

Teachers' Efforts in Training Early Childhood Independence at Aisyiyah Kejajar Kindergarten

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Abstract

This study aims to describe teachers' efforts in training early childhood independence in Aisyiyah Kejajar Kindergarten, as well as analyze supporting and inhibiting factors in its implementation. The research uses a qualitative approach with the type of field research. Data collection techniques are carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study showed that teachers applied various strategies such as habituation, example, responsibility, educational games, and motivation. Supporting factors include a conducive school environment, parental support, and the availability of independence-based learning programs. Inhibiting factors include differences in children's character, lack of consistency in parenting at home, and limited infrastructure.

Keywords: Early childhood independence; Teachers' efforts; Habituation; Exemplary; Educational games; Supporting factors; Inhibitory factors; Parenting; Early Childhood Education; Qualitative approach.

Introduction Section

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is the main foundation in the entire educational process that determines the direction of children's development at the next stage. In this phase, children are in a sensitive period or *golden age*, which is an age range when all aspects of development—cognitive, social-emotional, language, moral, motor, and spiritual—experience a very rapid acceleration and are plastic, so that whatever is provided by the environment will be firmly attached to the formation of children's character and competence (Chairilsyah, 2029). In this critical period of growth, the quality of learning interactions, pedagogical strategies, and the environment provided by PAUD institutions have direct implications for children's ability to adjust, understand the surrounding world, and develop various basic skills needed for their future life success. Therefore, PAUD is not just a stage of education preparation for the next level, but is a fundamental arena that prepares the foundation of children's character, independence, and adaptive abilities as a whole.

One of the aspects of development that plays an important role is independence. Independence in early childhood is understood not only as the ability to carry out daily activities without assistance, but also includes the ability to self-regulate, simple decision-making, initiative, a sense of responsibility, and confidence in one's own abilities (Sukatin, 2020). This ability is an important indicator of school *readiness* and children's social-emotional readiness, because independent children will be better able to adapt to the environment, complete learning tasks, and face developmental challenges more confidently. Thus, the development of independence must be the main focus in the PAUD curriculum, not only as a supporting activity but as a core competency that must be stimulated through a systematic learning process.

However, empirical reality shows that early childhood independence has not been optimally developed. Based on initial observations at Aisyiyah Kejajar Kindergarten, various phenomena of lack of independence were found, such as children who are not able to put on and take off their own shoes, dependence on teachers in eating and opening supplies, reluctance to clean up toys after play, lack of initiative in completing simple tasks, and showing hesitation or lack of confidence when asked to try new activities (Haisyah, 2023). This condition shows that there is a gap between the ideals of independent development and habituation practices that occur in the school and family environment. These obstacles can be influenced by parental parenting that is too protective, the lack of opportunities for children to practice independently, family culture that does not stimulate independence, and the lack of effective habituation strategies applied in schools.

In the context of formal education, teachers have a strategic role and are the main actors who determine the direction of the formation of early childhood independence. Teachers play the role of facilitators who provide opportunities for children to try, as a model who provides examples of independent behavior, as a mentor who provides direction according to developmental stages, and as a motivator who provides positive reinforcement to build children's confidence. Various studies show that habituation strategies that are carried out consistently, giving simple responsibilities, exemplary methods, giving opportunities to choose, and the use of educational games are effective pedagogical approaches in stimulating children's independence (Ningtyas, 2022). In addition, structured and free play activities, especially motor games and role plays, are believed to help children learn to control themselves, make decisions, and solve problems independently so that their independence develops more optimally.

Not only teachers, but the family environment and school also have a big contribution. Democratic parenting, consistency of rules at home, availability of adequate infrastructure, and a well-organized classroom environment are important factors that support the development of children's independence. On the contrary, overly indulgent parenting, excessive family culture serving children, and lack of communication between teachers and parents can be significant obstacles to the formation of independent behavior (Nafis, 2023). Therefore, the development of early childhood independence requires synergy between schools, families, and the social environment so that the independent habits applied can run continuously and meaningfully for children.

