arsini et al., 2023; Fatimah & Martoyo, 2025). This primacy exists because the family represents the first environment known to the child from birth, making the values, norms, and behavioral patterns instilled within the family foundational for subsequent personality development. Li et al. (2025) demonstrated that early-life caregiving flexibility, particularly in mother-child interactions during toddlerhood, predicts adolescent behavioral adjustment, highlighting the enduring influence of early family environments on long-term psychological outcomes.

The Golden Age theory or the golden period of early childhood serves as the foundation for understanding the vulnerable phase in child development. The concept that significant developmental surges occur during this period, without repetition at later ages, forms the basis for understanding the urgency of family environmental support during this time. Developmental psychology, defined as qualitative changes in an individual's personality, applies this theory by highlighting the difference between qualitative and quantitative changes (Amiliya et al., 2024). The period from birth to six years represents a critical window during which approximately 80% of brain development occurs, making early stimulation essential for optimal outcomes (Taywade et al., 2024). The first 1000 days of life, from birth to two years of age, are particularly vital, as rapid neuronal proliferation and synaptogenesis happen during this period (Taywade et al., 2024; Rahman, 2002).

According to Vygotsky (1978), the most influential tool in psychology is speech. Speech develops thought freely and focuses on spontaneous understanding, a capacity that others do

not possess. Through speech, children not only express their thoughts but simultaneously shape their thinking through dialogue with others and themselves. Language functions as a mediating tool between the individual and their social environment, enriching the child's cognitive and emotional structure through verbal interaction with adults and peers (Vygotsky, 1978; Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020). As development progresses, external speech, initially used for communication with others, transforms into inner speech, which plays an important role in self-control, action planning, and problem-solving (Bodrova & Leong, 2024; Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020). According to Bodrova & Leong (2024), Vygotskian approaches emphasize that children acquire cultural tools and ways of thinking through social interaction, making the quality of communication in early childhood settings crucial for cognitive development.

Several studies have examined various aspects of early childhood psychological development. Sukatin et al. (2020) analyzed socio-emotional development, emphasizing that early childhood represents a golden age when children become sensitive and responsive to stimulation. Isna (2019) explored language development, concluding that language acquisition depends not only on environmental learning but also on biological readiness from birth. Nasution et al. (2024) provided a comprehensive overview of early childhood developmental psychology, covering mental, physical, cognitive, linguistic, moral, and socio-emotional aspects. Ulfa & Na'imah (2020) examined the family's role in child development, establishing that family serves as the primary factor in the developmental process. Gea et al. (2025) demonstrated that holistic-integrative early childhood education significantly impacts social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development across multiple regions.

Recent meta-analytic evidence further underscores the importance of early childhood environments. Memba & Ostrov (2025) found that executive functioning during early childhood predicts both social competence and academic achievement across the transition to kindergarten, with affective conceptualizations of executive function predicting increases in social competence and decreases in aggression. Similarly, research on process quality in early childhood education and care demonstrates significant relationships with children's socio-emotional development over time (Raikes et al., 2024). Preiß et al. (2025) found that maternal personality traits, particularly agreeableness, are associated with better cognitive outcomes in toddlers, while maternal depression is linked to increased controlling behavior, emphasizing the intricate relation between maternal characteristics and child development. Han & Yan (2025) demonstrated that parenting styles play a pivotal role in early childhood development through network analysis, revealing age-specific patterns in the connections between parenting practices and developmental outcomes.

Despite the wealth of existing research, a significant gap remains in the practical integration of early detection strategies into everyday parenting and educational practices. Many studies focus on theoretical frameworks without providing actionable guidelines for implementation. Furthermore, limited research synthesizes the various developmental domains into a cohesive framework that can be readily applied by parents and educators without specialized training (Taywade et al., 2024). The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive synthesis of theoretical frameworks and practical applications for early detection, offering an integrated model that bridges the gap between theory and practice. This study also incorporates recent findings on the neurodevelopmental basis of early detection, as Hatakenaka et al. (2025) demonstrated the potential of using developmental records for early neurodevelopmental disorder detection through Bayesian network analysis, emphasizing early monitoring and intervention for at-risk children.

