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Exploring Classroom Action Research in Improving Children's Skills through Block Playing Activities: An Exploratory Study at PAUD Al-Quran Assu'ada Karawang

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine how classroom action research through block play activities can enhance children's skills. Using a mixed-method approach, the research data were collected from students and teachers at the PAUD Al-Quran Assu'ada Karawang. Children's skills in block play are considered crucial in developing their motor, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. From an Islamic perspective, children are viewed as a trust with the potential to become agents of change in the future. Therefore, providing optimal education and guidance for children is urgent, both by parents and education practitioners. Similarly, according to Article 1, paragraph 14 of Law No. 20 of 2003, children are obligated to receive physical and spiritual guidance. Internalizing religious values and character formation can be achieved through classroom action activities such as play. Data collection techniques used questionnaires, observations, and interviews, and data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman procedures, including data display, data reduction, drawing conclusions. The research findings showed several significant discoveries: 1) the use of cuisenaire blocks can enhance counting abilities in Group A children at PAUD Al-Quran Assu'ada Karawang. The average improvement from pre-action to cycle I was 26.09%, and the average improvement from cycle I to cycle II was 33.15%. 2) Block play activities were found to contribute to enhancing various aspects of children's development, such as fostering interest and motivation in learning, building creativity and imagination, and improving cognitive skills .

Keywords: *Improving Children's Skills, Block Playing Activities, Children's Skills*

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INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, there have been significant developments in the transformation of learning methods among practitioners in international education. One method that has received special attention is action learning (Camille, 2011; Kenney, 2011; Leggat, 2015; Mcnamara, 2014; Mullen, 2010). In a study conducted by Louis Baron, a researcher in the field of education, published in the Journal of Managerial Psychology, he highlighted several findings, including the significant contribution of action learning to the development of Authentic Leadership (AL) (Baron, 2016). He emphasized that action learning, which involves real-world work in solving problems and gaining new insights through a supportive environment, has

proven effective in bringing about real changes in participants' behavior. This suggests that action learning can help participants internalize consistent attitudes and behaviors. Other findings emphasize that action learning has a positive impact on participants' self-awareness development. Action learning, with its focus on reflection, observation, and self-understanding, helps participants become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the context of leadership. This helps participants develop deeper self-awareness and enhance their ability to adapt to change and make appropriate decisions (Baron, 2016). This means that there are significant opportunities and potential for how action research in the classroom can be an effective choice in developing students' abilities in the modern era, particularly in children as the golden generation.

Article 1, paragraph 14 of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System defines Early Childhood Education (PAUD) as an effort of development aimed at children from birth to the age of six years. It is carried out by providing physical and spiritual stimulation to children to continue their education to the next stage. The PAUD standards, established through Ministerial Regulation No. 58 of 2009, include benchmarks for the level of children's development divided into four groups according to age: 0-12 months, 2 years, 2-4 years, and 4-6 years. These benchmarks aim to maintain the quality of the process and results of Early Childhood Education implementation. Children's brains are highly malleable between the ages of four and six, and during this period, they also lay the foundation for various other aspects of growth, including their sense of identity, their ability to think abstractly, their language proficiency, their capacity for self-control, their ability to be independent, their appreciation for art, and their commitment to their religious beliefs and practices. Character formation has become a focus for Muslim scholars in Indonesia, especially in facing the current era's globalization (Ainiyah, 2013; Aprily, 2019; Hartini et al., 2016; Mohammad Rindu Fajar Islamy et al., 2021; Romli et al., 2021).

