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Application of Plasticine Play Activities to Train Fine Motor Skills of Children Aged 4-5 Years RA Muslimat NU Alhidayah

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Abstract: Fine motor skills are an important aspect in early childhood development, especially in children aged 4-5 years. These skills play a role in various daily activities, such as writing, drawing, and buttoning clothes. One of the effective methods to train fine motor skills is through plasticine play activities. Playing plasticine helps children strengthen finger muscles, improve hand-eye coordination, and stimulate creativity. This study aims to examine the application of plasticine play activities in training children's fine motor skills at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah. This study uses a qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation and documentation. The results of the study showed that playing plasticine had a positive impact on children's fine motor development. Children become more skilled in controlling finger movements, shaping various objects, and increasing imagination. In addition, this activity also contributes to children's social-emotional development, such as practicing patience, cooperation, and self-confidence. Thus, playing plasticine can be used as a fun and effective learning alternative to develop fine motor skills in early childhood.

Keywords: Fine motor, plasticine play, early childhood, child development.

INTRODUCTION

Fine motor development is one of the important aspects in early childhood growth and development, especially at the age of 4-5 years. This ability is related to the coordination of small muscles, such as fingers and hands, which play a role in various daily activities, such as writing, drawing, scissors, and buttoning clothes. According to Sari & Widodo (2021), good fine motor development will support children's independence in carrying out daily activities and prepare them for the next stage of development. Therefore, proper stimulation is needed so that children can develop their fine motor skills optimally.

However, the reality is that there are still many children who experience delays in fine motor development due to a lack of stimulation that suits their needs. The lack of activities that

train hand-finger coordination can cause children to have difficulty performing simple tasks, such as holding stationery or tying shoelaces (Rahmawati, 2022). This condition shows that an interesting and fun learning method is needed so that children can be more motivated to practice their fine motor skills.

One of the methods that can be applied to improve children's fine motor skills is through plasticine play activities. Playing plasticine is an activity that involves various hand movements, such as pressing, rolling, pinching, and shaping, which can help strengthen the finger muscles and improve children's hand-eye coordination (Putri & Kurniawan, 2023). In addition, playing plasticine can also be a means of exploration for children to develop their creativity through the various shapes and colors they create.

Research conducted by Lestari & Nugroho (2021) shows that playing plasticine can have a positive impact on fine motor development in early childhood. Children who regularly do this activity show improvement in grasping skills, controlling finger movements, and increasing sensitivity to texture and shape. Thus, this activity can be one of the effective alternatives in supporting the overall fine motor development of children.

In addition to the physical benefits, playing plasticine also contributes to the social-emotional development of children. According to a study conducted by Wahyuni & Prasetyo (2022), children who engage in plasticine play activities tend to be more patient and confident in completing their tasks. This is due to the process of playing which requires concentration and perseverance in shaping something according to their imagination. Thus, this activity not only trains fine motor skills, but also forms positive character in children.

This study aims to analyze the application of plasticine play activities in training fine motor skills of children aged 4-5 years at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah. By directly observing how children interact with plasticine in learning activities, this study is expected to provide a clearer picture of the effectiveness of this method in improving children's fine motor skills.

In addition, this study also aims to provide insight for educators and parents about the importance of fine motor stimulation through play activities. According to Nugraha & Fitriani (2023), stimulation carried out through a play approach tends to be more effective because children feel comfortable and not burdened. Therefore, it is hoped that plasticine play activities can be applied more widely in the early childhood education environment as part of a fun and useful learning method.

With this research, it is hoped that the best strategy can be found in the application of plasticine play activities to optimize fine motor development in early childhood. In addition, the results of this study can be a reference for educators and parents in choosing learning methods that suit the needs and characteristics of children. With the right approach, children can grow and develop optimally, both physically, socially, and emotionally.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method to analyze the application of plasticine play activities in training fine motor skills of 4-5 year old children at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah. The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation of children's activities in playing plasticine and interviews with teachers and parents regarding children's fine motor development. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from various literature, such as journals, books, and previous research related to fine motor development and play-based learning methods.

Data Analysis

The data that has been collected is analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis techniques. The steps of data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 2020). Data reduction is carried out by sorting out relevant information from the results of observations and interviews, then the data is presented in the form of a narrative description. Furthermore, the researcher draws conclusions based on the pattern of findings that appear in the study. The validity of the data is strengthened by source triangulation, namely comparing data from observations, interviews, and supporting documents to ensure the accuracy of the research results.

RESULTS

The results of observations conducted at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah show that the fine motor skills of children aged 4-5 years still vary. Some children already have good hand-eye coordination and are able to do activities such as grasping stationery, scissors, and buttoning clothes smoothly. However, there are still some children who have difficulty controlling their finger movements, especially in activities that require precision and strength of the hand muscles, such as forming patterns or drawing in detail.

After the implementation of regular plasticine play activities in several learning sessions, it can be seen that there is an increase in children's fine motor skills. Children show enthusiasm in rolling, pinching, pressing, and shaping plasticine into various objects. In addition, they are also more skilled in controlling finger and hand movements, which is shown through their increasingly neat and detailed work. Teachers also observed that children who initially lacked confidence in using their hands for creative activities began to show positive development.