This research addresses three primary questions: the nature of early childhood psychological development, the aspects of development in early childhood psychology, and

the implications of early detection of early childhood psychological development. The objectives are to understand the nature of early childhood psychological development, identify developmental aspects, and explore the implications of early detection. The study aims to bridge theoretical understanding with practical application, ultimately contributing to improved educational and childcare quality in Indonesia. The integration of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multiple environmental influences on child development, from the microsystem of family and school to the macrosystem of cultural values and norms. Khairati et al. (2024) further elaborated on the concept of family education according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, emphasizing the foundational role of family in shaping children's character and development.

2. Method

This research employs a library research or text study approach, which systematically examines existing literature to synthesize knowledge on early childhood psychological development. Library research is particularly suitable for this study as it allows comprehensive analysis of theoretical frameworks and empirical findings without the constraints of field-based data collection. This approach enables the integration of diverse perspectives from multiple disciplines, including psychology, education, and sociology, to develop a holistic understanding of early childhood development (Amiliya et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2024). According to Sukatin et al. (2020), library research in developmental psychology provides a robust foundation for understanding the complex interplay of factors influencing child development.

The research design includes three main components. First, theoretical review represents a scientific study step that subsequently requires empirical testing to obtain empirical truth (Khairati et al., 2024). This component involves systematically examining established theories of child development, including cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, and moral development frameworks. Second, the study attempts to theoretically examine all research objects related to validity, ensuring that the synthesized findings maintain scientific rigor and reliability (Setiyawati et al., 2021). Third, the review of theories involves critical analysis of existing theoretical frameworks to identify gaps and synthesize coherent conclusions (Arsini et al., 2023; Arifin, 2020).

The data collection procedure involved systematic searching of academic databases including Google Scholar, PubMed, Scopus, and national accredited journals such as Jurnal Golden Age and Jurnal Al-Athfaal. Search terms included "early childhood psychological development," "early detection," "golden age," "developmental psychology," "early childhood education," "parent-child interaction," "executive function," "socio-emotional development," "cognitive development," and "neurodevelopmental screening." Inclusion criteria required publications between 2020-2025, peer-reviewed status, and relevance to early childhood psychological development (Taywade et al., 2024; Raikes et al., 2024). Exclusion criteria eliminated non-peer-reviewed publications, studies focusing on populations outside the 0-6 year age range, and articles without clear theoretical or empirical contributions (Memba & Ostrov, 2025; Preiß et al., 2025).

The data analysis technique employed thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes across the literature. Themes were categorized into developmental domains: cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, moral, and motor development (Nasution et al., 2024; Sjech et al., 2024). Additional themes included factors influencing development, early detection strategies, the role of family and educational environments, and neurodevelopmental screening approaches (Hatakenaka et al., 2025; Taywade et al., 2024). Each theme was analyzed for theoretical consistency, empirical support, and practical implications. The

analysis also identified gaps in the literature, particularly regarding practical implementation strategies for early detection in diverse cultural contexts (Gea et al., 2025; Raikes et al., 2024).

