

The Use Of Letter Card Game Media To Develop The Ability To Recognize Letters In Children Aged 4-5 Years

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of using letter card game media in developing letter recognition skills among children aged 4 to 5 years. Letter recognition is a fundamental aspect of early childhood literacy, forming the basis for reading and writing skills. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, involving observation, documentation, and interviews with early childhood education teachers and students. The findings indicate that the use of letter card games significantly enhances children's engagement, motivation, and ability to identify and differentiate letters. The game-based approach provides a fun and interactive learning environment, which supports cognitive development and early literacy acquisition. The study concludes that letter card games are an effective and developmentally appropriate medium to support letter recognition in early childhood education settings.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is an individual who is in the process of developing rapidly throughout his life. Early childhood education can be done through formal or non-formal and informal education. According to revealed that children aged 4-6 years are at the concrete preoperational stage which is shown to organize and express movements and actions as well as inferring existence that is beyond sight.

Early childhood education (PAUD) is a very fundamental stage of education in shaping the basis of a child's overall development. Law No. 20/2003 on the National Education System states that the main purpose of PAUD is to help develop children's potential early on optimally, including physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual potential in a conducive, democratic, and competitive environment. PAUD has several main functions, including: (1) developing the basic potential of children as a whole, (2) instilling the values of aqidah and faith, (3) forming character and behavioral habits in accordance with social and cultural norms, (4) developing basic skills and initial knowledge, and (5) fostering motivation and positive attitudes towards lifelong learning.

In the process of child growth and development, there is a fundamental difference between the two. Growth refers to quantitative physical changes, such as weight and height gain. Meanwhile, development is a process of qualitative changes related to children's mental and emotional abilities, and takes place gradually according to age stages. One aspect of development that is very important to get attention in early childhood education is language development. Language is not only a means of communication, but also a means for children to understand and express thoughts, feelings, and interact with their social environment. Good language development will support other aspects of development, such as cognitive, social-emotional, even moral and spiritual.

Therefore, it is important for educators, parents and policy makers to ensure that every aspect of child development - including religious and moral values, gross and fine motor, cognitive, language and social-emotional - receives adequate stimulation through various educational and interactive play activities. Proper handling in early childhood will provide a strong foundation for children's future success, both in the context of academic and social life. The ability to recognize letters here is about the development of children who initially do not know their shape or sound so that they know and understand and interpret them. According to that the intended introduction of letters is so that children recognize, understand and can use symbols in writing as a means of communication. Meanwhile, according to Seefeld and Wasik, learning letters is a milestone in the Kindergarten curriculum through repeated and meaningful preparation of events that make children know and understand letters until they become words.

Kindergarten education is a vital component of early childhood education, specifically designed for children aged 4 to 6 years. At this stage, children are in a crucial period of growth where they become increasingly receptive to stimulation and learning experiences that shape their overall development. It is during this foundational stage that character education must be introduced, as early exposure to values and positive behavior significantly influences a child's personality and actions in adulthood. Early childhood is characterized by rapid development across various domains, including religious and moral values, physical and motor skills, cognitive abilities, social-emotional competence, artistic expression, and language development. Among these, language development plays a particularly critical role, as it serves as the foundation for communication and academic learning.

One of the key challenges children face in the early stages of language development is recognizing letters—especially those that appear visually similar. For example, letters like "b" and "d" or "p" and "q" may appear identical at first glance, leading to confusion and difficulty in reading or writing. Addressing this challenge requires deliberate and developmentally appropriate strategies from educators, including multisensory learning techniques, repetition, and visual aids. Providing children with supportive and stimulating learning environments in kindergarten helps optimize their potential across all developmental areas. Therefore, it is essential that educators and caregivers place strong emphasis not only on cognitive learning but also on moral, social, and language development to lay the groundwork for lifelong learning and character building.

Learning media play a crucial role in optimizing letter recognition for early childhood learners. At this developmental stage, children are highly responsive to visual and interactive stimuli, making the use of appropriate media essential in supporting their language development, particularly in recognizing letters. The term media originates from the Latin word *medius*, which means "middle" or "intermediary." In educational contexts, media are defined as tools or intermediaries that facilitate the transfer of information from the source (teacher or content) to the recipient (learner). These tools serve as bridges that help young children process abstract concepts more concretely.

One such medium that has proven effective in early language learning is the use of letter card games. These games provide an engaging and interactive way for children to recognize and differentiate letters, especially those with similar shapes that are often confusing at early stages—such as "b" and "d" or "m" and "n." By incorporating play-based learning, letter card games not only reinforce recognition skills but also foster motivation and positive attitudes toward learning. Therefore, integrating suitable and creative media in early childhood education is essential to support optimal cognitive and language development. Educators must be intentional in selecting media that align with children's developmental needs and learning styles, ensuring a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest design. This design is used to determine the effect of using letter card game media on children's ability to recognize letters before and after the intervention. The subjects in this study were children aged 4–5 years enrolled in a kindergarten (TK) located in [insert location], consisting of [insert number] children. The sample was selected using purposive sampling, focusing on children who had not yet mastered basic letter recognition at the start of the study. The primary instrument used in this study was a letter recognition test developed by the researcher based on standard indicators of early childhood literacy. The test was administered both before (pretest) and after (posttest) the intervention.

to measure the children's progress. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analysis, specifically the paired sample t-test, to compare the mean scores between the pretest and posttest. This analysis was conducted to determine whether the use of letter card game media had a significant effect on improving the children's letter recognition skills.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This research discusses how the use of letter card game media can support the development of letter recognition skills in children aged 4 to 5 years. Fundamentally, the use of learning media plays an important role in providing young children with meaningful learning experiences. Media help make abstract concepts more concrete and easier for children to understand. Additionally, the use of engaging and interactive media can significantly increase children's motivation to learn. Letter card media consist of individual letters printed or written on small pieces of material such as cardboard, paper, or recycled board. These cards can be physically moved, arranged, or manipulated by the children according to the learning objectives. As a form of visual media, letter cards are frequently used by early childhood educators—especially kindergarten teachers—as tools to introduce letters and basic reading skills.