To provide a clearer picture of the fine motor development of children before and after the application of plasticine play activities, the following data are obtained from the observation results:

Table 1. Children's Fine Motor Development Before and After Playing Plasticine

It	Fine Motor Indicator	Before Playing Plasticine (%)	After Playing Plasticine (%)
1	Able to hold stationery well	55%	85%
2	Able to cut simple patterns	50%	80%
3	Able to pinch and form plasticine	40%	90%
4	Able to button your own clothes	45%	75%
5	Good hand-eye coordination	50%	88%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that there is a significant increase in children's fine motor skills after playing plasticine. Before this activity was implemented, only about 40%-55% of children were able to perform fine motor activities well. However, after several sessions of playing plasticine, the percentage of children who are able to do these activities increases to reach 75%-90%.

One of the indicators that saw the biggest improvement was the ability to pinch and form plasticine, which was initially only 40% and increased to 90%. This shows that plasticine play is very effective in training children's finger muscles, which contributes directly to their fine motor development.

Data Verification

To ensure the accuracy of the data, this study uses a triangulation technique by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and child development records. Interviews with teachers and parents showed that they felt an improvement in children's fine motor skills after playing plasticine regularly. Teachers stated that children are now more confident in using their hands for other activities, such as drawing and writing.

In addition, the data was also verified through child development records made by teachers before and after the implementation of plasticine play activities. The results of the document analysis showed that children who previously had difficulties in fine motor activities began to show better development, both in movement precision and endurance in performing activities with hands.

The results of this study show that playing plasticine can be used as an effective learning strategy in improving fine motor skills of children aged 4-5 years. In addition to

improving hand strength and coordination, this activity also helps children develop their creativity and confidence. Thus, playing plasticine can be part of a more interactive and fun learning method for early childhood.

It is hoped that the results of this study can be a reference for educators and parents in providing the right stimulation for children's fine motor development. In addition, the application of plasticine play activities can also be combined with other methods that support holistic child development.

DISCUSSION

To ensure the accuracy of the results of this study, data validation was carried out using the triangulation method. Triangulation was carried out by comparing three main sources, namely the results of direct observation of children, interviews with teachers and parents, and analysis of child development documents before and after the implementation of plasticine play activities.

Observations were made during several learning sessions at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah, where children were observed while playing plasticine. Interviews with teachers and parents aimed to find out the changes they observed in the child's fine motor skills after participating in this activity. In addition, the child's developmental records that had been documented by the teacher before and after the application were also analyzed to see if there was a significant improvement in the fine motor aspect.

The results of triangulation show that there is a consistency between the data obtained from the three sources. Teachers and parents confirmed that the children showed improvements in finger strength, precision, and hand-eye coordination after playing plasticine regularly. Observational data also showed that children were becoming more skilled at pinching, rolling, and shaping plasticine in more detail.

The validation results showed that the application of plasticine play activities had a positive effect on the fine motor development of children aged 4-5 years. A summary of the validation results from various sources is as follows:

Direct observation showed that children were more active in using their fingers and hands when playing plasticine. Their work is getting neater and more detailed after several learning sessions, and they can be seen with high enthusiasm in participating in this activity. **Interviews with teachers and parents** revealed that teachers saw an improvement in children's skills in using stationery, scissors, and buttoning clothes. Parents also observed that children are more independent in carrying out daily activities that involve hand-eye coordination, as well as being more confident and patient in completing tasks related to fine motor skills. **Analysis of child development documents** showed an increase in skills in fine motor activities. Teachers' notes documented that the percentage of children who were able to perform certain tasks increased significantly after the implementation of plasticine play activities.

With the agreement of the results from various data sources, it can be concluded that plasticine play is an effective method in training fine motor skills in early childhood. This data validation strengthens the research findings and provides a strong basis to recommend plasticine play activities as part of learning for 4-5 year old children at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah and other educational institutions.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that plasticine play activities significantly help in training and improving fine motor skills of 4-5 year old children at RA Muslimat NU Al-Hidayah. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis showed improvements in various fine motor aspects, such as the ability to grasp stationery, pinch, roll, and shape plasticine in more detail. Before the implementation of this activity, many children still had difficulties in controlling finger movements and hand-eye coordination. However, after several sessions of plasticine play, the percentage of children who were able to perform this activity increased significantly, as shown in Table 1.

In addition, this activity also has a positive impact on children's psychosocial development. Children become more confident, patient, and independent in carrying out activities that involve fine motor skills. Teachers and parents also observed that children were more enthusiastic about participating in play-based learning, thus increasing their involvement in school activities.

Academically, the results of this study contribute to the development of play-based learning methods in early childhood education. Plasticine play activities are proven to be an effective alternative method in improving children's fine motor skills. Teachers can use this method as part of the daily curriculum to provide optimal stimulation for children. In addition, this study also adds references in the study of early childhood development, especially in the fine motor aspect and appropriate stimulation methods.

In terms of social contribution, this study provides insight for parents and educators about the importance of providing appropriate stimulation for children's fine motor development. Playing plasticine not only improves children's physical skills, but also trains their creativity, patience, and social coordination in cooperating with friends. Therefore, it is recommended that this activity be applied not only at school but also in the home environment, so that children get consistent and optimal stimulation in their development.

Thus, plasticine play activities can be a simple but effective solution in supporting early childhood development, both in terms of motor, cognitive, and social-emotional.

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