

A NON-FORMAL LEARNING MODEL FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD AT CITRA BANGSA CHILD CARE CENTER (TPA) IN SAMARINDA

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the nonformal learning model for early childhood and to identify factors influencing the learning process at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center, Samarinda. This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The research subjects consisted of the head of the daycare center and educators. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings indicate that the nonformal learning model at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center is implemented through a play-based learning approach that is flexible and oriented toward children's developmental needs. The learning process involves planning, implementation, and evaluation stages tailored to early childhood characteristics. Supporting factors include adequate facilities, educator competence, and parental support. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors consist of a limited number of educators, occasional lack of children's focus, and insufficient supporting facilities. The study concludes that nonformal learning at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center has been effectively implemented and plays a significant role in supporting holistic early childhood development.

Keywords: nonformal learning, early childhood education, daycare center, Early Childhood Education

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan model pembelajaran nonformal pada anak usia dini serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi proses pembelajaran di Taman Penitipan Anak (TPA) Citra Bangsa Samarinda. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian deskriptif. Subjek penelitian meliputi kepala TPA dan pendidik, sedangkan teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan studi dokumentasi. Analisis data menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman yang meliputi reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta uji keabsahan data melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa model pembelajaran nonformal di TPA Citra Bangsa dilaksanakan melalui pendekatan bermain sambil belajar yang bersifat fleksibel dan berorientasi pada kebutuhan anak. Proses pembelajaran meliputi tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan, dan evaluasi yang disesuaikan dengan karakteristik perkembangan anak usia dini. Faktor pendukung pembelajaran meliputi ketersediaan sarana dan prasarana yang memadai, kompetensi pendidik, serta dukungan orang tua. Sementara itu, faktor penghambat meliputi keterbatasan jumlah pendidik, kurangnya fokus anak pada waktu tertentu, serta keterbatasan fasilitas pendukung tertentu. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran nonformal di TPA Citra Bangsa telah berjalan dengan baik dan berperan penting dalam mendukung perkembangan anak usia dini secara holistik.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran nonformal, anak usia dini, taman penitipan anak, PAUD

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) plays a crucial role in laying the foundation for children's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. The early years are often referred to as a "golden period," during which children experience rapid growth and development that significantly influences their future learning readiness and overall well-being (Likhar, et.al., 2022). Appropriate educational stimulation during this stage supports children in developing independence, social competence, and basic learning skills essential for later educational success. In Indonesia, early childhood education is delivered through three educational pathways: formal, nonformal, and informal education, as regulated by Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System. Nonformal education serves as an alternative, complement, and supplement to formal education, particularly for children who require flexible learning environments. One important form of nonformal early childhood education is the Daycare Center or *Taman Penitipan Anak* (TPA), which provides care, education, and developmental stimulation for children, especially those aged 0–4 years, whose parents are working (Maghfiroh, et.al., 2023).

Daycare centers are not merely facilities for child supervision but are expected to function as educational environments that support holistic child development. Through structured yet flexible learning activities such as play, storytelling, singing, and habituation of daily life skills, nonformal learning in daycare centers contributes to children's cognitive, social-emotional, moral, and motor development. Therefore, effective learning models are essential to ensure that educational objectives in daycare settings are achieved optimally. However, in practice, the implementation of nonformal learning in daycare centers often faces various challenges. These include limited educational resources, insufficient training for caregivers, lack of standardized learning models, and imbalance between the number of educators and children (Psychiatry, 2018). Such conditions may affect the quality of learning experiences provided to children. Consequently, it is important to examine how nonformal learning models are implemented in daycare centers and to identify factors that support or hinder the learning process.

TPA Citra Bangsa Samarinda is a nonformal early childhood education institution that applies a flexible learning approach aligned with children's developmental needs. Based on preliminary observations, the institution utilizes a play-based learning approach and adapts the national curriculum to suit the characteristics of nonformal education. With adequate facilities and a manageable number of children, TPA Citra Bangsa provides an appropriate context for examining the implementation of nonformal learning models in early childhood settings. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the nonformal learning model applied at TPA Citra Bangsa Samarinda, as well as identifying the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence the learning process. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in nonformal early childhood education and to provide practical insights for educators and daycare managers in improving the quality of learning services.

