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Efforts to Increase Early Childhood Learning Motivation Through Structuring The Play Environment

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the process and results of learning through structuring the play environment that can increase learning motivation for children aged 5-6 years at Taman Kanak-Kanak B Miftahussalam, Bekasi. The research subjects consisted of 15 children, and this study used a qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of initial observations showed that children's learning motivation was still low, characterized by a lack of enthusiasm, active involvement, and curiosity during the learning process. Through the arrangement of a more interesting and interactive play environment, it is expected to create a pleasant learning atmosphere and encourage children to more actively participate in learning activities. This study uses the Kemmis and Taggart model of classroom action research design, which includes planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The results showed an increase in children's learning motivation after the arrangement of the play environment was carried out, with children becoming more excited, enthusiastic, and actively asking questions. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of structuring the play environment in the early childhood learning process, which can have a positive impact on their learning motivation. This research is expected to make a positive contribution to the development of more effective learning methods in early childhood education and become a reference for teachers and future researchers.

Keywords: *Learning Motivation, Play Environment Arrangement, Early Childhood*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a time when children spend their time playing. PAUD as a level of education before the basic education level introduces the world of learning while playing to children. Play is the main need for children. By playing, children can be creative and active so that children's development continues. When playing indirectly, children experience the learning process. Learning in early childhood is intended to develop children's potential through stimulation and stimulation that is meaningful for their growth and development, all of which can be realized in the concept of learning while

playing. Children will enjoy learning activities while playing if it is interesting and fun for them. If children do things that they are interested in, they will be happy, and the results will be better because they are done wholeheartedly. It is important to know that children learn best when they are interested in what they are learning and when they have some personal choice and control over what they learn and how they learn (Yuliantina, 2023).

Children who have high interest and motivation to learn will generally have high achievement, but on the contrary, if children have low motivation to learn, they will also have low learning achievement. Children will be able to linger and carry out learning activities continuously, and meaningful concentration occurs if they are presented with fun activities. Good motivation in learning can develop students' activity, initiative, and perseverance in learning. Learner motivation is one of the important factors in achieving learning success. With high motivation it is expected to support high learning outcomes for students and obtain maximum learning outcomes. Motivation must exist in children so that learning can run optimally. Therefore, learning motivation has an important role in the success of learning (Fadhilah, Tuti Indriyani, Zukhirina, 2020) in Azizah. From this explanation, it can be seen how important learning motivation is for the continuity of learning.

The problem that currently occurs in relation to child development in the world of education is about the low motivation to learn in early childhood. Motivation of learning for children at an age feels increasingly less attention from some PAUD organizers today. PAUD unit organizers seem to only compete to attract children's desire to attend school at their educational institutions, but the institution does not observe less thought and whether the school has become an attractive learning center for children so that it can foster a spirit of learning not only when attending school at the institution but also has a strong learning motivation to pursue education at the next level.

In the learning process, children should understand what they are learning and what they are getting. Likewise, teachers and early childhood education organizers are not only tasked with providing knowledge and fulfilling children's obligations to study. Learning must be meaningful for children. With an interesting environment for children, it is hoped that children will be eager to explore their potential, continue to look for new things, and thirst for knowledge.In the world of education and science, curiosity, love of knowledge, enthusiasm, and high motivation are the main driving factors in the progress of education. Early childhood education is the initial education that absolutely must be considered and followed up seriously because the education provided from an early age is a milestone of further human life.

The growth of student learning motivation is certainly inseparable from the role of the teacher in encouraging children in learning activities. Teachers contribute to children's optimal development and learning. The teacher's role as a facilitator begins when the teacher organizes the play environment by providing various play options. Structuring the play environment is very important in early childhood learning. The arrangement of the play environment is the responsibility of the responsibility of the third teacher, who is responsible for achieving learning goals.

A child can be said to have high motivation in learning if the child is diligent in facing tasks, resilient in facing difficulties, does not need external encouragement to achieve, has high enthusiasm for learning (happy, diligent learning), and likes new knowledge. Therefore, learning motivation has a big influence on learning because if the child is not interested in the learning provided, the knowledge provided will not be absorbed properly.Learning activities in early childhood should emphasize a fun learning process. Teachers and educators play a very important role in how children have strong motivation in learning by paying attention and developing student needs. Therefore, according to Piaget, teachers must appropriately adapt complex teaching materials to the child's developmental stage.

