



Implementation of Practical Life Learning in Developing Independence Character in Children Aged 4-5 Years

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ABSTRACT

Independence is the most important need for children in preparing to enter the educational stage. If children are to be prepared for an increasingly complex life, they need to develop a character of independence. Fostering independence from an early age is very important, as it can help children grow into confident, intelligent adults who are ready to face future challenges. One strategy to foster independence in early childhood is through practical life skills (practical life). This research aims to explore the implementation of practical life learning in building independence character in children aged 4-5 years. The research method used is qualitative descriptive, with the research location at TK Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang. The subjects of the research are the school principal and two educators from TK A Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang. Data collection techniques include data reduction, data presentation, and data verification, using methods such as interviews, observations, and documentation to gather information. The results showed that the implementation of practical life has 3 stages, namely planning, implementing practical life which is carried out while the children are at school from the time the children arrive until they go home with habits every day and evaluation.

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Submitted/Received 02 Sep 2024

First Revised 28 Sep 2024

Accepted 11 Oct 2024

First Available online 20 Oct 2024

Publication Date 01 Nov 2024

Keyword:

Implementation,

Independence,

Practical Life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children are entrusted by God Almighty to be cared for, guarded and educated so that they become useful human beings and do not trouble themselves or others (Yuliastutie et al., 2022). Children need appropriate services to meet their needs and development including education. This is in line with the view of (Hasni, 2021) in his research that in his research that education in early childhood should be provided to stimulate optimal child development.

In his research that in his research that education in early childhood should be provided to stimulate optimal child development. Early childhood education seeks to stimulate, weigh, guide, foster and accommodate learning activities that help develop children's abilities and skills (Devi, 2023). Thus, early childhood education provides opportunities for children to improve their potential and personality (Saputri & Katoningsih, 2023). Moreover, aspects of child development are comprehensively and globally stimulated, including aspects of religious and moral development, language, cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical motor development (Kamil & Asriyani, 2023).

In addition to these aspects of development, there are other things that children should get in early childhood education, namely helping to stimulate the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed by children when children adjust to the environment and further life, because early childhood is the stage of undergoing a very rapid growth and development process which is often referred to as the golden age (Waruwu et al., 2024). In this phase, children can also form the basis of a personality that will provide experience in later life (Rahmah, 2018). In addition to these aspects of development, one aspect that is sometimes often overlooked is independence.

Independence in early childhood refers to a child's ability to carry out daily activities or tasks independently or with minimal assistance, without relying on others, especially parents, depending on the child's level of development or ability (Fajrin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, independence according to (Cahnia et al., 2024) is the child's ability to perform basic daily activities such as eating, dressing, putting on shoes, using the toilet, and tidying up toys that have been used. Independence is an effort by a child to enhance moral values and personality, especially in carrying out activities and tasks according to their age needs (Puspita & Harfiani, 2024). Independence needs to be developed from an early age so that children can perform all their activities on their own without the intervention of others (Fadlillah, 2020). The importance of fostering independence from an early age aligns with the opinion of (Ningrum et al., 2024) in their research that the potential that needs to be developed is independence.

Independence should be cultivated from an early age, which will then serve as a fundamental asset for children before they enter the next level of education (Chairilisyah, 2019). According to (Al Musafiri & Miftahurrohmah, 2022), independence is the ability that children possess to successfully carry out daily activities with the guidance of adults as a way to prepare them to face future difficulties and challenges in life. Independence can be well developed if it is pursued through continuous learning from childhood Independence can have a positive impact on a child's growth and development, so it should be taught as early as possible. If a child is not taught independence from an early age, they will ultimately be unable to solve the problems within themselves (Antika & Karlina, 2024).

Based on observations at Siti Sulaechah 04 Kindergarten in Semarang, many children aged 4-5 years are beginning to be independent in their daily activities. It is clear that some children are already able to complete their tasks independently, and they have been trained to put on their shoes by themselves when coming to and leaving school. In addition, during the observation, it was noted that when eating together during break time, the children always

took their own meals without the help of the teacher, and when eating, they were already trained to eat by themselves without needing to be fed, as well as tidying up and putting their containers back into their respective bags.

In addition, there are several children aged 4-5 years at Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang who are not yet independent in carrying out their activities at school. When the activity of eating together still requires assistance from the teacher, for example, when taking food from the bag and opening their lunch boxes, children also still need help opening their water bottles. Even after eating, some children do not tidy up their eating and drinking areas. In addition, some children are still seen throwing garbage unwittingly and during the learning activities there are some children who have not been able to clean up their toys after playing, and are not able to remove and wear their own shoes.