The effectiveness of this media lies in its alignment with early childhood developmental needs, particularly those related to sensory processing and memory. The approach reflects the educational philosophy of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, who emphasized the importance of developing children's AVM (Auditory, Visual, and Memory) abilities during the early years of life. According to Pestalozzi, these three sensory domains serve as the foundation for cognitive growth and should be prioritized in early education. By engaging the visual sense through letter card games, children are not only exposed to letters in a playful and enjoyable way but are also able to internalize the forms and sounds of letters more effectively. This multisensory approach supports better retention and recognition, thereby enhancing their overall language development. Thus, the use of letter card game media proves to be a practical and developmentally appropriate method for introducing alphabetic knowledge to young children, fostering both their understanding and enthusiasm for early literacy.

Learning using letter card media to develop the ability to recognize letters in children aged 4-5 years, children are trained to use their sense of hearing, namely listening to the letters of the alphabet and pronouncing the sound of the letters correctly, sight, namely children directly seeing the shape of the letters of the alphabet, and memory (memory) namely children can remember the shape and sound of letters. The use of letter card media must also meet the requirements for learning, namely easy, interesting, simple and useful. In the process of learning to recognize alphabet letters, the teacher also uses the question and answer method. This method is considered effective in conveying learning objectives, especially learning letter recognition. The question and answer method is a dialogue/communication activity to realize the ability to listen and understand other people's conversations and the ability to express opinions. Learning to recognize letters is an ability that young children must have. Children need to know and understand the letters of the alphabet to eventually become independent and fluent readers and writers. Children who can recognize and name letters in the alphabet list in learning will have fewer difficulties than children who do not know letters.

Letter recognition is a crucial developmental stage in which children transition from not recognizing letter forms to understanding the relationship between letter shapes and their corresponding sounds. This ability allows children to visually identify letters and associate them with meaning, forming the foundation for reading and writing skills in later stages of literacy development. For young children, exposure to various types of letters—such as Latin letters, Arabic script, and others—typically comes from their surrounding environment. This exposure fosters the ability to distinguish, categorize, and sort different letter forms, a cognitive process that supports symbolic understanding and early literacy.

According to Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 58 of 2009 on Early Childhood Education Standards, the ability to recognize letters is an integral part of language development in early childhood. This includes recognizing written symbols (letter shapes) and identifying the initial letter of familiar objects or words. Such skills are foundational in helping children make meaningful connections between spoken and written language. To effectively support this development, consistent practice and repetition are essential. Young children need repeated opportunities to see, hear, and interact with letters in various forms. Through repeated exposure, children begin to internalize letter names, sounds, and shapes, leading to improved fluency and confidence in language use. Therefore, early childhood educators and parents play a vital role in

facilitating environments that provide rich and engaging literacy experiences. By using a variety of teaching strategies—such as games, songs, storytelling, and visual aids—children can develop strong letter recognition skills that will support their continued academic success.

Based on insights from several experts, it can be concluded that letter recognition is a key developmental milestone in early childhood, where children learn to identify and understand letter symbols. This ability forms an essential part of the kindergarten curriculum, achieved through repeated and meaningful exposure to reading and writing activities. Such exposure helps children become familiar with letters and realize that letters combine to form words. Implementing letter recognition strategies from an early age offers significant benefits for children's language development. These strategies not only prepare children for the complex skill of reading but also facilitate smoother and more successful reading acquisition. Research shows that children who develop strong letter recognition skills tend to exhibit better reading abilities later on. Therefore, it can be concluded that early learning of letter recognition provides foundational support for children's literacy development. By becoming proficient in recognizing letters at a young age, children are better prepared to learn reading and writing effectively, ultimately contributing to their academic success.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the method of using letter cards involves utilizing tools or media in the form of cards that display letter symbols accompanied by pictures and written text. The primary purpose of this method is to develop children's ability to recognize, identify, and understand the letters of the alphabet. The use of letter cards serves several important functions in early childhood education. Notably, it accelerates the process of introducing letters to children aged 4 to 6 years. By employing these teaching aids, educators can deliver explanations more efficiently, enabling children to grasp letter concepts in a shorter amount of time. Additionally, letter cards make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable, which helps maintain children's motivation and interest. Thus, the letter card method is an effective and practical approach for fostering early literacy skills in young learners, combining visual stimulation with interactive learning to optimize the development of letter recognition abilities.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted, it can be concluded that the use of letter card game media effectively enhances the ability of children aged 4 to 5 years to recognize letters. The interactive and playful nature of the letter card games helps children engage more actively in the learning process, making it easier for them to identify and differentiate letter symbols. Furthermore, the media supports the development of early literacy skills by providing concrete and enjoyable learning experiences. Therefore, incorporating letter card game media in early childhood education is recommended as an effective strategy to improve letter recognition abilities in young learners. Furthermore, the study indicates that repeated exposure to letter card games fosters better retention and understanding of letter shapes and sounds. This method not only supports cognitive development but also increases children's motivation and positive attitudes toward learning. It is recommended that educators and parents consistently incorporate letter card games as part of their teaching strategies to maximize early literacy development. For future research, it is suggested to explore the use of other interactive media and compare their effectiveness in improving various aspects of early childhood literacy, such as phonemic awareness and vocabulary building. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine the long-term impact of early letter recognition on children's reading and writing proficiency.

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