According to experts, children under the age of six are typically considered part of early development. Therefore, they are regarded as part of the early childhood period from birth until six years old. Many people consider this stage of life as the "Golden Age" because it is during this period that the foundation for their entire life is laid. Due to the remarkable progress achieved in childhood, this period is often referred to as the golden age (Ridwan, 2016). Physical, mental, linguistic, socio-emotional, ego and autonomy development, creativity, morality, and spirituality are all crucial aspects to initiate during this period (Bakkar, 2011). To enable children to develop to their fullest potential, they need to be provided with a learning environment and tailored stimulation that meets their specific needs (Rawwas, 1988). The increasing demand on children to master mathematical concepts and skills has led early childhood education institutions to teach mathematics abilities sporadically and radically. This is done in order for children to understand mathematical concepts from an early age. Teachers employ various methods to ensure children comprehend mathematical concepts effectively, one of which is through the use of worksheets that children need to complete. However, this approach has led to many children becoming lazy or disinterested in completing worksheets, resulting in them falling behind in understanding foundational mathematical concepts. Children get bored with the continuous use of worksheets. The developmental stage of a child influences the teaching methods used by educators. The learning approach for a 2-year-old child clearly cannot be the same as that for a 6-year-old child.

Ideally, children should achieve their developmental milestones according to their age. Based on the stages of child development, children between the ages of 3 and 6 should be able to count and enumerate numbers up to 10 (Ministerial Regulation No. 146 of 2014). At the age of 3 to 4, children should be able to recite numbers from 1 to 10, while at the age of 5 to 6, they should be able to recite number symbols from 1 to 20. Additionally, they should be able to differentiate various colors and geometric shapes (Ministerial Regulation No. 137 of 2014). However, many children between the ages of 3 and 6 still struggle with these foundational mathematical concepts. The mathematical abilities of 3 to 4-year-old children are influenced by their cognitive development and thinking abilities. According to Piaget (in Soetjiningsih, 2012: 194), the cognitive development patterns in children aged 2 to 7 falls into the preoperational stage. During this stage, children use symbols to represent concepts. Their ability to comprehend symbolic concepts allows them to perform actions related to the objects they observe. This statement suggests that children generally have a better understanding of concrete objects compared to abstract ones.

During the formative years of life, individuals undergo rapid growth as preparation for their future lives. In terms of perspectives, focus, interests, and acceptance of learning, early childhood stands out as a separate and unique developmental period. Early childhood education plays a crucial role in optimizing the development of religious character from an early age (Zain, 2020; Zati, 2018). Due to their unique experiences, children require an individualized approach to education. The expression "golden age" is often used when referring to a child's learning potential. It is essential for parents to pay attention to this peak period of development. At this age, children learn best through play. Therefore, early childhood education combines teaching methods that encompass religious, socio-emotional, physical-motor, cognitive, linguistic, and creative values in nurturing children's development across various domains. Values such as empathy and compassion are examples of developmental elements that should be fostered during a child's formative years (Hasan, 2016). Parents and early childhood educators are concerned about their children's cognitive growth. A child's cognitive capacity refers to their thinking abilities, including their capacity for engaging in cerebral processes. The cognitive component aims to enhance children's brain capabilities, encompassing aspects such as memory, understanding, problem-solving skills, and creative thinking. Children's intelligence allows us to see them as unique individuals constructing their own understanding of the universe.

Each child's brain develops in its own unique way, and some may have better thinking skills than others at a young age. However, this does not mean that children with lower cognitive abilities will not experience improvement in their thinking abilities. Allah SWT has bestowed parents with the most precious gift in the world when He created a child (Islamy, 2022; Ramdan & Fauziah, 2019). If a child does not receive appropriate nurturing from their parents, it will have a negative impact on their brain development, making parents the primary factor in a child's growth and development. Parents also play a vital role in helping their children fulfill their future needs by providing them with appropriate stimulation and support (Al-Adawi, 1998; Ramdan & Fauziah, 2019). Having a strong understanding of early mathematics is crucial for progressing in the field. In the development of early mathematics, there needs to be a continuous and interconnected process that will continue to develop into an ability. The basic understanding or abilities of children in early mathematics include: 1) One-to-one correspondence, 2) Counting and enumeration, 3) Ordering, 4) Calculation, 5) Classification, 6) Measurement, 7) Comparison, 8) Geometry (shapes), 9)

Patterns. Each concept can be taught formally or informally during activities in school. The use of media and materials can also be adjusted to the concept being taught. Young children usually have a strong understanding of concepts such as left and right, up and down, front and back, inside and outside, first and last among others, and moving forward and backward. After observing three or four repetitions of a pattern, such as blue, red, white, a child will be able to anticipate what comes next.

