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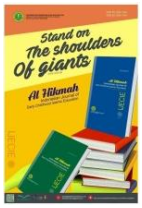

The Use of Loose Parts Media as a Strategy for Developing Early Childhood Creativity

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ABSTRACK

This study is based on the low level of creativity among early childhood children in expressing ideas and creating independently. This issue is evident when children appear confused and lack confidence when asked to create free-form works without examples from teachers. Based on data analysis from previous studies, the low level of creativity in children is caused by monotonous teaching methods and the use of less engaging media. Therefore, a learning medium capable of optimally stimulating children's creativity is needed, one of which is loose parts media. This study aims to develop early childhood creativity through the use of loose parts media by utilizing natural materials available in the surrounding environment for Group B students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo. The research adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative design. It was conducted at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo, with the research subjects being Group B students. Data collection methods used include interviews, observation, and documentation. The data analysis process includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study are as follows: 1) The creativity development of RA Mambaul Ulum students increased by 70% compared to before using loose parts media. 2) The implementation of loose parts media was conducted from Monday to Thursday using materials provided by the teacher.

INTRODUCTION

This study is based on the low level of creativity among early childhood students in expressing their ideas and creating independently. This is evident when children appear confused and lack confidence when asked to create freely without examples from the teacher. According to data analysis from previous studies, this lack of creativity is caused by monotonous teaching methods and the use of unengaging media. Therefore, there is a need for learning media that can optimally stimulate children's creativity, one of which is loose parts media. Loose parts provide children with many opportunities to discover new things and become creative. The concept of loose parts helps children interact with their social environment to boost confidence, develop skills, and foster independence. Through loose parts media, children can create without limits, enhance their willingness to explore creativity more deeply, and develop their interest in exploring the environment (Zakiyah, Prasetyawati, & Yani, 2023).

Students can interpret their environment through this enjoyable learning process. However, some schools still fail to promote the use of loose parts as an effective learning medium (Farida, 2020). From the observations conducted by the researcher during the pre-research phase at RA Mambaul Ulum on November 13, 2023, information was gathered regarding the creativity of Group B students before implementing loose parts media in learning activities to develop their creativity. These observations showed that the development of students' creativity was limited to drawing and coloring activities. As a result, learning activities were focused solely on worksheets provided by the teacher using colored pencils or crayons. This caused a reduction in students' ability to explore their surroundings, limited their ability to be creative and express ideas, and hindered the development of their skills to create new and unique ideas. Furthermore, the stimuli provided to develop students' creativity were restricted to sitting quietly and completing worksheets prepared by the teacher. This limited the development of the students' critical thinking and strong curiosity.

Based on the observations, the study focused on Group B students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo because their creativity was confined to drawing and coloring activities, which limited and underutilized their potential. However, there are other media, such as loose parts media, that can be used to develop students' creativity more effectively and motivate them to create. To address this, RA Mambaul Ulum initiated an innovation in learning by using engaging and enjoyable new media that attracts students' interest. One such media is loose parts. Loose parts are materials that are easily found in the surrounding environment, which can be moved, combined, and redesigned in various ways (Ratna, Arbarini, & Loretha, 2023).

Loose parts materials include stones, pebbles, leaves, bottle caps, wood, and more. Students can use these materials individually or combine them with other materials (Hartini, Mansoer, & Mappapoleonro, 2021). Children are introduced to these loose items early using simple language suited to their environment. Since early childhood development includes motor skills development, loose parts serve as a highly beneficial learning tool. Loose parts are used to foster problem-solving, creativity, attention, fine and gross motor skills, science, language development (literacy), art, logical thinking, mathematics, engineering, and technical skills (Fransiska & Yenita, 2021).

According to NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) as cited in Suryana (2014:15), early childhood refers to children aged 0-8 years. Research conducted by Keith Osborn at the University of Georgia, Burton L. White at the Harvard Preschool Project, and Benjamin S. Bloom at the University of Chicago reveals that approximately 50% of human intelligence capacity develops between birth and age 4, 80% occurs between the ages of 4 and 8, and it reaches its culmination of 100% between the ages of 8 and 18 (Novitasari., 2022).

