

STRATEGY TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD INDEPENDENCE THROUGH STORY METHOD AT KB DEWI SARTIKA PROBOLINGGO

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Abstract

Early childhood independence is an important aspect in child development that must be formed early on so that children are able to develop their ability to think, act, and make decisions independently. This study aims to determine the strategy for increasing early childhood independence through the story method at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques through observation, interviews, and documentation. The informants in this study were the Head of the Foundation, Principal, teachers, students, and guardians. The results of the study showed that the story method has proven effective as a learning strategy to foster values of independence in early childhood, such as the habit of tidying up their own toys, wearing clothes without help, and making decisions in daily activities. Teachers at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo utilize stories with characters that reflect an independent attitude as a means of conveying moral messages that are easy for children to understand. In addition, the involvement of teachers in discussions after telling stories helps children internalize the values conveyed. So that the story method becomes an interesting and educational strategy in increasing the independence of early childhood at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo.

Keywords: *Independence, Early Childhood, Story Method, Learning Strategy.*

Abstrak

Kemandirian anak usia dini merupakan aspek penting dalam perkembangan anak yang harus dibentuk sejak dini agar anak mampu mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir, bertindak, dan mengambil keputusan secara mandiri. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui strategi peningkatan kemandirian anak usia dini melalui metode cerita di KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Informan dalam penelitian ini ialah Kepala Yayasan, Kepala Sekolah, guru, siswa, dan wali murid. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa metode cerita terbukti efektif digunakan sebagai strategi pembelajaran untuk menumbuhkan nilai-nilai kemandirian pada anak usia dini, seperti kebiasaan merapikan mainan sendiri, memakai pakaian tanpa bantuan, serta mengambil keputusan dalam kegiatan sehari-hari. Guru di KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo memanfaatkan cerita dengan tokoh-tokoh yang mencerminkan sikap mandiri sebagai sarana penyampaian pesan moral yang mudah dipahami anak. Selain itu, keterlibatan guru dalam diskusi setelah bercerita membantu anak menginternalisasi nilai-nilai yang disampaikan. Sehingga metode cerita menjadi strategi yang menarik dan

edukatif dalam meningkatkan kemandirian anak usia dini di KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo.

Kata kunci: *Kemandirian, Anak Usia Dini, Metode Cerita, Strategi Pembelajaran.*

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is an individual aged between 0-6 years. Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, paragraph 1, states that "children who are included in the early childhood age range are children who are in the age range of 0-6 years. Early childhood is a group of children who are in a unique growth and development process". Early childhood is an individual who is experiencing a very rapid growth and development process, even said to be a developmental leap (Nurmawati, 2020). As is known, the period (age 0-6 years) is also called the Golden Age, so the existence of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions can be a means of developing all children's potential to the maximum. Learning in PAUD is carried out with a variety of fun activities so that children can receive stimulation and real learning experiences even though they are done while playing. In addition, PAUD also provides opportunities for children to learn to socialize with peers, learn to queue, and practice other skills needed in elementary school later, such as skills in using stationery and so on. (Hasviani et al., 2022).

Early childhood education as a form of educational service that focuses primarily on aspects of children's growth and development, both physically, intellectually, socially-emotionally, and in terms of language skills, in accordance with the characteristics and stages of development experienced by children at that age. Children are seen as valuable assets for every parent, who certainly want their children to grow optimally and receive an education that can form good morals, ethics, and character (Simatupang et al., 2021).

Independence is one of the important aspects in early childhood development. Independence in early childhood includes the ability to carry out various daily activities without relying on adult assistance, such as eating alone, dressing, and tidying up toys. This ability not only reflects the child's physical and motor development, but also social, emotional, and cognitive skills that will be an important foundation for further development in the future (Utami, 2019). Child independence can be seen as the child's ability to carry out daily activities and tasks on their own or with little guidance, according to the child's developmental stage and abilities. Independence means that the child has

been able to not only recognize what is right and what is wrong, but also be able to distinguish between what is good and what is bad. In this phase of independence, the child has been able to apply to things that are prohibited or prohibited, and at the same time understand the consequences of the risk if they break the rules (Sa'diyah, 2017).

However, based on the researcher's observation at the Dewi Sartika Probolinggo Playgroup (KB), it was found that early-age children showed a level of independence that was not optimal. Several factors influence the low level of independence of children, including educational approaches that do not provide children with the opportunity to develop this ability. In this case, there is one approach that can be used to increase children's independence, namely through the story method.