Nonformal Education

Nonformal education refers to organized and systematic educational activities conducted outside the formal school system to meet the learning needs of specific groups. According to the Indonesian National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, nonformal education functions as a substitute, complement, and supplement to formal education and supports lifelong learning. Nonformal education is characterized by flexibility in implementation, curriculum adaptation, and learning methods that are adjusted to participants' needs and contexts. In the

context of early childhood education, nonformal education provides alternative learning opportunities that emphasize experiential learning, play-based activities, and social interaction. This flexibility allows educators to respond to children's developmental stages, interests, and individual differences, making nonformal education particularly suitable for early childhood settings such as daycare centers (Etling, 1993).

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education focuses on children from birth to six years old, a period marked by rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Educational stimulation during this stage is essential for supporting holistic development and preparing children for subsequent levels of education. Early childhood education emphasizes learning through play, exploration, and interaction within a supportive and nurturing environment. Learning experiences for young children are designed to develop fundamental competencies, including motor skills, language abilities, social-emotional skills, moral values, and cognitive foundations. Therefore, educational practices in early childhood settings must align with children's developmental characteristics and prioritize meaningful, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate activities (Likhari, et.al. 2022).

Stages of Nonformal Learning Implementation

The implementation of nonformal learning consists of three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Planning involves identifying children's developmental needs, setting learning objectives, selecting appropriate methods and media, and organizing the learning environment. This stage is essential to ensure that learning activities are aligned with children's abilities and interests. The implementation stage focuses on interaction between educators and children through structured yet flexible activities, including opening activities, core learning activities, and closing or reflection sessions. Learning is conducted through play, storytelling, creative activities, and social interaction. Evaluation in nonformal early childhood education is primarily qualitative and focuses on observing children's development, behavior, and participation rather than academic achievement. Evaluation methods commonly include daily observations, anecdotal records, and documentation of children's work (Mahmud & Saad, 2022).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design. The qualitative approach was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of nonformal learning models in early childhood education and to explore the factors influencing the learning process within a natural setting. The research was conducted at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center (Taman Penitipan Anak Citra Bangsa) in Samarinda. The research subjects consisted of the head of the daycare center and educators who were directly involved in the planning and implementation of learning activities. These participants were selected purposively based on their roles and relevance to the research objectives. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out to examine daily learning activities, interactions between educators and children, and the learning environment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the head of the daycare center and educators to obtain detailed information regarding learning models, teaching strategies, and supporting and inhibiting factors. Documentation was used to support the data, including learning plans, activity schedules, and institutional records.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting, focusing, and simplifying relevant information from field data. Data were then organized and presented in narrative form to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn based on recurring patterns and relationships identified during the analysis process. To ensure data validity, triangulation of sources and techniques was applied. Information obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation was cross-checked to enhance credibility and reliability. Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive and accurate description of nonformal learning implementation in early childhood education settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of Nonformal Learning at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center

The results of this study indicate that the nonformal learning model implemented at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center is based on a play-based and child-centered approach. Learning activities are designed to accommodate the developmental needs of early childhood and emphasize flexibility in time, methods, and learning content. This approach allows educators to adapt learning experiences according to children's interests, emotional conditions, and developmental stages. The learning process is carried out through three main stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. In the planning stage, educators prepare daily learning activities by considering children's developmental aspects, available learning media, and learning objectives. Planning is not rigidly structured as in formal education but remains guided by developmental indicators appropriate for early childhood. During the implementation stage, learning activities are conducted through various interactive methods, such as playing, storytelling, singing, drawing, and daily habituation activities. Educators act as facilitators who guide children, provide motivation, and create a comfortable learning atmosphere. This finding aligns with early childhood education principles that emphasize learning through play as an effective strategy for developing cognitive, social-emotional, language, and motor skills. Evaluation of learning is carried out continuously through observation of children's behavior, participation, and developmental progress. The assessment process does not focus on academic achievement but rather on monitoring individual development and identifying children's needs. Evaluation results are used as feedback for improving learning activities and providing appropriate stimulation for each child.

Supporting Factors in the Learning Process

The study found several factors that support the effective implementation of nonformal learning at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center. One of the main supporting factors is the availability of adequate facilities and learning media that create a safe and stimulating environment for children. Learning spaces are organized to support play-based activities and children's exploration. Educator competence also plays a significant role in supporting the learning process. Educators demonstrate an understanding of early childhood characteristics and apply appropriate teaching strategies. In addition, parental support contributes positively to the learning process, particularly through communication and collaboration between educators and parents regarding children's development and daily activities. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of learning environments, educator professionalism, and family involvement in enhancing the quality of early childhood education.