Introducing five-year-old children to constructive block play, where their action involves assembling or arranging blocks, is a great idea. Mathematics, language, social skills, and physical development are just a few of the many domains in which children benefit greatly from playing with blocks. Many discoveries are made, and problem-solving skills are naturally developed as children play with blocks. Their level of mental maturity can be observed by observing the progression from simple to complex construction methods. As a result, children's brains are effectively utilized. By exploring the world around them, they will discover mathematical concepts related to shapes, sizes, colors, meanings, equality, balance, etc. In terms of early education, most people agree that blocks are the best and most useful toys available. Educational aids in the form of pieces with varied shapes and sizes, referred to as blocks by M. Fadlillah, are described. Mulyasa states that a block center consists of blocks of various sizes, colors, and textures. Here, children can engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, and early mathematical abilities while building and playing with blocks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Action Learning in a Scientists lens

In the last few decades, there has been significant development in the transformation of learning methods among practitioners of international education. One method that has received special attention is action learning (Brones, 2017; Camille, 2011; Kenney, 2011; Leggat, 2015; McNamara, 2014; Mullen, 2010; Tufek, 2020). In a research study conducted by Louis Baron, an education researcher, published in the Journal of Managerial Psychology, he highlighted several findings, including the significant contribution of action learning to the development of Authentic Leadership (AL) (Baron, 2016). Baron emphasizes that action learning, which involves real work in solving problems and gaining new insights through a supportive environment, has been proven effective in bringing about real changes in participants' behavior. This indicates that action learning can help participants internalize consistent attitudes and behaviors. Other findings emphasize that action learning has a positive impact on participants' self-awareness development. Action learning, with its focus on reflection, observation, and self-understanding, helps participants become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and actions in the context of leadership. It helps participants develop deeper self-awareness and enhances their ability to adapt to change and make appropriate decisions (Baron, 2016). This means that there are significant opportunities and potential for how action research in the classroom can be an effective choice in developing students' abilities in the modern era, especially for children as the golden generation.

The PTK (Action Research) approach is typically implemented according to a predetermined time interval or cycle. There are several stages of examination throughout each cycle that must be fulfilled to achieve the desired outcomes for the researcher. The PTK cycle consists of four fundamental phases: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The Kurt Lewin model, the Kemmis and McTaggart model, the John Elliot model, the Dave Ebbut model, and the Suharsimi Arikunto model are

just five of many models that contribute to the framework of PTK. Here is a description and analysis of the five theories proposed by these experts: 1) Kurt Lewin Model: Experts have built and refined Kurt Lewin's original model. Planning, taking action, observing results, and reflecting on the experience form what Kurt Lewin referred to as the action research cycle. 2) Kemmis and McTaggart Model: The Kemmis and McTaggart approach is built upon the work of Kurt Lewin. There are not many significant differences between the two. This type is popular due to its clarity and simplicity. There are many possible iterations of the Kemmis and McTaggart design, but they all have the same phases: planning, acting, and reflecting. These steps are performed as often as necessary to achieve the research goals. 3) John Elliott Model: The John Elliott model, like the Kemmis and McTaggart model, is an extension of the original Lewin model. Elliott aimed to provide more step-by-step explanations of the study process. The basic concept remains the same: identify the problem, design a series of actions believed to solve the problem, implement those actions, monitor their effectiveness, and repeat as needed. John Elliott has adapted a graphical model of PTK, which you can see below.