Table 1. Summary of Literature

No.	Author(s)	Year	Focus Area	Key Theme
1	Nasution et al.	2024	Comprehensive PAUD Psychology	Holistic child development
2	Isna, A.	2019	Language Development	Biological basis of language
3	Sukatin et al.	2020	Socio-Emotional Development	Golden age sensitivity
4	Ulfa & Na'imah	2020	Family Role	Family as primary factor
5	Aisyah & Sembiring	2024	Cognitive Development	Piaget's theory application
6	Salsabila, A.	2021	Socio-Emotional Development	Early childhood potential
7	Shalihah, M.	2025	Psychological Analysis	Comprehensive development analysis
8	Arifin, Z.	2020	Social Development Theory	Convergence theory
9	Rofi'ah et al.	2022	Socio-Emotional 0-6 Years	Stimulation according to theory
10	Amiliya et al.	2024	Golden Age	Critical developmental period
11	Setiyawati et al.	2021	Online Learning Impact	Developmental achievement
12	Arsini et al.	2023	Parental Role	Psychological development importance
13	Fatimah & Martoyo	2025	Family Role	Family in psychological development
14	Rokhayati & Nafilah	2021	Child Psychology & Literature	Literature introduction
15	Sjech et al.	2024	Developmental Psychology	Growth and development nature
16	Li et al.	2025	Mother-Child Interaction	Adolescent psychological adjustment
17	Memba & Ostrov	2025	Executive Function	Kindergarten transition outcomes
18	Raikes et al.	2024	ECEC Quality	Quality profiles in early programs
19	Preiß et al.	2025	Maternal Characteristics	Cognitive development in toddlers
20	Taywade et al.	2024	Developmental Delay	Primary care screening
21	Hatakenaka et al.	2025	Neurodevelopmental Disorders	Early detection using Bayesian analysis
22	Gea et al.	2025	Holistic Education	Multi-regional development impact
23	Bodrova & Leong	2024	Vygotskian Approach	Tools of the Mind
24	Vygotsky	1978	Sociocultural Theory	Mind in society
25	Mauluddia & Solehuddin	2023	Piaget's Theory	Play-based learning
26	Denham & Ferrier	2024	Socio-Emotional Socialization	Classroom emotional socialization
27	Han & Yan	2025	Parenting & Development	Network analysis perspective
28	Bronfenbrenner	1979	Ecological Theory	Ecology of human development
29	Ye et al.	2024	Attachment Theory	Secure base and mental health
30	Waters & Waters	2024	Attachment	Developmental change in attachment
31	Khairati et al.	2024	Family Education	Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept
32	Zhao et al.	2025	Moral Development	Moral judgment and cheating
33	Fitriahadi & Widyantara	2026	Early Detection	Growth and development screening
34	Syafnita et al.	2023	Developmental Psychology	Comprehensive child psychology
35	Rahman	2002	Early Childhood Education	Basic concepts of PAUD

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3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Nature of Early Childhood Psychological Development

Early childhood psychological development encompasses regular, gradual, and interconnected changes across physical, mental, emotional, social, language, moral, and personality aspects (Sjech et al., 2024; Nasution et al., 2024). Development is influenced not only by biological factors but also by learning experiences and the quality of children's interaction with their environment. In early childhood education practice, psychological development cannot be separated from the context of family and educational institutions, as children learn through relationships, imitation, play, language, and daily experiences (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020). Therefore, approaches to early childhood must be holistic, viewing children as complete persons developing simultaneously across various dimensions (Nasution et al., 2024; Gea et al., 2025). The interconnection between developmental domains means that progress in one area often supports growth in others, necessitating integrated educational and parenting strategies. Syafnita et al. (2023) emphasized that understanding the holistic nature of child development requires attention to all aspects simultaneously, as each domain influences and is influenced by others.

3.2 Aspects of Psychological Development

Language serves as a communication tool and a developmental aspect that can be observed directly. Children understand various things intended by parents, including stories, rules, commands, and reading materials (Syafnita et al., 2023; Isna, 2019). Language ability functions not only as a means of conveying information but also as the foundation for understanding meaning, following instructions, developing logical thinking, and building positive social relationships through meaningful verbal interaction. According to the nativist perspective, biological evolution plays a role in shaping individuals as linguistic beings. In line with physical and mental growth, language development improves naturally, similar to walking ability, influenced by brain maturation (Isna, 2019). Language acquisition does not solely depend on environmental learning but also on biological readiness from birth. Vygotsky's framework emphasizes that children acquire language and culture-specific ways of using language through actively participating in daily conversations with adults (Vygotsky, 1978; Bodrova & Leong, 2024).

Early childhood cognitive development relates to thinking, remembering, categorizing, recognizing symbols, and solving simple problems (Aisyah & Sembiring, 2024). Piaget's theory explains that early childhood children generally remain in the preoperational stage, where imagination develops rapidly but thinking remains strongly influenced by concrete experiences (Mauluddia & Solehuddin, 2023). Cognitive development is influenced by environmental stimulation, social interaction with parents and peers, and the quality of learning experiences at home and in educational institutions (Memba & Ostrov, 2025). Language development and symbolic abilities serve as important means for children to express ideas and test simple hypotheses. Biological factors, such as neural maturation and health, interact with socio-cultural factors in determining cognitive development pace (Preiß et al., 2025). Executive functioning, including inhibition, working memory, and shifting, supports flexible and goal-directed behavior and is crucial for both current and later-life outcomes (Memba & Ostrov, 2025).