Inhibiting Factors in the Learning Process

Despite the positive implementation of nonformal learning, this study also identified several inhibiting factors. One of the main challenges is the limited number of educators compared to the number of children, which can affect the intensity of individual guidance during learning activities. Additionally, children's fluctuating emotional conditions and attention spans sometimes hinder the smooth implementation of planned activities. Another inhibiting factor relates to the limited availability of certain supporting facilities and learning materials, which restricts variation in learning activities. These constraints require educators to be creative and adaptive in utilizing available resources. The presence of these inhibiting factors highlights the need for continuous improvement in resource management, educator support, and institutional planning to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of nonformal learning programs.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the non-formal learning model at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center has been implemented effectively and in accordance with the theoretical foundations of early childhood education. Play-based learning, flexible planning, and child development assessment are pedagogical strategies that support children's holistic development, including cognitive, social-emotional, language, and motor aspects. This approach is in line with Bodrova and Leong's view that play-based learning is a valid and essential approach in early childhood education because it provides children with opportunities to explore and build understanding through meaningful experiences (Bodrova & Leong, as cited in Tekyi-Arhin, 2025).

In the contemporary pedagogical perspective, the play approach is not merely a recreational activity but a medium of learning that supports the integrated development of all domains of children. This is reinforced by the statement of Susan Sutherland Isaacs (n.d.), a child development expert, that play is a form of natural experimentation for children and contributes to thinking skills, problem solving, and the discovery of new understandings, which are important aspects of cognitive development (play is children's work).

The implementation of play-based learning in non-formal institutions such as daycare centers allows educators to utilize play activities as a framework for observing and evaluating children's development flexibly, in accordance with the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes contextual and child-centered learning. Adaptive learning plans allow learning activities to be tailored to each child's individual development, so that children feel motivated and actively engaged in the learning process (Pratama, et.al., 2023).

Two relevant recent studies provide empirical support for these findings. First, a study by Fadzil & Abdul Rahman (2025) revealed that the implementation of a holistic approach through play-based learning significantly increased the engagement, motivation, and social and emotional development of toddlers in a non-formal education context (holistic development through play-based learning). Second, research by Sitorus, Siregar, and Sari (2025) shows that play-based learning activities are proven to be effective in developing the cognitive, creative, and social-emotional skills of early childhood through structured play interactions and participatory observation by educators.

However, there are challenges in implementing this learning model, particularly those related to the limited number of educators and optimal supporting facilities. An inadequate teacher-child ratio can reduce the intensity of quality interactions between educators and children, thereby preventing the full realization of the expected potential for development. This issue is consistent with the findings of other evaluative studies, which show that limited human

resources and infrastructure are significant obstacles to the implementation of effective learning in non-formal education units (Mulyono, et.al, 2023).

The role of educators as trained and certified facilitators is key to the implementation of a holistic non-formal learning approach (Mulyono, 2012). The quality of interaction between educators and children is a major determinant of long-term development outcomes, as found in a number of international reviews that the quality of interaction has a greater impact on child development than just the written curriculum (quality educator-child interactions predict longer term learning outcomes).

Overall, this study reinforces the assumption that non-formal institutions such as daycare centers play a strategic role in the early childhood education ecosystem, particularly through flexible, contextual, and development-based learning practices. Recommendations include developing the capacity of educators through continuous training, increasing human resources, and improving learning facilities that support creative play activities. These efforts are expected to improve the quality of non-formal institutions and strengthen their contribution to holistic child development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the nonformal learning model implemented at Citra Bangsa Daycare Center, Samarinda, has been effectively carried out and plays an important role in supporting early childhood development. The learning model is characterized by a play-based, child-centered, and flexible approach that is adapted to children's developmental needs. The learning process is systematically conducted through planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, although it remains non-rigid compared to formal education settings. The findings indicate that the effectiveness of nonformal learning is supported by adequate facilities, educator competence, and active parental involvement. These factors contribute to the creation of a safe, stimulating, and supportive learning environment for children. However, the study also identifies inhibiting factors, including a limited number of educators, children's fluctuating attention and emotional conditions, and constraints in certain supporting facilities. Overall, this study highlights the significance of nonformal early childhood education institutions in providing holistic developmental support for young children. It also emphasizes the need for continuous improvement in resource management, educator capacity building, and institutional support to enhance the quality and sustainability of nonformal learning programs. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators, daycare managers, and policymakers in developing and improving nonformal learning practices in early childhood education.

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