According to the head of RA Mambaul Ulum, the reason for implementing loose parts media in the institution is that many students felt bored and unfocused during lessons involving Children's Work Sheets (LKA). Additionally, some students were reluctant to

engage with the teacher during lessons. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to find ideas or methods that inspire children to participate in learning activities. The selection of a free learning environment aims to reduce reliance on LKA in learning. This allows students to go beyond completing worksheets and engage in free play with loose parts materials.

RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo aims to provide children with the freedom to think, independence, and creativity by applying loose parts media in learning activities. (Fransiska & Yenita, 2021). Based on the explanation above, the researcher aims to conduct a study on how Group B students utilize loose parts media in learning. This research intends to explore in-depth how loose parts can be used as a strategy to develop the creativity of early childhood students in Group B at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, where the researcher presents data based on facts observed in Group B at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo. The research subjects consist of 14 children, including 7 girls and 7 boys, who participate in the systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of the ongoing learning process.

The primary data sources in this study are the children's activities while playing with loose parts materials and their documented creations, which serve as core information. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation (Novitasari, 2022). The collected data is systematically processed and its accuracy verified through triangulation. Data analysis is conducted using the Miles and Huberman model to draw conclusions regarding the application of loose parts materials for 5-6-year-old children in developing their creativity in Group B at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo, presented accurately and systematically.

RESULT

1. The Development of Creativity in Group B Students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo

To gather data on the creativity of Group B students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo, the researcher conducted interviews with the head of RA Mambaul Ulum and the class teacher. Based on the interview with RA Mambaul Ulum class teacher, Mrs. Saudah, the following information was obtained:

"*The development of creativity among students at RA Mambaul Ulum is limited to drawing and coloring. Teachers provide worksheets containing pictures for the children to color. Every day, it's the same monotonous activity. Sometimes, students feel bored and uninterested because every day, for every learning theme, it's always the same. Occasionally, some children refuse to color because they feel bored and say 'tired,' likely because they find the activity less enjoyable*."

Observations were conducted on Thursday, November 2, 2023. Data collection was performed through observation to assess the extent of students' creativity at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo. To measure creativity, several indicators were established with evaluation criteria, including Not Yet Developing (BB), Beginning to Develop (MB), Developing as Expected (BSH), and Developing Very Well (BSB). These student creativity indicators

are outlined in the table below (*Permendikbud Nomor 137 Standar Nasional PAUD*, 2021):

Table 1. Creativity Indicators for Students at RA Mambaul Ulum

No	Creativity Indicator
1	Has a high level of curiosity
2	Possesses a high level of imagination
3	Enjoys creating forms of artwork
4	Likes taking responsibility
5	Enjoys trying new things
6	Enjoys exploring

Source: STPPA RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo TP 2023/2024

From the results of the observations conducted, it was found that the creativity of students before the implementation of loose parts media could be considered low or insufficient. This can be seen from the data on student creativity observation results below:

Table 2. Assessment Data of Student Creativity Observation Results Before Using Loose Parts Media in Class B1

No	Name	Aspects Assessed					
		Enjoys exploring	**Has a high level of curiosity**	**Possesses a high level of imagination**	**Enjoys creating forms of artwork**	**Likes taking responsibility**	**Enjoys trying new things**
1	RAFFA	MB	MB	MB	MB	MB	**MB**
2	RAFFI	MB	MB	MB	MB	MB	**MB**
3	SANTI	MB	MB	MB	BSH	MB	**MB**
4	FALAH	MB	MB	MB	MB	MB	**MB**
5	ALFI	MB	MB	MB	MB	MB	**MB**
6	AULIA	BB	BB	MB	BB	MB	**BB**
7	ZAHRA	MB	BB	MB	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
8	CAHYA	BSH	BSH	BSH	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
9	FARACH	MB	BB	MB	MB	BB	**MB**
10	HANA	MB	MB	MB	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
11	REZA	M	M	BB	MB	B	**MB**