Structuring the PAUD environment is an activity of organizing the play environment with tools and materials that can help children learn from their environment so that they gain the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their learning goals. A good play environment will provide opportunities for children to interact (Yuliantina, 2023). Yuliantina further states that a good play environment includes a diverse, safe play area and tools and materials that are appropriate for early childhood. Early childhood learning environments should provide children's learning facilities that make children free to move, create, and explore, including doing various manipulations so that children get some behavior from their activities.

METHOD

The research method used is classroom action research, which is included in applied or action research (action research), namely research that is practical and can be directly used. Because the action or research activity is carried out in the classroom (classroom), it is called Classroom Action Research (PTK) or in English Classroom Action Research (CAR) (Machali, 2022), which in principle is intended to develop skills or to solve a problem in the classroom (Mirnawati, 2012). This is emphasized by McNiff that the main basis of this method is to improve and increase the professional services of educators in handling the teaching and learning process by taking various alternative actions in solving learning problems (Arikunto et al., 2006). In this case, the researcher or teacher does something whose direction and purpose are clear, namely for the benefit of students in obtaining satisfactory learning outcomes.

The design of the action intervention design or research cycle uses the Kemmis and Taggart model. The research procedure of the Kemmis and Taggart model consists of four components, namely: (a) planning, (b) acting, (c) observing, and (d) reflecting. The cycle is carried out continuously until the problem is resolved.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study uses the Kemmis and Taggart research design, with a design that includes planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. Before planning the activity program, initial observations were made. Initial observations were made with the aim of knowing the learning motivation of children. The results of these observations are used to

compare the scores at the end of the action to see whether the actions taken have shown an increase or not.In the planning process, an activity is designed by preparing or organizing the play environment. Teachers organize and plan various areas for children to play. The arrangement of the environment is done as interestingly as possible to invite and attract children to explore.

Action is carried out based on the learning scenario designed at the initial stage. While the implementation of the action is taking place, the researcher makes detailed observations of children during play activities. Researchers record problems and reactions that arise during the activity. Furthermore, the results of observations are evaluated in the form of reflection.The reflection stage was carried out to see the failures or successes that occurred during the action. The successes and failures were then discussed with the teacher. Furthermore, researchers and teachers design for further improvement. If the results of the reflection action in the first cycle have not provided the expected results, then the design will be redesigned in the second and third cycles.

Cycle 1

The following planning was carried out before starting the action in Cycle 1: 1) The planning unit is arranged based on objectives, activities, media, and collecting tools consisting of 8x meetings of approximately 45 minutes based on agreement with collaborators; 2) Prepare a variety of tools and materials or media needed for the play environment; 3) Prepare data collection tools in the form of field notes, interview notes, and documentation to see the results of each action; 4) Determine the indicators of success used to determine the motivation to increase learning in children.

On the first day of research, the activity begins with getting to know fruits. Children are invited to observe and mention the names, characteristics, and benefits of vegetables that have been prepared by researchers. After observing vegetables, children complete the play activities with their worksheets (LKPD). At the end of the activity, children are invited to make fruit satay using various fruits. Before making fruit skewers, students were invited to discuss how to cut the fruit and how to put the fruit on skewers. The researcher showed Fruit Satay as an example that had previously been made by the researcher. It was observed that children were interested in seeing various fruits and the tools and materials that had been prepared.

Figure 1. Activity in Cycle 1

In this first session, observations showed that some children began to show interest in the activities provided. Their enthusiasm was seen as they tried to complete the play tasks. However, not all children showed the same reaction. Some children still seemed unfocused and engaged in chatting with their friends or were busy with their own activities.

Reflection from this session suggests that the researcher needs to find a more engaging and interactive approach to attract the attention of children who are still less motivated. Perhaps with variations in activities or more fun methods, the children's attention could be better focused. In addition, it is important to create a conducive and more structured environment so that children can more easily follow directions and orders from researchers. This is important to improve the effectiveness of the activities in the following sessions.

