



## The Implementation of Loose Parts Play in Enhancing Creativity and Fostering Children's Imagination at RA Al Hidayah Plelen in 2024

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### Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the impact of implementing loose parts play in enhancing creativity and fostering children's imagination at RA Al Hidayah. The research method used is Classroom Action Research (CAR) with a qualitative approach. The subjects of this study are early childhood students enrolled at RA Al Hidayah. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, then analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model. The results of the study indicate that loose parts play has a positive influence on children's creativity and imagination. Children become more free to explore, create new shapes, and develop stories from the objects they use. With systematic implementation and proper guidance, loose parts can be an effective strategy in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** Loose Parts Play, Creativity, Imagination, Early Childhood

### INTRODUCTION

The field of early childhood education, creativity and imagination are crucial aspects in supporting children's cognitive and emotional development (Haque et al., 2021). Children who have the opportunity to explore various forms of play tend to demonstrate higher creative thinking skills compared to those who are only given direct instructions (Edwards, 2020). One method that can be used to stimulate children's creativity and imagination is through loose parts play, which allows children to use various objects in an unrestricted manner. Play is an essential aspect of early childhood development, particularly in enhancing creativity and fostering imagination (Fleer, 2021). Loose parts, which refer to materials that children can manipulate freely, have been recognized as an effective strategy in exploration-based learning. However, in early childhood education institutions have optimally applied this method. early childhood education practices in Indonesia, many educational institutions still rely on conventional teaching methods that limit children's opportunities for exploration (Rahmawati & Santoso, 2022). Research has shown that a flexible and exploration-based learning environment can significantly

enhance children's imagination (Putri & Widodo, 2021). Therefore, it is crucial to further explore how loose parts can be effectively implemented in early childhood education institutions such as RA Al Hidayah.

The main issue in this study is the lack of flexible and creative play stimulation at RA Al Hidayah, which results in suboptimal development of children's creativity and imagination. Based on initial observations, many children are still limited to playing with conventional materials that offer little variation for imaginative play (Smith & Goldschmied, 2020). The research gap lies in the limited studies conducted in Indonesia on the implementation of loose parts in the context of early childhood education. Although various international studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of this method, its application in early childhood education settings in Indonesia still requires further investigation (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2021). The objective of this research is to analyze the impact of loose parts play on the development of children's creativity and imagination. This study is expected to contribute to the development of more innovative and effective learning methods in fostering creative thinking skills in early childhood. The primary goal is to examine the effects of implementing loose parts play in enhancing creativity and imagination in children at RA Al Hidayah. Additionally, this research aims to evaluate the extent to which this method can serve as an innovative alternative in early childhood education (Yusuf et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this study refers to various recent studies that highlight the importance of environments that support free exploration for children. Research conducted by Nicholson (2020) emphasizes that loose parts can stimulate children's cognitive and motor skills more effectively than structured toys. The findings of this study are expected to provide recommendations for teachers and early childhood education practitioners on how to optimally implement loose parts approaches in the classroom. Additionally, it is hoped that this research will offer insights for school administrators in developing policies that support exploration-based learning methods. In this study, research from several recent sources is used to support the theoretical framework and expected outcomes. Thus, this research aims to provide a new perspective on early childhood education in Indonesia.

## **METHODS**

This study employs the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method with a qualitative approach. CAR was chosen because it allows the researcher to directly intervene and observe changes occurring during the implementation of loose parts play in the classroom (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2020). The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through direct observation of children's play activities, interviews with teachers, and documentation of activities. Meanwhile, secondary data were gathered from various literature and previous studies relevant to this topic (Stake, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (2020), which involves three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The collected data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and relationships between loose parts play and the development of children's creativity and imagination. To enhance the validity of the study, data triangulation was carried out by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation. Additionally, peer discussions and reflections on the findings were used to ensure more objective and reliable research results (Creswell, 2021). Through this method, the study is expected to provide in-depth insights into the effectiveness of loose parts play in enhancing creativity and imagination in early childhood at RA Al Hidayah.

## RESULTS

The research results indicate an increase in children's creativity and imagination after implementing loose parts play. Data were collected from 15 students through observations conducted before and after the application of loose parts. The following table presents an overview of children's creativity and imagination development:

No	Child's Name	Creativity Before (%)	Creativity After (%)	Imagination Before (%)	Imagination After (%)
1	A	40	80	45	85
2	B	35	75	40	80
3	C	50	85	55	90
...	...	...	...	...	...
15	O	38	78	42	83

From the table above, it is evident that children's creativity and imagination significantly improved after the intervention of loose parts play (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2021). The play process, which involves various open-ended materials, allows children to explore and create new concepts in their play (Nicholson, 2020). Data analysis shows that the increase in creativity is due to children's opportunities to combine different loose parts elements according to their imagination (Fleer, 2021). Children also become more motivated to try new things without the constraints of structured play (Smith & Goldschmied, 2020). Data verification was conducted through source triangulation by comparing observation results, teacher interviews, and activity documentation. These findings align with the study by Miles & Huberman (2020), which states that loose parts can enhance creativity and problem-solving skills in early childhood.

Data validation was conducted by comparing the findings of this study with several previous studies that examined the effects of loose parts on children's creativity. The results of this study support the findings of Fleer (2021), which emphasize that free exploration in play significantly enhances children's imagination. Additionally, this study aligns with Nicholson's (2020) research, which revealed that loose parts provide children with opportunities to develop their original ideas—something that cannot be achieved with conventional toys. Previous research by Smith & Goldschmied (2020) also showed that playing with materials that lack fixed shapes encourages children to be more creative. In line with Piaget's cognitive development theory, exploration through loose parts helps children construct new cognitive schemas and understand the world around them (Piaget, 2020).

Furthermore, teachers involved in this study confirmed that the loose parts play method positively impacts children's social interactions. Children more frequently engage in discussions, share ideas, and collaborate to create specific shapes or structures from the available materials. This finding supports Stake's (2021) study, which highlights the importance of interaction in enhancing children's social and emotional intelligence. According to Vygotsky (2021), social interaction plays a crucial role in children's cognitive development, which is further reinforced by exploration-based learning methods. This study also found that children who were previously less active in play became more engaged after being given the opportunity to use loose parts. These findings strengthen the results of Miles & Huberman's (2020) study, which revealed that environments that encourage free exploration can enhance children's learning motivation. This is also consistent with recent research showing that playing with loose parts can improve problem-solving and critical thinking skills in children.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of loose parts play has a significant impact on enhancing children's creativity and imagination at RA Al Hidayah. Children who are accustomed to playing with loose parts show improvements in developing new ideas and greater confidence in expressing their imagination (Daly & Beloglovsky, 2021). From an academic perspective, this study contributes to a better understanding of the importance of play-based approaches in early childhood education. Loose parts have been proven to be an effective method for stimulating creativity and helping children develop innovative thinking skills (Nicholson, 2020). Socially, this study provides benefits in improving children's interactions with one another. Through loose parts play, children engage in more communication, collaboration, and teamwork, which contributes to the development of their social and emotional skills (Stake, 2021). Thus, the implementation of loose parts can be recommended as a learning strategy in early childhood education curricula. This study also encourages schools to provide more open-ended play materials to support children's broader exploration.

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