		B	B			B	
12	NISA	B S B	BS H	BSH	BSB	BS B	**BS B**
13	NIZAM	B S H	BS B	BSB	BSH	BS H	**BS H**
14	GHIFA R	B B	M B	MB	BB	M B	**BB**

Description:

1. Not Yet Developing (BB)
2. Beginning to Develop (MB)
3. Developing as Expected (BSH)
4. Developing Very Well (BSB)

From the results of the interviews and observations above, it can be concluded that the creativity of students at RA Mambaul Ulum is relatively low because students have not been able to meet the creativity indicators. These include having a high level of curiosity, enjoying exploration and experimentation, liking new things, and generating new ideas. This is due to the monotonous use of learning media, which primarily revolves around student worksheets involving drawing and coloring activities. Consequently, students feel bored, the learning process becomes less enjoyable, and their creativity fails to develop optimally.

To address this, RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo introduced an innovative learning method to make learning more enjoyable, attract students' interest, and enhance their creativity. This aligns with the results of an interview with the head of RA Mambaul Ulum, Mrs. Juwati, who explained:

"Children's creativity has improved after using loose parts media. This can be observed during learning activities with loose parts media, where students became more active in exploring and eager to create works according to their interests. This is a significant improvement compared to before when they only engaged in drawing and coloring worksheets provided by the teacher in the classroom."

Similarly, the results of observations show that to increase the creativity of students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo, the teachers implemented an innovative learning strategy using loose parts media. The materials used include natural elements such as pieces of leaves, gravel, sand, twigs, seeds, and environmentally friendly recycled items like used bottles, bottle caps, and old buttons. During these activities, students appeared engaged and enthusiastic, successfully creating interesting works using loose parts. For example, they could arrange letter shapes using gravel, leaves, or buttons based on their creativity. This allowed students to learn while playing according to their interests and enhanced their creativity. The observation results after using loose parts media are shown in the following table:

Table 3. Assessment Data of Student Creativity Observation Results After Using Loose Parts Media in Class B1

		Aspects Assessed

No	Nama	Aspects Assessed	Enjoys trying new things	Suka menghasilkan suatu bentuk karya	Suka bertang gungjawab	Suka mencoba suatu hal yang baru	Suka bereksplorasi
1	RAFFA	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	**BSB**
2	RAFFI	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	**BSB**
3	SANTI	BSH	BSH	BSB	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
4	FALAH	BSH	MB	BSH	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
5	ALFI	BSH	BSH	BSB	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
6	AULIA	BSH	BSH	BSH	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
7	ZAHRA	BSH	MB	BSH	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
8	CAHYA	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	**BSB**
9	FARACH	MB	BSH	BSB	BSH	BSH	**BSH**
10	HANA	BSH	BSH	BSH	BSB	BSB	**BSB**
11	REZA	BSH	BSH	BSB	MB	BSH	**MB**
12	NISA	BSB	BSH	BSB	BSB	BSB	**BSB**
13	NIZAM	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	BSB	**BSB**
14	GHIFAR	MB	BSH	BSH	MB	BSH	**MB**

Description:

1. Not Yet Developing (BB)
2. Beginning to Develop (MB)
3. Developing as Expected (BSH)
4. Developing Very Well (BSB)

Based on the assessment results, the creativity of students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo can be considered to have developed significantly after the implementation of loose parts media compared to before its use. This development is marked by an increase in students' curiosity and imagination, which are notably higher than before. Students' interest and enjoyment in exploring also showed growth, meeting and even exceeding expectations. Additionally, their ability to create or produce work improved to a satisfactory and excellent level. When observed through the percentage scores, this growth is evident. Before the use of loose parts media, the average creativity score was below 70%, whereas after its implementation, the average score increased to over

70%.

2. The Use of Loose Parts Media as a Strategy to Develop Creativity of Group B Students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo

The teachers at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo implemented a strategy to enhance students' creativity by encouraging them to engage in playful and thematic learning activities using loose parts media. These materials, often sourced from the students' surroundings, allowed for a more interactive and enjoyable learning experience.