The development of religious values in early childhood is closely related to environment, as religion guides and regulates life activities according to norms and directs humans toward goodness despite differences in ethnicity, culture, and beliefs (Rahman, 2002). The quality of environment—at home, school, and community—becomes key in shaping religious values, as through daily interactions with adults and peers, children absorb examples of religious behavior, internalize good norms, and learn to appreciate differences

(Sjech et al., 2024). Early childhood morality grows from concrete experiences rather than abstract lectures, making adult role modeling essential (Salsabila, 2021). Character formation cannot rely solely on verbal advice but must be built through consistent direct practice, where adults actively demonstrate honest, fair, and responsible behavior (Rokhayati & Nafilah, 2021). Research on moral development by Zhao et al. (2025) indicates that young children's moral judgments of honesty and dishonesty predict actual cheating behavior, providing insights into the knowledge-behavior link in early childhood.

Socio-emotional development includes children's ability to recognize emotions, manage feelings, build relationships, cooperate, and adapt to environment (Sukatin et al., 2020; Shalihah, 2025). Socio-emotional intelligence plays a major role in forming self-esteem, empathy, self-discipline, and school readiness (Salsabila, 2021). Children with good socio-emotional development interact more easily with peers and adults, resolve conflicts positively, and control behavior according to applicable norms. Play, peer interaction, attachment quality with parents, and emotional climate at home and school significantly influence socio-emotional development (Ye et al., 2024). Children in supportive environments tend to be more confident and adaptable, while stressful environments can lead to withdrawal, aggression, or difficulty controlling emotions (Denham & Ferrier, 2024). The process quality of early childhood education and care, including sensitive interactions with emotional and instructional support from staff, has been shown to be a significant predictor of children's socio-emotional development over time (Raikes et al., 2024).

Motor development encompasses both gross and fine motor skills, progressing from basic movements like lifting the head and rolling over to more complex skills like running, jumping, and writing (Nasution et al., 2024). The development follows a predictable sequence, though individual variation exists based on genetic factors, nutrition, and environmental stimulation. Research on parenting styles and preschool children's development using network analysis reveals that motivation (parenting) and emotion (development) serve as the strongest bridge nodes connecting parenting practices to developmental outcomes, with age-specific patterns showing that motivation-art connections dominate at age three, acceptance-art at age four, and respect-language at age five (Han & Yan, 2025).

3.3 Developmental Milestones Table

Table 2. Early Childhood Psychological Development Milestones

Age	Cognitive Development	Language Development	Socio-Emotional Development	Motor Development
0–1 year	Recognizes parents' faces, explores objects with senses, begins understanding simple cause-effect	Babbles, responds to sounds, begins uttering simple words like "mama" or "papa"	Social smile, recognizes primary caregiver, shows anxiety toward strangers	Lifts head, rolls over, sits, crawls, begins standing
1–2 years	Recognizes objects and simple functions, imitates adult behavior, begins simple problem-solving	Vocabulary develops rapidly, able to say several words and follow simple instructions	Shows early independence, begins parallel play, expresses emotions clearly	Walks, runs, climbs, stacks simple blocks
2–3 years	Begins categorizing colors and shapes, simple pretend play	Combines 2–3 words into simple sentences, understands more complex commands	Begins understanding simple rules, tantrums emerge as part of emotion regulation	Jumps, kicks a ball, uses own spoon
3–4 years	Symbolic thinking develops, recognizes	Speaks in complete sentences, able to tell	Plays with friends, begins sharing and	Draws simple shapes, cuts with

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Age	Cognitive Development	Language Development	Socio-Emotional Development	Motor Development
	numbers and basic colors, begins asking "why"	simple experiences	taking turns, understands others' feelings	help, runs more balanced
4–5 years	Simple counting, understands basic time concepts, memory improves	Uses more complex sentences, able to tell stories with clear sequence	Develops empathy, begins understanding social norms and teamwork	Writes some letters, buttons clothes, jumps on one foot
5–6 years	Thinks more logically, solves simple problems, ready for basic academic learning	Masters most everyday language structures, able to have simple discussions	Forms more stable friendships, able to control emotions better	Body coordination improves, draws details, writes own name