Several factors that contribute to a child's lack of independence include internal and external factors. Internal factors encompass emotions and intellect. External factors include stimulation, environment, parenting style, family economic status, love and affection, mother's employment status, as well as the quality of both the child and the parents (Nuryatmawati, 2020). In addition, also due to the lack of opportunities given to children, they often receive assistance from others. If this matter is left unaddressed, it will be detrimental to the child's development as the child will become dependent on others (Dini, 2023).

The aspect of independence is closely related to practical life learning, which was first introduced by Maria Montessori. As he explained, a child who is prepared to face the next stages of life is characterized by independence through practical life (Badriyah & Fidesrinur, 2023). Practical life refers to a series of daily activities that are often carried out to provide children with real experiences to prepare them for their future lives (Sari & Arifin, 2023). This aligns with the opinion of (Maryani, 2022) in her research that through practical life, children can learn skills to meet their daily needs, such as buttoning clothes, washing hands, pouring water, and other activities. Practical life activities can be carried out by children on their own through gradual exercises until they are able to perform them independently without assistance from others (Bui et al., 2023).

Practical life activities greatly influence a child's independence, as children will become accustomed to carrying out tasks in their daily lives at school and at home independently (Khotijah, 2018). Gradually and continuously, children engage in practical life exercises. Once they have completed these exercises, they become accustomed to doing everything on their own. Children receive practical life education so that they can carry out all their activities independently, without needing to ask for help from others, thus fostering their independence (Nisa & Lestari, 2021).

As for previous research conducted by (Rohmah & Aprianti, 2021), there is an analysis of the Montessori method in the aspect of independence to children who are applied, namely the change in attitude by children, this is evidenced by the average score obtained before and after the method is applied to children. In addition, it is also known that in the application of the Montessori method for independence, it is known that children have begun to be able to take care of themselves as in the required curriculum so as to provide opportunities for children to express freely with the environment, especially as a source of learning. In addition, findings on the participation of mothers and fathers in the formation of children's independence during online learning (Anggaraini, 2022; Arsanti & Nurzannah, 2024). The difference between previous research and (Anggaraini, 2022) in life skills is the participation of mothers and fathers who have a major influence on the formation of children's independence, while the discussion of this article refers to the analysis of the Montessori method on aspects of children's independence through practical life learning activities in

instilling the independence of children aged 4-5 years. So there is a difference that this study aims to explore the implementation of practical life activities in building the character of independence of children aged 4-5 years at Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang Kindergarten”.

2. METHODS

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach with qualitative descriptive methods. Qualitative descriptive research is research that aims to describe a symptom, event, or phenomenon based on data in the field (Rustam, 2024). The location of the research was conducted at Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang Kindergarten located on Jl. Ahmad Yani No. 154, Karangkidul, Kec. Semarang Tengah, Semarang City, Central Java Province. Sources of data in this study there are two sources of data, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data sources in this study include the principal, educators of kindergarten A class Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang and children aged 4-5 years. While secondary sources in this study in the form of written data related to schools, field notes, interview reports and observation reports in the field include RPPM, RPPH, rules and photo documentation during activities.

Data collection techniques in this study were carried out using 3 stages, namely observation, interviews, and documentation (Zainuddin et al., 2022). To check the validity of the data, researchers used triangulation techniques. Triangulation is a methodological approach used in data collection and analysis (Sutanto & Christiana, 2024). Data analysis techniques in this study include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Rosmawati et al., 2022).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. implementation of Practical life learning in building the character of independence of children aged 4-5 years at Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang

Based on observations and interviews, the efforts made by Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang to build the character of independence of children aged 4-5 years is to conduct a practical life learning, especially in its implementation in daily activities. This begins with encouraging children to independently enter the classroom or bathroom without help. As stated by the Principal of Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang *“Every day we do habits that can encourage the emergence of the character of independence of children aged 4-5 years with practical life, such as every morning there is toilet training which aims to train children's independence in activities in the bathroom starting from unzipping pants, opening and wearing underwear, then rinsing with water, washing hands, and not leaving the faucet open during hand washing activities. In addition, when children are walking towards their destination, we teach them to walk without having to rush or run in order to remain calm in doing something, besides that during the break activity, namely eating activities, we teach children to wash their own hands and bring their lunch and drinking bottles in their respective bags, After eating activities, children are also taught to clean the table and dispose of the remains of rice that has fallen on the table or on the floor and dispose of food snack waste brought by children's lunches, besides that we teach and familiarize children to wear their own socks and shoes gradually”*.

The interview results show that Practical Life activities are carried out every day as a routine for children at school and at home. This is in line with what one parent of a student at Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang Kindergarten said: *“I feel comfortable sending my child to Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang. Because in this school, children learn independence from the time*

they come to school by instilling an attitude of courage to go to school without having to be waited on by me."