The loose parts-based learning activities were conducted four times a week, specifically on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. These materials were either provided by the school or, depending on the situation, students were asked to bring items from home. Examples of loose parts materials include stones, gravel, leaves, seeds, pieces of wood, tree branches, and recycled items such as bottle caps and buttons. These readily available materials supported various creative tasks.

Using loose parts media helped students understand their educational potential in a fun and engaging way. For instance, during a letter-recognition lesson, the teacher instructed students to use corn kernels provided by the teacher to arrange them into letter shapes. What was once considered merely a food ingredient became a creative tool for learning. Similarly, other materials like gravel, wood pieces, tree branches, buttons, and bottle caps were repurposed to support interactive lessons. Below is an example of the activity captured in images:

Figure 1. Documentation of Loose Parts Media Application in Plant-Themed Activity: Arranging Letters

This image highlights the process of students engaging in a hands-on activity by gathering leaves and stems from their surroundings to use as learning materials. The activity demonstrates how students actively participate in learning while enjoying the experience of collecting and selecting their own loose parts. This method promotes

creativity, independence, and a connection with nature, as the students prepare to use these materials for their educational projects.

Figure 2. Documentation of Students Collecting Leaves and Stems for Learning Media

From the image, it is evident that the students were highly enthusiastic about collecting leaves as learning materials independently. They enjoyed the freedom to choose as they wished and seemed to delight in their exploration in the open nature. The students showed active engagement, cooperation, and social skills, interacting well with their peers and the surrounding environment.

The implementation of loose parts media in learning activities at RA Mambaul Ulum involves natural materials and eco-friendly recycled items. Observations revealed that the use of loose parts follows a similar approach to other learning media. Before the lesson, teachers plan activities by determining the theme, the subject matter to be taught, the specific loose parts media to be used, and the rules for their application. They then organize activity plans into the stages of opening, main activities, and closing.

Steps for Implementing Loose Parts Learning at RA Mambaul Ulum

1. Opening
    a. The teacher starts the session with greetings, singing a theme-related song, reciting short verses, assigning one student to lead the opening prayer, and asking the students about their current feelings.
    b. Ice-breaking activities are introduced to boost students' enthusiasm and motivation.
    c. The teacher explains the learning objectives, theme, material, and rules for the activity.

2. Main Activity

a. The teacher explains the task, which involves learning with loose parts. Students are instructed to independently collect natural materials available in the school environment or playground.

b. The students then complete tasks assigned by the teacher using the loose parts media.

c. While the students work on their tasks, the teacher observes and assesses their performance for subsequent evaluation.

3. Closing

a. The teacher reviews the session by asking students to recall the activities they performed and how they felt during the session.

b. The session concludes with motivational remarks and a group closing prayer.

DISCUSSION

A. Development of Creativity in Group B Students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo

Creativity is one of the most important cognitive abilities in humans, and most cognitive psychologists categorize it as the ability to solve problems and find solutions (Aisyah, 2017). The indicators of creativity in early childhood are as follows (Mulyani, 2019):

1. High Curiosity: This is evident when students frequently ask questions about what they see.
2. High Imagination: Students begin to share their experiences and describe the activities they have done.
3. Producing Creative Works: Students enjoy creating their own works, take pride in their creations, and value their achievements.
4. Responsibility and Enjoyment in Experimentation: Students demonstrate responsibility by tidying up toys after playing, completing tasks happily, finishing assignments within the given time, and enjoying simple experimental activities.
5. Willingness to Try New Things: This is observed when the teacher introduces new materials, and students appear enthusiastic and eager to try them.
6. Love for Exploration: This is seen when the teacher invites students to collect natural loose parts such as sand, leaves, twigs, seeds, and pebbles. Students show enthusiasm because they are given the freedom to select their own materials (Komara & Rohmalina, 2023).

Based on the assessment, the creativity of students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo can be considered low, as less than 70% of the students meet the criteria of "Developing as Expected" or "Developing Very Well." This is primarily due to the monotony in learning activities, where creativity is limited to drawing and coloring. Such repetitive activities lead to boredom and restrict students' creative growth.

Additionally, students lack opportunities to explore and experiment with the real world, which limits their ability to produce innovative and creative works.