To understand this phenomenon in depth, the literature review in this study explains the concept of early childhood independence, the role of teachers in the formation of independence, habituation strategies that have been proven effective, and supporting and inhibiting factors based on theories and previous research results. This theoretical study provides a strong conceptual foundation so that the research can be comprehensively analyzed and compared with the findings of previous research. In addition, the literature review shows the position of this research in its contribution to the literature on the development of early childhood independence, especially in the context of the implementation of habituation in rural PAUD institutions such as Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten which has certain socio-cultural characteristics.

Based on this description, this study aims to describe in depth the efforts of teachers in training early childhood independence in Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten and identify supporting and inhibiting factors that affect the success of the formation of independence. It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to the development of early childhood learning practices, enrich the literature on strategies for the formation of independence, and become a basis for educational institutions in formulating habituation programs that are more structured, effective, and sustainable.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive design, because the purpose of the research is to understand in depth the processes and strategies carried out by teachers in training early childhood independence in a natural context. This approach was chosen so that researchers can comprehensively describe phenomena as they are, without manipulating variables, and allow researchers to capture the dynamics of learning and habituation that occur every day at Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten.

The research was carried out at Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten, Wonosobo Regency, which was chosen purposively because it has characteristics in accordance with the focus of the research, namely an institution that implements various forms of self-reliance habituation in children aged 4-6 years. The research subjects are classroom teachers who manage learning and interact directly with children, while the principal becomes a supporting informant to provide information about school policies and programs that support children's independence. Early childhood is also a source of observational data through observation of their behavior during learning activities and daily routines.

Data collection was carried out through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation is carried out directly by observing the activities of children and teachers in learning situations, including activities such as tidying up bags, opening provisions, using motor play facilities, and other daily activities that require independence. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and principals to get an overview of the views, experiences, strategies, and obstacles faced during the process of getting used to independence. Documentation was obtained from photos of activities, school archives, learning programs, and relevant records to strengthen field findings. These three techniques are used simultaneously to ensure that the data obtained is richer and more in-depth.

The data analysis in this study was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. All data collected is reduced to select information relevant to the focus of the research, then presented in the form of a narrative description so that the researcher can identify patterns that appear during the habituation process. Conclusions are obtained through a continuous verification process of field data so that the research results remain accurate, consistent, and accountable.

The validity of the data is maintained through technical triangulation and source triangulation by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation, and matching them with information from teachers and principals. In addition, the researcher confirmed the findings to the informant to ensure that the interpretation of the data was in accordance with the actual conditions. The entire research process is carried out by paying attention to research ethics, including obtaining

permission from the institution, maintaining the comfort of children during observation, and protecting the confidentiality of the informant's identity(Ray1*, 2024)

Results And Discussion

The results of the study show that the learning process at Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten takes place in a warm and conducive atmosphere, where teachers play an active role in guiding children to develop their independence. Every morning the teacher starts the activity by welcoming the child, doing a prayer together, and accompanying the child to arrange personal belongings such as bags, shoes, and drinking bottles. In the early stages of the study, it was seen that some children still had difficulty putting bags in the locker or putting things in the right place, so teachers needed to give direct directions. But as time goes by, children begin to understand the flow of activities and can do it themselves after being given several examples by the teacher.

Teachers' efforts in training children's independence are carried out through various methods that are continuous and gradual. Teachers provide simple instructions as well as real examples so that children are able to imitate the expected activities. For example, when wearing shoes, the teacher first demonstrates how to open the shoe adhesive, insert the foot, and close it again. The child pays attention to the steps and then tries to do it himself. At first, some children looked confused and asked for help, but after the teacher gave them the opportunity to try independently, the child began to be able and looked more confident.(Atalia et al., 2021)

In addition to through example, teachers provide stimuli that foster children's courage to try. Teachers use encouraging phrases, such as "try it first, you can do it," so that children feel supported to complete tasks without relying too much on the teacher's help. From the observation results, the provision of stimulation has consistently been proven to improve children's ability to complete simple activities, such as tidying up toys after playing, opening provisions, or closing their own lunch boxes.