The above opinion is supported in interviews conducted with kindergarten group A teachers and also the curriculum field: *"The habituation method and direct practice method are the methods used so that children will continue to do these activities until children can be independent"*. The results of the curriculum field explain that *"In accordance with the age development period we also refer to standards that are in accordance with the standards of children's abilities"*.

From this, based on the results of observations the author will explain the implementation of Practical Life activities which include planning, implementation and evaluation in building the character of independence of children aged 4-5 years at Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang as follows:

1) Planning Stage

The planning of practical life activities at Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang is based on the benefits, for example, training motor skills, training life skills to be independent, eye coordination, hand and foot coordination, independent without depending on parents, This is in accordance with the view (Magdalena et al., 2024) that the lesson plan is defined as the process of creating learning materials, utilizing the environment, evaluating teaching methods and methods, and evaluating the time used in a certain period of time to achieve goals. Lesson plans are designed so that teachers provide fun activities that facilitate learning and are prepared before the activities begin (Utami et al., 2024). The design of learning at Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang is outlined in the weekly program, semester program (prosem), Weekly Learning Implementation Plan (RPPM), as well as (RPPH). Every educator plans weekly activities before carrying out the tasks, aimed at delivering material that is relevant to the children's needs

2) Implementation Stage

Since the beginning, Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang has implemented the Circle Time learning model, which is part of the classroom or the design of the Montessori method space. In the implementation of Practical Life activities, it is carried out in accordance with the SOP established by the Institution. In the view of (Tamara & Aulia, 2023), standard operating procedures are guidelines used to ensure that all operational activities are carried out consistently, efficiently, and effectively. The SOPs that encourage independence include the welcoming SOP, the eating SOP, and the basic activity SOP. Based on the results of the interview between the researcher and the school principal, it was found that the scale of teacher support is based on the age or ability of the child. This scale includes: fully assisting the child, helping and providing opportunities for experimentation or trying, offering assistance to the child when needed, and providing motivational encouragement to empower the child to do it independently. In addition, teachers in the independence activities within Practical Life only act as facilitators or guides for children in carrying out independent learning planning activities. Thus, the development of independence character in children aged 4-5 years at Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang is carried out by each classroom teacher.

In addition, of course, to encourage independence through practical life learning, a method is needed. The method applied in Practical Life at Siti Sulaechah 04 Kindergarten in Semarang is the hands-on practice method. With this method, educators provide children with experiences of direct involvement in manipulating objects to enhance their experiences and

understanding. By doing it alone, the child has the opportunity to try again if they fail. Through direct practice, the child identifies the appropriate way to carry it out. The principal and teachers stated that hands-on practice methods have proven effective in building the independence character of children aged 4-5 years. Activities for children in group A aged 4-5 years are listed in the daily activity plan. This daily activity plan is a schedule designed in such a way that activities are carried out in an organized or structured manner. The activities listed in this daily activity plan are carried out every Monday to Friday.

The implementation of practical life activities is carried out to build children's independence character, such as practicing dressing themselves, folding clothes, learning to tie shoelaces, and tidying up their toys. This learning activity runs from 08:00 to 09:30, and from 09:30 to 10:00 there is free play, communal eating or snack time, and toilet training. (toilet training). During mealtime, the child is not given assistance such as being fed; instead, the child is trained to eat independently so that they become accustomed to doing things on their own. And during toilet training, the child will be guided to go to the toilet and remove their pants independently. By engaging in practical life activities, children can develop a sense of responsibility and independence. This is reinforced by the opinion of (Meisaroh & Salim, 2024) which states that by applying appropriate adjustments, children are able to learn to take initiative, be responsible, and complete tasks without asking or relying on adults. Based on the research findings, practical life learning is very effective for the TK A group of Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang in building children's independence character (see in **Figure 1**).



Figure 1. A child transferring seeds from a bowl to a plate using food tweezers.

The Practical Life learning conducted in the TK A Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang group uses Montessori equipment as both tools and means in its teaching. This tool is designed to be flexible and simple, allowing children to participate in the environment and enhance their independence in the learning process. In the process of transferring seeds from a bowl to a plate using tweezers, children can learn concentration as well as independence. This activity is an initial step in developing children's writing skills from an early age (see in **Figure 2**).



Figure 2. Tidying Up Toys

Getting children in Tk A aged 4-5 years at Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang into the habit of tidying up and organizing their toys can optimize their development of independence and foster positive character traits in them, such as responsibility, empathy, and care. Organizing toys will have a positive long-term impact on independence, understanding (cause and effect), and developing positive character traits. With this habit, the child is able to understand the consequences if their toys are not tidied up. (for example, stepped on and then damaged, or lost) Organizing toys can stimulate the muscles of the hands and arms, as well as foster a sense of responsibility (see in **Figure 3**).