3.4 Early Detection of Psychological Development

Early detection is the process of identifying symptoms and early signs of deviations in a child's psychological development before the condition worsens (Fitriahadi & Widyantara, 2026; Taywade et al., 2024). This enables rapid, precise, and continuous evaluation and intervention to support optimal cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development. According to studies in early childhood developmental psychology, psychological development includes several main domains: cognitive development (thinking, remembering, problem-solving), language development (understanding and using language), socio-emotional development (interacting, recognizing, and managing emotions), motor development (gross and fine motor skills), and moral and independence development (Rofi'ah et al., 2022; Nasution et al., 2024). Early identification of children with developmental delays is essential, as most major brain structures mature within the first three years of life, making early intervention crucial for better outcomes (Taywade et al., 2024). Hatakenaka et al. (2025) demonstrated that using developmental records for early neurodevelopmental disorder detection through Bayesian network analysis can identify key predictive factors including meconium-stained amniotic fluid, Apgar scores, and early developmental milestones, emphasizing the potential of systematic monitoring for early intervention.

3.5 Factors Influencing Early Detection

Convergence theory states that child development is influenced by two main factors: innate factors (heredity) and environmental factors (Arifin, 2020). Psychological development is not determined solely by genetics or environment but results from their interaction. Children with good innate potential develop optimally when supported by a conducive environment. This theoretical framework has been supported by recent research demonstrating that both genetic predispositions and environmental factors, including parenting styles and early childhood education quality, interact to shape developmental outcomes (Preiß et al., 2025; Han & Yan, 2025).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains that child development is influenced by various interacting environmental systems. The microsystem includes family, school, and peers. The mesosystem encompasses relationships between family and school. The exosystem involves environments not directly involving the child but impacting development, such as parents' work. The macrosystem includes culture, values, and societal norms. The chronosystem involves environmental changes over time (Ye et al., 2024). This theory emphasizes that psychological development cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which the child grows (Waters & Waters, 2024). Studies applying Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory have identified how interactions and relationships among ecosystem components affect children's development, highlighting the need for multi-level interventions (Raikes et al., 2024).

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that early childhood psychological development represents a multifaceted process requiring comprehensive understanding from parents, educators, and policymakers. The holistic nature of development, encompassing cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, moral, and motor domains, necessitates integrated approaches to early childhood education and care (Nasution et al., 2024; Sjech et al., 2024). This discussion synthesizes the theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to provide practical implications for early detection and intervention strategies, incorporating recent evidence from longitudinal and meta-analytic studies.

The concept of the golden age emerges as a central theme across the literature, emphasizing the critical nature of the 0-6 year period. During this window, rapid brain development occurs, with approximately 80% of neural connections forming (Taywade et al., 2024; Amiliya et al., 2024). This neurobiological reality underscores the urgency of providing appropriate stimulation, nutrition, and emotional support during early childhood. The implication for practice is clear: interventions delayed beyond this period may have limited effectiveness, as the brain's plasticity decreases with age. Research by Gea et al. (2025) demonstrates that holistic-integrative early childhood education significantly impacts social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development, supporting the notion that comprehensive approaches during the golden age yield substantial benefits. Rahman (2002) emphasized that the basic concepts of early childhood education must be grounded in an understanding of this critical developmental period.

Language development, as highlighted by Isna (2019) and Vygotsky (1978), demonstrates the interplay between nature and nurture. While biological readiness provides the foundation for language acquisition, environmental stimulation determines the trajectory and quality of language development. Parents and educators must provide rich linguistic environments through conversation, reading, and storytelling. The nativist perspective, while acknowledging biological predispositions, does not diminish the importance of environmental input; rather, it emphasizes that language development requires both innate capacity and appropriate stimulation (Bodrova & Leong, 2024). Vygotsky's framework emphasizes that psychological processes are socially mediated by language, and children acquire language through active participation in daily conversations with adults. Parent-child linguistic interactions during toddlerhood have been shown to promote children's language development at preschool age, highlighting the importance of early conversational engagement.

