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Efforts to Improve the Fine Motor Skills of 5–6-Year-Old Children Through Finger Painting at Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat

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Abstract:

Fine motor skills are essential for children's early development, particularly in performing activities that require hand-eye coordination, precision, and dexterity. This study aims to enhance the fine motor skills of 5–6-year-old children through finger painting at Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat. The research employs a qualitative approach with an action research method, involving observation, interviews, and documentation techniques. The findings indicate that finger painting significantly contributes to improving children's fine motor skills by strengthening finger muscles, enhancing hand coordination, and fostering creativity. Additionally, this method makes learning more enjoyable and engaging. The study concludes that finger painting is an effective strategy to support fine motor skill development in early childhood education.

Keywords: Fine Motor Skills, Finger Painting, Early Childhood Education, Hand Coordination, Creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a crucial period for laying the foundation for optimal growth and development. During this stage, a conducive environment is needed to provide appropriate stimulation and educational efforts that align with children's needs. This is because early childhood has distinct characteristics in terms of physical, social, emotional, moral and religious, as well as cognitive aspects. One type of formal education pathway is Kindergarten. According to Helmawati (2015:49), Kindergarten is a formal educational institution for early childhood aged 4–6 years. Meanwhile, according to Maimunah (2012:355), Kindergarten is a formal education level following playgroup, intended for children aged 5–6 years. Learning in Kindergarten aims to develop and stimulate six aspects of child development: moral and religious values, language, physical-motor skills, cognitive abilities, social-emotional skills, and arts. All these developmental aspects are stimulated properly in accordance with the child's stage of development.

According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 58 of 2009 concerning Early Childhood Education Standards, early

childhood education (PAUD) is organized before the elementary education level through formal, non-formal, and informal education pathways. The formal education pathway includes Kindergarten (TK), Raudhatul Athfal (RA), and other equivalent institutions; the non-formal education pathway includes Playgroups (KOPER), Childcare Centers (TPA), and other equivalent institutions; while the informal education pathway consists of family education and education provided by the surrounding environment. This classification aligns with UNESCO's (2005) categorization, which includes: (1) Kindergarten (TK) and/or Raudhatul Athfal (RA); (2) Playgroups (KOPER); (3) Childcare Centers (TPA); (4) Integrated Service Posts (Posyandu); and (5) Early Childhood Family Development (BKB) (Mulyana, 2012: pp. 5-6). The development of fine motor skills in children is carried out through hand exercises using creative tools or media such as brushes, pencils, paper, scissors, clay, playdough, sponges, and others. By using these creative media, children can engage in activities that train their hand muscles and coordinate their eyes, minds, and hands. To ensure the successful development of fine motor skills, children are required to have good attention and perceptual abilities, such as quick reaction speed, cooperation skills, discipline, and honesty, in accordance with their capabilities (Depdiknas, 2007).

Based on the author's observations while teaching at RA, it was found that many children tend to be in a hurry and lack patience while playing. As a result, they encounter several challenges in developing their fine motor skills, particularly in eye-hand coordination. Several issues were identified in this regard, including: (1) Monotonous learning activities, such as only using crayons and pencils, which quickly lead to boredom and disinterest among children. (2) Children often struggle to focus during play activities. From the preliminary cycle conducted at Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat, data revealed that out of 15 children aged 5-6 years, 12 children had not yet developed their fine motor skills properly. Their development was still classified as low, below 60%. Based on the researcher's experience and observations, some children had not yet met the standard achievement level stated in the basic competencies (3.6 – 4.6) for fine motor development. This was evident when children were asked to engage in activities such as coloring with crayons or tracing with pencils; they found it uninteresting and struggled to understand the teacher's instructions. Therefore, to enhance children's fine motor skills, teachers must implement engaging activities that attract children's interest in play. Teachers should provide clear guidance and explanations to ensure that children pay attention and follow directions properly. Additionally, activities should focus on finger movements to develop fine motor skills effectively. In response to this need, the author has planned an activity using finger painting as a strategy to improve fine motor skills.