Cycle 2

In this second cycle, the researcher determined a different topic from the first cycle. The topic in the second cycle was recognizing the village office. There are four kinds of play that have been provided which contain three types of play, namely sensory, development and role play, including making ID cards, making village stalls, making mailboxes and making village office buildings. The tools and materials provided are: cardboard boxes, ribbons, scissors, newsprint, blocks, used beverage bottles, cardboard paper, illustrated paper and glue.

Next, the researcher directs the children to the activities chosen by the children. A total of four children chose activities to make ID cards, three children made mailboxes, three children had activities to make village waring and four children chose to make village office buildings. When playing the role of a merchant in a village shop, children look excited, communicate fluently as if they are selling their merchandise, even some children are no longer shy and confident.

Figure 2. Activity in Cycle 2

In the process of activities in this second cycle, it was observed that children were more serious about doing their work, asking researchers/teachers about their difficulties, doing their work happily and children did their tasks thoroughly. It did not feel like the time provided had run out and the children had to end the activity immediately. However, it was observed that children were still at home with their activities. At the end of the activity the researcher/teacher asked the child what activity he liked, the child enthusiastically pointed “it” towards the activity he liked. Even so, on that day there were still two children who had not chosen the play activities that had been provided but the children were still playing APE (educational game tools) in the classroom.

Overall, this second cycle gave more positive results than the first cycle. The selection of interesting and relevant topics and variations in activities were able to increase children's engagement and enthusiasm. However, special attention was still needed to ensure all children were actively involved in each activity session. After reflecting on phase II, the average achievement of children's learning motivation has not reached the target of 68.75%, therefore the researcher made the decision to continue with cycle 3..

Cycle 3

Entering the third cycle, the teacher or researcher has organized the children's play environment with four different play varieties from cycle two. The topic in the third cycle was “Buildings in the City." The varieties of play that have been prepared by the researcher are: making mall buildings, making stations, making airports, and making terminals. It was observed that when the children entered the classroom in the morning, they were presented with a different scene from the previous days. Children observe the tools and materials that have been displayed on the floor, including used cardboard boxes, rocks, and ice cream sticks. Wooden twigs, glue, scissors, cardboard, and markers. Researchers have also attached pictures of various buildings in the city on the blackboard as initial inspiration.

When seeing the variety of toys, children are already curious and start asking the teacher what they will play today. Children begin to impatiently wait for the bell to enter

and want to immediately see what the teacher or researcher will convey. Furthermore, the teacher begins the learning activities on that day with the habituation of lining up, the habituation of prayer, followed by taking attendance of children one by one. All 16 children were present in this third cycle.

The children started the activity by looking at the building pictures that had been provided, then they discussed what each child had to make ornaments to make it a complete building. At the terminal building group table, children made several pictures of people and cut them out; some made pictures of toy cars and cut them out; some made terminal buildings and made the word "terminal." The finished pictures of people and cars were then arranged to resemble the atmosphere of the terminal.

The researcher also observed the activities carried out in other groups; they were also working on the same process. At that time, the children no longer thought about when it was time to rest or play outside APE. The children were focused on doing their tasks and thinking about what other tools and materials they would need to make the buildings they made look good. If they are not confident, children will ask the teacher what other materials are needed. The teacher provides support, reinforcement, and expansion of ideas that children need.

Figure 3. Cycle 3 Activity

The teacher or researcher observed the condition of the class at that time, which was very conducive; the children were serious about each activity; the children looked happy and not forced when doing the activities until the time had run out. The activities that day went as expected by the researcher. Children are no longer in a hurry to go home; there are even children who want to continue their activities when the teacher reminds them that time is up.From the three research cycles, researchers observed and obtained the results that by arranging the play environment, it turned out to bring changes in children's behavior, including children becoming excited, enthusiastic, happy, more focused, and wanting to know many things by asking many questions.