Cognitive development, examined through Piaget's theoretical lens, reveals that children in the preoperational stage (approximately 2-7 years) think differently from adults. Their thinking remains egocentric and influenced by perceptual appearances rather than logical reasoning (Aisyah & Sembiring, 2024; Mauluddia & Solehuddin, 2023). Educational practices must accommodate these cognitive limitations by providing concrete, hands-on learning experiences rather than abstract instruction. Play-based learning emerges as particularly effective, as it allows children to explore, experiment, and construct understanding through active engagement (Mauluddia & Solehuddin, 2023). Research on executive functioning demonstrates that early childhood executive function predicts concurrent and later social, health, and behavioral outcomes, with affective conceptualizations of executive function predicting increases in social competence and decreases in aggression (Memba & Ostrov, 2025). The transition from preschool to kindergarten represents a critical period during which executive functioning skills develop and influence both academic and social outcomes.

The development of religious and moral values presents unique challenges and opportunities in early childhood education. Children learn morality through observation and

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imitation rather than through verbal instruction alone (Salsabila, 2021; Sjech et al., 2024). This finding has significant implications for character education: educators and parents must model the values they wish to instill. The emphasis on concrete experience over abstract teaching aligns with Piaget's cognitive development theory, suggesting that moral development, like cognitive development, progresses through stages tied to cognitive maturation. Zhao et al. (2025) examined whether young children's moral judgments of honesty and dishonesty predict actual cheating behavior, providing insights into the knowledge-behavior link in early childhood. Their findings indicate that moral judgment develops alongside cognitive maturation and that early moral education should focus on concrete behavioral examples rather than abstract principles.

Socio-emotional development, as analyzed by Sukatin et al. (2020), Shalihah (2025), and Raikes et al. (2024), plays a foundational role in overall well-being and academic success. Children with well-developed socio-emotional competencies demonstrate better school readiness, stronger peer relationships, and greater resilience to stress. The quality of attachment to primary caregivers emerges as a crucial factor, with secure attachment predicting positive socio-emotional outcomes (Ye et al., 2024). Conversely, insecure attachment or adverse childhood experiences can have lasting negative effects on emotional regulation and social competence (Waters & Waters, 2024). These findings underscore the importance of responsive, sensitive caregiving and the creation of supportive emotional environments. Denham & Ferrier (2024) found that early childhood educators' emotional socialization practices contribute crucially to young children's social-emotional competence, with effects moderated by socioeconomic risk.

The ecological theory proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) provides a valuable framework for understanding the multiple environmental influences on child development. Development does not occur in isolation but is shaped by interactions across multiple systems. The microsystem, including family and school, exerts the most direct influence, but the mesosystem (interactions between microsystems), exosystem (indirect influences), and macrosystem (cultural values) also play significant roles (Ye et al., 2024). This ecological perspective suggests that interventions targeting only one system may have limited effectiveness; comprehensive approaches addressing multiple environmental levels are necessary. Studies applying Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory have identified how interactions and relationships among ecosystem components affect children's development, highlighting the need for multi-level interventions that consider the complex systems within which children develop (Raikes et al., 2024). Khairati et al. (2024) elaborated on the concept of family education according to Ki Hajar Dewantara, emphasizing the foundational role of family in shaping children's character and development within the broader cultural context.

The convergence theory proposed by William Stern integrates nature and nurture perspectives, acknowledging that both genetic inheritance and environmental factors contribute to development (Arifin, 2020). This theoretical integration resolves the nature-nurture debate by recognizing that development results from the interaction between innate potential and environmental experience. The practical implication is that early detection and intervention must consider both biological risk factors (such as genetic conditions or perinatal complications) and environmental risk factors (such as poverty, parental mental health, or inadequate stimulation). Preiß et al. (2025) found that maternal personality traits, particularly agreeableness, are associated with better cognitive outcomes in toddlers, while maternal depression is linked to increased controlling behavior, emphasizing the intricate relation between maternal characteristics and child development. Han and Yan (2025) demonstrated that parenting styles play a pivotal role in early childhood development through network analysis, revealing age-specific patterns in the connections between parenting practices and developmental outcomes.