METHODS

This study employs a classroom action research (CAR) approach to improve the fine motor skills of children aged 5-6 years through finger painting activities. The research follows the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The study was conducted at Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat over two cycles, each consisting of two sessions. The participants were 15 children aged 5-6 years from Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat, selected based on preliminary observations indicating that 12 out of 15 children had underdeveloped fine motor skills. Teachers acted as facilitators and observers. Data were collected through observation, structured interviews with teachers, documentation of children's activities, and assessment sheets measuring aspects such as hand coordination, finger strength, and precision. A descriptive qualitative approach was used for data analysis, comparing results from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 to determine the effectiveness of the intervention, with a goal of achieving a minimum of 75% improvement in fine motor skills. The research procedure included planning (identifying challenges and designing activities), action (implementing structured finger painting activities), observation (recording responses and progress), and reflection (evaluating effectiveness and making necessary adjustments). This method

ensures a systematic approach to enhancing fine motor skills in young children while maintaining an engaging and creative learning environment.

RESULTS

Motor skills, derived from the English term "motor ability," refer to the ability to move. Fine motor skills involve coordinated movements of small muscles, particularly in the hands and fingers, essential for tasks like grasping and placing objects. By age four, children's fine motor coordination develops significantly, though they may still struggle with tasks like building block structures. Motor skill development follows key principles: it progresses continuously from simple to complex, follows a uniform sequence, depends on neural maturity, moves from general to specific motions, transitions from reflexive to coordinated movements, and develops from large muscle control to finer movements. Additionally, motor development follows a head-to-toe (cephalocaudal) and center-to-limb (proximodistal) pattern, meaning children gain control of their head and trunk before their limbs and fingers.

Finger painting, as described by Sanggar Pusara (2010), is a painting technique using fingers and hands with water-based paint, promoting fine motor skill development. Ayung Candra P. (2009) states that finger painting engages the whole body, enhancing not only motor skills but also creativity. Witarsono (2009) highlights that this activity fosters imagination, artistic talent, and originality as children experiment with colors and ideas, making it an effective tool for motor skill and creative development. Finger painting in this study is a technique where children freely spread colored paste using their fingers or palms on a surface, creating vibrant, unique, and original artwork. According to Downs (2008), finger painting serves as a medium for artistic expression, helps children improve concentration, making it beneficial for hyperactive children, and supports psychological well-being by allowing free expression and boosting self-confidence. Ma'had Al-Hanif highlights several benefits, including developing fine motor skills by engaging small muscles and nerve maturity in the fingertips, serving as an emotional outlet through color choices, introducing primary and secondary colors, enhancing aesthetic appreciation, stimulating imagination and creativity, reducing hyperactivity in children with autism or ADHD, improving hand-eye coordination, and providing relaxation amidst daily activities.

In Cycle I, the finger painting activity was conducted according to the lesson plan, using colored paint and children's fingers as media. However, several challenges were observed, such as difficulties in moving fingers properly, lack of enthusiasm, less engaging media, incomplete artwork, and difficulty understanding instructions. These issues affected the development of fine motor skills and children's concentration. Due to these shortcomings, the researcher decided to improve the learning activities to make them more engaging and effective in Cycle II. In Cycle II, several improvements were made, including using simpler language for explanations, better classroom organization, and more engaging media. As a result, the activities ran smoothly, and the children showed greater focus and enthusiasm. They actively participated and expressed excitement during the session. The findings confirmed that finger painting successfully improved the fine motor skills of children aged 5-6 years at Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat. Since the targeted improvements were achieved, the research was concluded after Cycle II.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and learning improvements, it can be concluded that efforts to enhance the fine motor skills of children aged 5-6 years through finger painting at Raudhatul Athfal Al Azhar Rantauprapat, using finger painting to draw based on their imagination, is an effective technique. This activity helps teachers improve the quality of early childhood education. The planned finger painting activities, along with improvements and adjustments made, resulted in engaging and effective learning that met

expectations. This is evident from the percentage increase, where achievement in Cycle I was 55% and improved to 88.9% in Cycle II. The improvements were carried out over two cycles according to the scheduled time, with agreed-upon materials, and the expected results were successfully achieved.

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