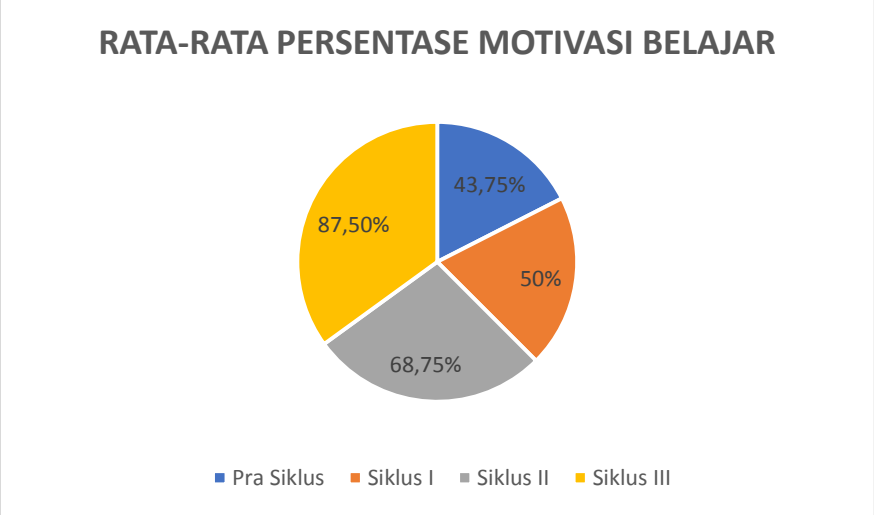

Figure 4. Learning Motivation Results

Based on the data on the results of student interest in learning that has been carried out in cycles I, II, and III, there has been an increase, namely in the pre-cycle the average learning interest results of 43.75%, in cycle one average learning interest of 50%, in cycle two average learning interest of 68.75%, and in cycle three average learning interest of 87.50%.

This research shows that by arranging the right play environment, there is an increase in learning motivation in early childhood. Through improving the learning environment, children become more interested and active in learning activities. However, repeated cycles with in-depth reflection are needed to continuously improve and adjust learning strategies for optimal results.The results of this study show that the arrangement of the play environment has a significant impact on increasing children's motivation to learn in kindergarten B Miftahussalam Bekasi. The research process using the Kemmis and Taggart model, with the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection, provides a clear picture of the effectiveness of the strategy of structuring the play environment on children's learning motivation.

The planning stage plays an important role in determining the success of the action. Researchers designed an interesting and interactive play environment, taking into account the developmental needs of young children. This arrangement does not only focus on aesthetics but also on functionality that can facilitate children's exploration, creativity, and active involvement in the learning process. The results of good planning can be seen in children's increased interest in the learning activities provided.

In the action phase, the researcher engaged the children in activities that were directly related to the organized play environment. The activities, such as making fruit satay, attracted the children's attention and increased their participation. This activity emphasizes an active and participatory learning approach, where children are invited to interact directly with play materials, thus increasing their engagement. This finding is in line with early childhood learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of direct

experience in learning.

The observation stage during the implementation of the action showed that children were more enthusiastic and excited when the play environment was well organized. Children who previously appeared passive and less focused began to show more active involvement. They were more eager and interested in completing their tasks when given the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment. Although there were some children who still showed indifference, overall, most children showed an improvement in their learning motivation.

The reflection stage provides an opportunity for researchers and teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions taken. Analysis of the observations showed that although there was an increase in learning motivation, some aspects of the structuring of the play environment still needed to be adjusted to achieve more optimal results. This reflection also shows the importance of flexibility in the learning process, where strategies can be continuously refined based on children's responses and the results achieved.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to increase the learning motivation of 5-6 year old children at Taman Kanak-Kanak B Miftahussalam, Bekasi, through better structuring of the play environment. The results show that an interesting and interactive play environment can significantly increase children's learning motivation. Children became more excited, enthusiastic, and active in participating in learning activities after the play environment was well organized. The research design used is the Kemmis and Taggart model, which includes planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. Through initial observations, researchers found that children did not show high enthusiasm and involvement in the learning process. However, after the environmental arrangement, there was a clear improvement in their learning motivation according to the results obtained in the third cycle.

Overall, this research shows that structuring an engaging and relevant play environment can significantly increase children's motivation to learn. Each cycle provided valuable feedback for improvement in the next cycle, and the final results showed a consistent increase in children's interest in learning at Miftahussalam Kindergarten. Thus, a well-designed environment is a key factor in supporting early childhood learning.

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