Early detection emerges as a critical strategy for optimizing developmental outcomes. By identifying deviations from typical developmental trajectories, early detection enables timely intervention, potentially preventing more serious difficulties (Taywade et al., 2024; Fitriahadi & Widyantara, 2026). The developmental milestones presented in Table 2 provide a practical framework for monitoring progress across domains. However, early detection must be implemented sensitively, avoiding labeling or stigmatization while ensuring that children receive appropriate support. Hatakenaka et al. (2025) demonstrated the potential of using developmental records for early neurodevelopmental disorder detection through Bayesian network analysis, identifying key predictive factors including meconium-stained amniotic fluid, Apgar scores, and early developmental milestones. This approach emphasizes early monitoring and intervention for at-risk children and could guide future infant mental health initiatives in community settings. The role of primary care physicians in identifying developmental impairments early is essential, and community-based screening programs can help detect at-risk children and plan early intervention (Taywade et al., 2024).

The role of family in early childhood development cannot be overstated. As the first and most enduring environment, family shapes children's values, behaviors, and expectations (Arsini et al., 2023; Fatimah & Martoyo, 2025). Parents serve as primary educators, role models, and sources of emotional security. The quality of parent-child interaction, parenting styles, and family functioning significantly influence developmental outcomes (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020). Families facing socioeconomic disadvantage may require additional support to provide optimal developmental environments. Li et al. (2025) demonstrated that early-life caregiving flexibility, particularly in mother-child interactions during toddlerhood, predicts adolescent behavioral adjustment, highlighting the enduring influence of early family environments on long-term psychological outcomes. Community and policy interventions that strengthen families can have cascading positive effects on child development. Han & Yan (2025) showed that parenting styles play a pivotal role in formulating effective family policies to support early childhood development, with enduring intergenerational implications for children's outcomes.

Educational institutions, particularly early childhood education programs, complement family influences by providing structured learning opportunities and social experiences (Gea et al., 2025). Quality early childhood education programs have been shown to improve cognitive, language, and socio-emotional outcomes, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Raikes et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of these programs depends on teacher quality, curriculum design, and the extent to which they engage families. The integration of early detection strategies into educational settings can enhance the identification of children needing additional support. Raikes et al. (2024) found that quality early childhood care and education is important for young children's holistic healthy development, and as early childhood care and education scales up, maintaining quality becomes increasingly important. Profiles of quality in early childhood programs using standardized instruments reveal significant variations that impact child outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of early childhood development to environmental disruptions. Remote learning and social distancing measures limited children's access to educational and social experiences, potentially affecting developmental trajectories (Setiyawati et al., 2021). Research documented challenges in achieving developmental milestones during online learning, emphasizing the importance of in-person interaction and hands-on experiences. These findings underscore the need for resilient educational systems that can maintain developmental support during crises. Studies examining parent-child relationships during the pandemic found that maternal nurturance indirectly predicted higher early child development through increased parent-child

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closeness, explaining a significant proportion of the total effects. This highlights the protective role of strong parent-child relationships during periods of environmental stress.

Cultural context shapes expectations and practices related to child development. In Indonesia, cultural values emphasizing respect, cooperation, and religious observance influence parenting and educational approaches (Rahman, 2002; Sjech et al., 2024). Early childhood programs must be culturally responsive, incorporating local values while also promoting universal developmental goals. The integration of religious and moral education into early childhood programs reflects cultural priorities while also supporting holistic development (Rokhayati & Nafilah, 2021). Research on holistic-integrative early childhood education in Indonesia demonstrates that such approaches significantly impact social-emotional, physical, and cognitive development across multiple regions, supporting the effectiveness of culturally responsive educational models (Gea et al., 2025).

The integration of developmental domains represents a key principle of effective early childhood practice. Development in one domain influences and is influenced by development in others (Nasution et al., 2024). For example, language development supports cognitive development by enabling symbolic thought and social interaction. Socio-emotional development facilitates learning by enabling positive relationships with teachers and peers. Holistic approaches that address multiple domains simultaneously are more effective than fragmented interventions targeting single domains (Gea et al., 2025). The network analysis perspective on parenting styles and preschool children's development reveals that motivation (parenting) and emotion (development) serve as the strongest bridge nodes connecting parenting practices to developmental outcomes, with age-specific patterns showing that motivation-art connections dominate at age three, acceptance-art at age four, and respect-language at age five (Han & Yan, 2025). This nuanced understanding of age-specific linkages underscores the importance of tailored parenting strategies.