Figure 3. The practice of opening and fastening clothing.

After the teacher demonstrated and explained how to unbutton and button clothing, the child attempted to start buttoning the shirt correctly. First, the child was able to hold both sides of the shirt with the right button aligned. Second, the child was able to insert the button into the hole. Third, the child took the edge of the hole and buttoned it correctly. With this activity, it is hoped that children can be independent in putting on and taking off their clothes without needing assistance from parents or teachers (see in **Figure 4**).



Figure 4. The practice of tying shoelaces

The Practical Life activities implemented to build the character of independence in children aged 4-5 years at Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang include shoe-tying activities using media. Through this activity, children can practice eye coordination, fine motor skills, as well as

thinking and memory abilities. Additionally, this activity also trains children's focus and supports their independence (Rujiah et al., 2023) (see in **Figure 5**).



Figure 5. Child Eating Independently

The next activity for children's independence is to encourage them to take their own snacks from their bags, open their own water bottles, and eat by themselves without needing to be fed or assisted. Thus, this habituation activity will foster responsibility and independence in children, which will then be beneficial as they begin to grow into adulthood (Hasanah et al., 2022).

3) Evaluation Stage

The Practical Life activities, as one of the activities to build independence character in children aged 4-5 years at Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang, always conduct an evaluation. The aim is to assess the children's ability to absorb the material presented by the teacher during activities, allowing the teacher to evaluate their methods, media, and students. The evaluation phase is conducted at Siti Sulaechah Kindergarten 04 Semarang in a systematic and structured manner, involving collaboration between teachers and parents to achieve the results and objectives, which is for the children to independently carry out their activities. The assessment in this practical life learning is essentially the same as conventional assessment in education, which is conducted through teacher observation using checklists and daily notes in the form of photo/video documentation. The results of the assessment of practical life activities will be included in the child's development report and sent to the parents, accompanied by information in the form of a description of the assessment process carried out by the teacher. At the end of the practical life implementation, the teacher will conduct a final assessment, specifically in the form of a child development progress report that will be given to parents every six months.

3.2 Supporting and hindering factors in the implementation of Practical Life learning.

In shaping children's independence character has several supporting factors for children's success in carrying out independent activities, namely:

1. A positive mindset from the teacher will believe that children can do it on their own, thus being patient with the child's development process, and the teacher will motivate the children in various ways.
2. Cooperation between parents and teachers. Based on the interview results, the collaboration between parents and teachers in the learning process is essential. For instance, at school, children carry out all activities independently, so when they are at home, parents should encourage their children to engage in activities

independently as well, while reducing assistance or pampering. According to (Wulandari et al., 2024), collaboration between two parties can have a positive impact on children's learning continuity, as the cooperation between teachers and parents can enhance growth and support the continuity of education both at home and at school.

Based on the interview results, the inhibiting factor is:

a. Lack of parental support.

Parents often provide assistance in carrying out daily activities, making it difficult for children to manage their tasks independently. Parents should encourage their children at home to perform their activities on their own, just as they do at school. Parents play an important role in enhancing the growth and development of their children (Gandini et al., 2024). This aligns with the perspective of (Ulfa & Na'imah, 2020) in their research that the family is the most crucial support for a child's growth and development, as they spend every day with their family and thus directly observe the family's habits.

b. The patience of children while playing.

Patience is part of the socio-emotional intelligence aspect. The characteristics include being not easily angered, not easily giving up, resilient in facing difficulties, and steadfast. This can be interpreted as taking a calm and unhurried approach to the various things being done. According to (Rasyidah et al., 2024), children should be trained in patience from a young age so that they become accustomed to being patient in carrying out activities and waiting for their turn.

4. CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the implementation of practical life learning plays a crucial role in building independence character in children of group A aged 4-5 years at Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang. Practical life learning is very effectively applied at Tk Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang, resulting in the development of independence in children aged 4-5 years being at the Expected Development level. So, Practical Life has important benefits for a child's independence. Because daily activities that include life skills are essential to be applied to young children in a directed and systematic manner, so that they can build a character of independence in children.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researchers express their gratitude to TK Siti Sulaechah 04 Semarang for granting permission for data collection until the completion of this study, as well as to the supervising lecturers who have guided and provided direction throughout the research process, and to all parties who have assisted, whom the researchers cannot mention one by one.

6. AUTHORS' NOTE

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. Authors confirmed that the paper was free of plagiarism.

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