The storytelling method is one of the ways to provide learning experiences for early childhood by presenting stories orally. The stories presented by the teacher must be interesting and invite the attention of children and must not be separated from the goals of early childhood education, and the content of the story must be associated with those who are full of joy and in delivering the story it is attempted to provide a feeling of joy so that children can understand the content of the story conveyed by the teacher. By telling stories, teachers can use stories to instill honesty, courage, friendliness, moral and religious values and other positive attitudes in life, both in the family, school and community environments (Hasanah, 2011).

Storytelling is a way to pass on cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Storytelling can also be a medium to convey values that apply in society. Stories are an alternative way to attract children's attention because they are narratives that describe how something or an event happened or compositions that tell the deeds, experiences of happiness or suffering of others, whether the incident is real or fictional (Mekar et al., 2017).

The use of story methods to increase the independence of early childhood is important because it can teach children about how students can solve their own problems, make decisions, and act independently (Mardianto, 2015). In addition, this method also allows children to internalize the values taught through the characters in the story, which can ultimately increase their motivation and ability to act independently.

Several previous studies have examined independence, including: Pareira & Atal conducted a study on increasing the independence of 4-5 year old children through

storytelling methods with hand puppets. The results showed a significant increase in the initiative and responsibility aspects of children (Pareira & Atal, 2019). Warahmah, studied the effectiveness of storytelling methods using hand puppets on children's language and attitude development. The results of the study showed that children were more active, expressive, and brave in expressing ideas (Warahmah, 2024). Meanwhile, Damaryanti stated that the story method with hand puppets helps children understand social messages more effectively than conventional methods (Damaryanti et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers try to explore and test the effectiveness of the story method in increasing the independence of early childhood. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide real contributions in the development of more effective learning methods to support the development of children's independence at an early age.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study research type that aims to describe in depth the strategy for increasing early childhood independence through the story method at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo. Case studies are chosen because they allow researchers to understand phenomena contextually, intensively, and comprehensively in a real environment (Handoko et al., 2024). The subjects in this study were teachers and children in playgroups, with locations selected purposively because this institution has implemented the story method in learning. Data collection techniques include participatory observation of children's activities in learning activities that reflect independence, in-depth interviews with teachers and principals to explore the strategies applied, and documentation in the form of learning notes, photos, and teaching tools. Data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions and verification. Data reduction is carried out to filter relevant information, then presented in narrative or table form, and conclusions are drawn that are verified through data triangulation. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of sources and techniques is used, so that the research results are more objective and accountable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSS

Building Early Childhood Independence Through Storytelling Methods

The storytelling method is one way of providing learning experiences for kindergarten children by presenting stories to children orally. The story presented by the teacher must be interesting and invite children's attention and cannot be separated from the educational goals for kindergarten children. Tanfidiyah quotes the opinion of Bachtiar S. Bachri, stating that storytelling activities in the context of early childhood learning can be said to be an effort to develop the potential of children's language skills through hearing and then telling them again with the aim of training children's conversational skills to convey ideas in oral form (Tanfidiyah & Utama, 2019).

The storytelling method is a method that suits the characteristics of Kindergarten children. Sanders stated that there are several important reasons why children need to listen to stories. One of them is because listening to stories is something fun for children. Children can be more enthusiastic about learning because basically children enjoy listening to stories.

The storytelling method is one way of providing learning experiences for kindergarten children by presenting stories to children through hearing and then telling them back in oral form. There are several types of storytelling techniques that can be used, including: teachers can read directly from books, use illustrations from picture books, use flannel boards, use dolls, and role play in a story. Some storytelling techniques that teachers can use include:

- a) Reading directly from story books, the technique of telling stories by reading directly from books is very good if the teacher has good poetry and prose to read to children.
- b) Telling stories using illustrations from books. If the story told to the child is too long and detailed by adding illustrations from books that can attract the child's attention, then this storytelling technique can work well.
- c) Telling Fairy Tales. Fairy tales are the oldest art form. Storytelling is a way of passing on cultural heritage from one generation to the next. Fairy tales can be used to convey messages of virtue to children.
- d) Storytelling Using a Flannel Board. Teachers can make a flannel board by covering the entire board with neutral colored flannel. Pictures of characters that represent the

characterization in the story are cut out on paper, the back of which is covered with the smoothest rubbing paper to stick to the flannel board.

- e) Storytelling with Puppets. Each puppet that is made shows the character of a certain role holder. For example, a patient father, a nagging mother, a brave son, a spoiled daughter, and so on.
- f) Dramatization of a Story. In telling stories, teachers play characters in a story that children like and have universal appeal. In line with this, Tadzkirotun Musfiroh in Yuliana divides storytelling techniques into telling stories with props and telling stories without props (Yuliana, 2023). Storytelling with props includes storytelling with book props, storytelling with picture props, storytelling with puppet props, and storytelling with printed picture media. Props are very useful for teachers in the storytelling process. Props can speed up the process of understanding the contents of the story. Teachers will find it easier to describe the dialogue between characters through sound. The dialogue becomes clearer because the character's turn of speech is visualized into the media. Props will attract children's attention so that they encourage children to listen to the story (Agusriani et al., 2022).