The practical application of early detection requires accessible, user-friendly tools and training for parents and educators. Developmental screening instruments, such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire, provide structured methods for monitoring development (Taywade et al., 2024). However, these tools must be adapted to local contexts and accompanied by guidance on interpretation and follow-up actions. Training programs for parents and educators can enhance their capacity to observe development, identify concerns, and implement appropriate interventions (Hatakenaka et al., 2025). Research on developmental screening tools demonstrates that various instruments are available for detecting developmental delay in children, and early identification and intervention are crucial because better outcomes are achieved when intervention is performed on time (Taywade et al., 2024).

Policy implications of this research include the need for investment in early childhood education, family support programs, and early detection systems. Indonesia's commitment to universal access to early childhood education represents a positive step, but quality and equity remain challenges (Gea et al., 2025). Policies should address socioeconomic disparities that limit access to quality early childhood services. Furthermore, integration of early detection into primary healthcare and educational systems can ensure that all children receive appropriate monitoring and support (Taywade et al., 2024). The role of primary care physicians in identifying developmental impairments early is essential, and community-based screening programs can help detect at-risk children and plan early intervention (Taywade et al., 2024).

The role of technology in early detection and intervention presents both opportunities and challenges. Digital screening tools and mobile applications can facilitate monitoring and provide resources for parents (Hatakenaka et al., 2025). However, technology must be used judiciously, complementing rather than replacing human interaction. The digital divide

may exacerbate existing disparities, as families with limited access to technology may be left behind. Research on game-based learning in early childhood demonstrates that technology-enhanced approaches can promote cognitive development by encouraging active engagement, fostering curiosity, and improving problem-solving and information retention.

Future research should focus on developing and evaluating culturally adapted early detection tools and intervention programs. Longitudinal studies tracking developmental trajectories and intervention outcomes would provide valuable evidence for policy and practice (Li et al., 2025; Memba & Ostrov, 2025). Research on the effectiveness of different intervention models, including home visiting, center-based programs, and technology-mediated approaches, would inform resource allocation. Additionally, studies examining the mechanisms through which early experiences influence later outcomes would enhance theoretical understanding and guide intervention design (Preiß et al., 2025; Ye et al., 2024). The neurodevelopmental framework emphasizes that early detection and intervention are vital as neurodevelopmental disorders often follow a long prodromal phase of neurodevelopmental disturbances, and child and adolescent mental health services should lead developmentally-sensitive models for timely, effective detection and intervention (Hatakenaka et al., 2025).

4. Conclusion

This comprehensive literature review confirms that early childhood psychological development represents a critical period requiring attentive, informed, and holistic approaches from parents, educators, and policymakers. The findings establish that psychological development encompasses multiple interconnected domains—cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, moral, and motor—each requiring appropriate stimulation and support. The golden age concept underscores the unique vulnerability and opportunity of the 0-6 year period, during which foundational neural connections form and developmental trajectories are established. Early detection emerges as a vital strategy for identifying deviations from typical development and enabling timely intervention, potentially preventing more serious difficulties and optimizing developmental outcomes. The integration of developmental screening into primary healthcare and educational systems, combined with culturally appropriate tools and training for parents and educators, represents a practical pathway for improving early childhood outcomes.

The integration of theoretical frameworks—including Piaget's cognitive development theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, and Stern's convergence theory—provides a comprehensive understanding of the multiple influences on child development. Family environment, particularly parenting quality and parent-child interaction, represents the most significant influence, while educational institutions and community contexts also play important roles. The synergy between family, school, and community is essential for supporting optimal psychological growth. This research contributes to the literature by synthesizing theoretical knowledge with practical implications for early detection and intervention. Future efforts should focus on developing accessible, culturally appropriate screening tools, training parents and educators in early detection strategies, and implementing policies that ensure all children receive the support they need during this critical developmental period. The evidence from recent longitudinal and meta-analytic studies underscores the enduring impact of early childhood experiences on lifelong outcomes, reinforcing the imperative for investment in early childhood development as a foundation for individual and societal well-being.

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