The teacher also gave a slow understanding of the importance of being an independent child. The teacher explained that doing activities independently is one way to show that children have grown up and great. Explanations like this are well received by children because they are delivered in simple and easy-to-understand language. Children who previously refused to clean up toys began to take the initiative to do it themselves after the teacher said that the activity was part of the responsibility of an adult child.(Meilyana, 2023)

The learning process at Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten is also supported by the use of media and play activities designed to strengthen children's motor skills and courage. Games such as climbing nets, simple flying foxes, walkway bridges, and moving objects are used by teachers to train children's physical strength, balance, and body coordination. When the net climbing activity took place, some children seemed hesitant to start. However, after seeing other friends trying, they finally dare to do it themselves. Children learn to go up and down without being carried or pushed by the teacher, and this is proof that physical play can be an effective means of practicing independence.

During the learning process, teachers always provide motivation and positive reinforcement so that children are more confident in their abilities. Every time the child succeeds in doing his own task, the teacher gives a sincere compliment, smile, or applaud the award. The praise given not only makes the child feel proud, but also inspires the spirit to try the next task. When children open their own provisions or clean up toys without being asked, the teacher gives a speech of appreciation that makes the child look more confident.(Hasanah, 2020)

In this study, various factors were also found that affect the success of the formation of children's independence. A well-organized classroom environment makes it easy for children to reach the necessary items, such as lockers, toy racks, and dining tables, so that children can do so without relying on teachers. Experienced and patient teachers are also very influential in creating a comfortable and supportive learning atmosphere. However, there are some obstacles such as the character of children who are still shy, reluctant to try new things, or are very dependent on parents. Parenting that lacks self-reliance training at home is also one of the factors that hinders the process of self-reliance at school. Children who are used to being served at home take longer to adapt to the demands of independent learning at school.(Putri & Lestari, 2021)

Overall, the results of the study showed a significant increase in children's independence skills after going through the habituation process carried out by teachers. Children who at first always ask for help to open the provisions can now do it themselves. Children who are reluctant to clean up toys begin to get used to doing it without being commanded. Even in the motor and courage aspects, children increasingly show the ability to complete physical challenges such as climbing and climbing bridges without assistance. This proves that teachers' efforts through habituation, example, motivation, and emotional support have a positive impact on the development of early childhood independence.



Figure 1. Children have begun to be independent during the parade to enliven the 113th anniversary of Muhammadiyah



Figure 2, Children are independent when Teaching and Learning activities are in class.



Figure 3. Independent children during Outing Class activities to the Wonosobo Fire Department office

Conclusion

Based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten, it can be concluded that teachers' efforts in training early childhood independence run effectively through a series of activities that are carried out consistently every day. Teachers train children's independence through habituation, example, providing opportunities, and continuous motivation given in real situations during the learning process.

Children who were initially still very dependent on teachers, such as not being able to wear their own shoes, not daring to open provisions, and being reluctant to clean up toys, gradually showed an improvement in their ability after following the habituation carried out by the teacher. Habits such as tidying up bags, washing hands, opening and closing supplies, and cleaning up game tools are carried out repeatedly by teachers accompanied by direct examples so that children can imitate and try on their own. The praise and motivation given by teachers has also been proven to increase children's courage and confidence to complete tasks independently.

The use of educational games that involve physical activities such as climbing nets, bridges, and role plays also helps children develop motor skills while training courage and initiative. Children who were initially afraid or hesitant to play the game, were finally able to complete the activity without help after being given examples, reinforcement, and the opportunity to try.

The increase in children's independence is evident, especially in the aspects of self-care ability, motor independence, and the ability to manage personal belongings. Most children who initially showed high dependence on teachers are now able to carry out basic activities independently. (Yuliani, 2018) However, the habituation process is inseparable from obstacles such as differences in children's character and lack of consistency in parenting at home. Children who are used to being served by their parents take longer to adjust to the habit of independence at school.

Overall, it can be concluded that teachers' efforts in training early childhood independence at Aisyiyah Keajar Kindergarten **successfully deliver concrete changes**, where the child shows significant development in carrying out independent activities. (Wulandari & Sari, 2022) This success is supported by teachers' patience, a conducive classroom environment, and habituation that is carried out regularly. By continuing to maintain consistency between habituation at school and support from parents at home, children's independence can develop more optimally.

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