To address this issue, it is essential to introduce engaging learning activities that utilize easily accessible and familiar materials from the real world, such as loose parts. As a solution, RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo has introduced an innovative learning approach to make lessons more enjoyable and engaging while enhancing students' creativity. Observations revealed that using loose parts as learning materials significantly improves creativity. The loose parts include natural materials like leaves, pebbles, sand, twigs, and seeds, as well as eco-friendly recycled items such as used bottles, bottle caps, old buttons, and other readily available resources.

From the activities conducted, students appeared more interested and enthusiastic during lessons. They were able to create impressive works using loose parts. For example, students could arrange letters using pebbles, leaves, or buttons according to their creativity. This approach allowed students to play while learning, based on their interests, and develop their creativity.

Based on theories, observations, and interviews, it can be concluded that students' creativity improves when teachers introduce innovative learning methods, such as the implementation of loose parts. This is evident from the data showing an increase in student creativity scores before and after using loose parts as learning media.

B. Implementation of Loose Parts Media to Develop Creativity in Group B Students at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo

The implementation of learning activities at RA Mambaul Ulum using loose parts media follows several stages, including theme determination, activity planning, selection of the loose parts media to be used, activity execution, and evaluation. Based on observations, in order to develop students' creativity, RA Mambaul Ulum invites students to play while learning according to the determined theme, using media that can be collected directly from the students' surroundings, namely loose parts.

Learning activities with loose parts are carried out four times a week, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The loose parts media are usually provided by the school, and at times, the students are also assigned to bring materials from home depending on the situation. Examples of loose parts include stones, pebbles, leaves, seeds, pieces of wood, twigs, parts of used materials like bottle caps, and other materials that are easy to find around the students. An interview with the head of RA Mambaul Ulum also confirmed that, in order to develop students' creativity, RA Mambaul Ulum provides an innovative learning approach with child-friendly and environmentally friendly media, namely loose parts. These media consist of separate materials that can be shaped into whatever the students desire.

When choosing loose parts media, RA Mambaul Ulum selects materials that are easily found in the students' environment and do not need to be purchased at high costs. For example, stones, pebbles, tree branches, leaves, sand, used bottle caps, old buttons,

and other similar items. The choice is also based on the safety of the materials for the students. Furthermore, it is enjoyable for the students when the teacher asks them to gather the materials from their surroundings. Students are very enthusiastic when actively engaging in real-world learning, and they gain valuable experiences that will remain memorable throughout their lives. This aligns with the theory of the function of media as a learning resource, where learning media is used to acquire information and act as an intermediary for extracting information. With this media, students can experiment, helping them remember the knowledge they learn (Safira, 2020).

The application of loose parts media at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo to develop students' creativity is carried out from Monday to Thursday through the stages of opening, core activity, and closing. From the description above, in alignment with the theory of loose parts media and students' creativity, it can be analyzed that to develop students' creativity at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo, loose parts media is used. The reasons for choosing loose parts are that they are safe for students, easily accessible, and do not require high costs. The activities with loose parts are conducted at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo every Monday through Thursday, based on the theme, and following the stages of opening, core activities, and closing. Throughout the learning process, the teacher conducts evaluations, which will be used to assess the students' creativity after using the loose parts media

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion about the implementation of loose parts media to develop student creativity at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo, which refers to the research problem formulation, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Student Creativity Before Using Loose Parts Media: The creativity of students before using loose parts media can be considered low. This can be seen in the student assessment results before using loose parts, which were below 70%. However, after using loose parts media, the creativity increased to over 70%. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was an improvement and development in student creativity after using loose parts media.
2. Application of Loose Parts Media in Developing Student Creativity: The implementation of loose parts media to develop student creativity at RA Mambaul Ulum Jatirogo involves using media sourced from the students' environment or provided by the teacher and sometimes brought by the students from home. These materials include seeds, sand, stones, pebbles, used buttons, bottle caps, and other similar items. The activities are conducted in three phases: opening, core activity, and closing. Learning with loose parts media takes place from Monday to Thursday.

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