Dolls are props that are in accordance with the characteristics of children aged 4-5 years. states that children aged 4-5 years are in the pre-operational period. At this time, children are able to represent the world at a concrete level. Dolls are props that are considered to be close to the naturalness of storytelling (Meo et al., 2023). The characters embodied through puppets speak with movements that support the story and are easy for children to follow. Through puppets, children know which character is talking, what the conversation is about, and how the actor is doing it.

Hand puppets are imitations of human form and even now include imitations of animal forms that are played using limbs from the elbow to the fingertips. Puppets are chosen because they are in accordance with the characteristics of children aged 4-5 years who are able to represent the world at a concrete level. Tadzkirotun Musfiroh in Maskur, states that there are several types of puppets that can be used as storytelling props, namely hand puppets (including wayang), hanging puppets, hand puppets, and stick-on puppets. Each puppet requires its own hand skills. Hand puppets rely on the skill of synchronizing the movement of the handle with the right and left hands. One hand is required to be able to handle three movements at once so that in one scene the teacher can play two characters

at once. While hanging puppets rely on the skill of moving puppets and threads tied to certain materials such as wood, sticks, or the roof of the puppet stage. At first glance it looks easy, but it is actually quite difficult to make the right movements according to the level of movement required by the story. The storyteller sometimes makes excessive movements, so that it looks artificial and things like that tend to be boring (Maskur et al., 2020).

In addition, stick puppets rely on the skill of playing hand movements. Most stick puppets do not move freely because they are attached to a two-dimensional stage. On the other hand, hand puppets rely on the teacher's skill in moving the thumb and index finger which function as hand bones. Hand puppets are usually small and can be used without other tools. These puppets can be made by the teacher themselves, and can also be purchased in stores.



Picture 1. *Story Method Simulation with Hand Puppets*

Suhartono divides several types of puppets based on their shape and how to play them, including: a) Finger puppets. These puppets are made with simple tools such as bottle caps, ping pong balls, and small bamboo that can be used as puppet heads. As the name implies, these puppets are played using the fingers. The puppet head is placed on the fingertips. It can also be made from a kind of glove, where the fingertips of the glove are already shaped like a puppet head and thus the storyteller only has to play it. b) Hand puppets. Hand puppets rely on the teacher's skills in moving the thumb and index finger which function as hand bones. Hand puppets are usually small and can be used without

other tools. These puppets are made by the teacher themselves and can be purchased in stores. c) Stick puppets. They are called stick puppets because they are played using sticks. These sticks are connected to the hands and body of the puppet. d) String puppets. String puppets rely on the skills of moving puppets and threads tied to certain materials such as wood, sticks, or the roof of the puppet stage. At first glance it looks easy, but it is actually quite difficult to make the right movements according to the level of movement required by the story. The storyteller sometimes makes excessive puppet movements, so it seems contrived and things like that tend to be boring.

Building independence in early childhood is an important step in preparing students to become confident individuals who are able to solve problems independently. At an early age, children are in a golden age of development, where they easily absorb values, attitudes, and life skills. One effective approach to instilling an independent attitude is through the storytelling method. Stories are not only fun for children, but can also be a means of conveying moral and social messages in a subtle and easy-to-understand way.

The story method provides an opportunity for children to learn from the characters in the story presented. Children can imitate the behavior of characters who are brave, independent, and responsible in facing various challenges. For example, a story about a child who learns to tie his own shoelaces or helps his mother at home can inspire children to do the same in everyday life. Through identification with the story characters, children begin to understand that they are able to do various activities themselves without always relying on others.

In addition to providing concrete examples, stories also build children's self-confidence by actively involving them in listening and discussing the story. When children are asked to retell the story or express their opinions, they learn to express themselves and think independently. This process helps children's cognitive and emotional development, which is an important foundation for their independence. Stories can also be a means for teachers or parents to introduce the concept of responsibility and the consequences of each action in a fun way.

Thus, the story method is not only a means of entertainment, but also an effective educational strategy in instilling values of independence from an early age. This approach should be carried out consistently and adjusted to the level of development and interests

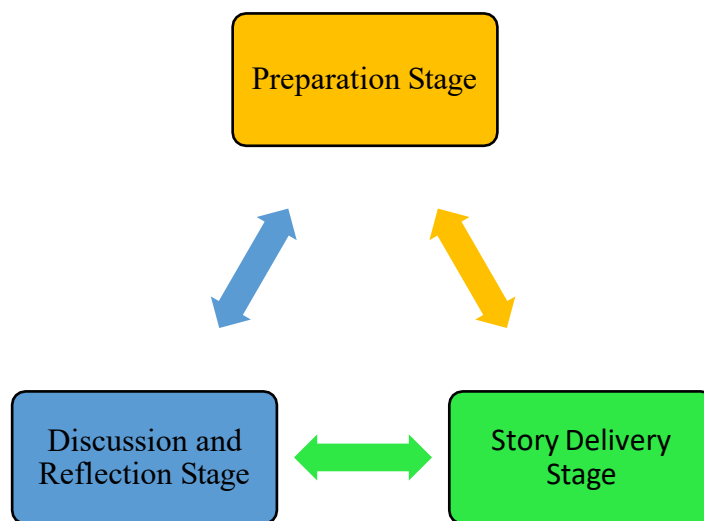
of the child. With proper guidance, children will grow into independent, creative individuals who are ready to face challenges in the future. Therefore, it is important for educators and parents to utilize the story method as an integral part of the early childhood learning process.

In this study, the author chose hand puppets as a medium for storytelling in order to improve children's speaking skills. Hand puppets were chosen by the researcher because using hand puppets does not require much space and time. Hand puppets are also easy to obtain, even hand puppets can be made by the researcher themselves. When compared to other types of puppets, hand puppets are more flexible in moving so that children can interact with the puppets, for example children touch the puppets. In addition, hand puppets were chosen because they were considered easier to play and did not require other tools in playing them. Hand puppets help children to pay more attention to the contents of the story.

Implementation of Story Method (Hand Puppet) at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo

The implementation of the story method using hand puppets at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo is carried out through several systematic stages. The first stage is preparation, where the teacher chooses a story that is relevant to the theme of independence and prepares interesting hand puppets to attract children's attention. Furthermore, at the stage of delivering the story, the teacher uses hand puppets as a medium for storytelling while actively involving children through interactions and questions that trigger thoughts about independent attitudes. The third stage is discussion and reflection, where the teacher and children discuss the contents of the story and relate them to everyday experiences so that children can understand and internalize the values of independence. The last stage is practical activities that support the application of independence values directly, such as getting children used to arranging toys, eating alone, and getting dressed without help. In implementing this method, observations were carried out covering three aspects; pre-implementation, implementation, and evaluation. This shows an increase in children's independent behavior, including initiative, responsibility, and the courage to make decisions independently. In addition, interviews with teachers and parents were also conducted to strengthen the data. From the results of the interviews, both teachers and parents stated that the hand puppet-based story method had a positive impact on children's independence. Children become more active in taking

initiative, more responsible in completing tasks, dare to make their own decisions, and show higher independence and reduce dependence on adults.



Picture 2. *Stages of Storytelling Method with Hand Puppets*

The story method using hand puppets has a positive influence on increasing the independence of early childhood at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo. This is supported by data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation during the research process. The analysis shows that the results of this study are in line with the theory of early childhood development, which states that aspects of cognitive, language, physical-motor, social-emotional, and moral development are interrelated and can be stimulated in an integrated manner. The story method with hand puppets has been proven to be able to stimulate all of these aspects holistically. The advantages of this method lie in its ability to attract children's interest, convey moral and social values in a fun way, and encourage the development of creativity and imagination. During the implementation, the increase in children's independence was seen from the initiative in carrying out activities, responsibility in completing tasks, and courage in making their own decisions. Based on these findings, it can be recommended that the story method based on hand puppets is an effective learning strategy to increase the independence of early childhood, and its implementation at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo has been proven to have a positive impact on children's overall development.

CONCLUSION

The story method using hand puppets has a positive influence on increasing the independence of early childhood at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo. This is supported by data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation during the research process. The analysis shows that the results of this study are in line with the theory of early childhood development, which states that aspects of cognitive, language, physical-motor, social-emotional, and moral development are interrelated and can be stimulated in an integrated manner. The story method with hand puppets has been proven to be able to stimulate all of these aspects holistically. The advantages of this method lie in its ability to attract children's interest, convey moral and social values in a fun way, and encourage the development of creativity and imagination. During the implementation, the increase in children's independence was seen from the initiative in carrying out activities, responsibility in completing tasks, and courage in making their own decisions. Based on these findings, it can be recommended that the story method based on hand puppets is an effective learning strategy to increase the independence of early childhood, and its implementation at KB Dewi Sartika Probolinggo has been proven to have a positive impact on children's overall development.

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