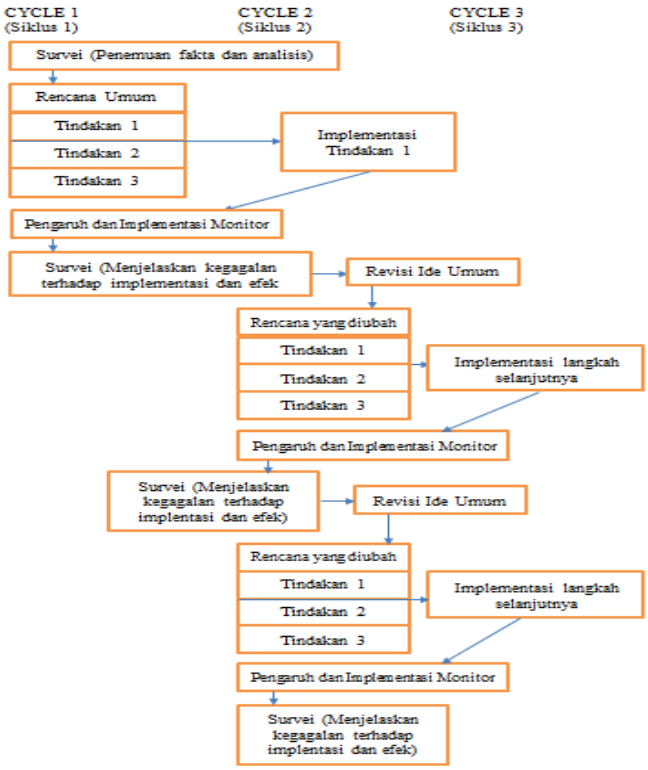


Figure. Model John Elliott

Fourth, the Dave Ebbut Model by Kurt Lewin, Jhon Elliott, and Kemmis and McTaggart became the inspiration for Dave Ebbut's approach. The PTK model from experts is very good, but there are still a number of things or components that are not quite right, according to Dave Ebbut, they need to be improved.

Children's Education in the Perspective of Islamic Religion

Education of children from the perspective of Islam is considered a weighty task, requiring time and is regarded as a noble duty (Imron, 2016; Mudlofir, 2016; Yusufi,

2019). In the eyes of Muslim scholars, the Quran, as the primary source of teachings, touches upon various aspects of child upbringing, education, and instruction, as found in Surah At-Tahrim verse 6, Surah Al-Baqarah verse 233, Surah Al-Isra verse 23 (Al-Qurthūbī, 1964; Katsīr, 1999; Thanthawi, 1987). The process of educating children holds a high level of urgency for several reasons: 1) Following the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his companions, and the early generations in educating their followers. By understanding how they educated their followers, we can comprehend how to educate our own children. 2) Through education, self-resilience can be nurtured in children, enabling them to withstand temptations and doubts. Education strengthens their obedience to Allah. 3) Education is a task that prepares children to face difficulties, trials, and challenges they may encounter in the future. 4) Education prepares children to fulfill the assigned roles that benefit themselves, their communities, and the ummah (Muslim community) (Bakkar, 2008, 2011).

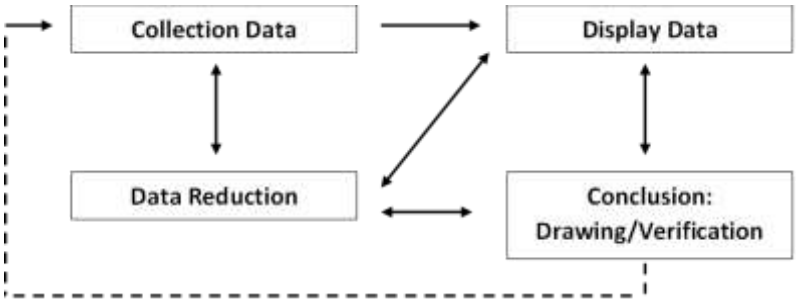
In an essay written by Sheikh Abdurrahman Al-Ayid, an educational consultant and Muslim scholar, in his work titled "Kaifiyyah Tarbiyyah Al-Aulad," he emphasizes that the process of education is not limited to intellectual aspects alone. Education encompasses various different aspects, such as faith education, moral education, physical education, intellectual education, psychological education, social education, sexual education, and so on. This means that we must understand that education is not only limited to physical education alone, nor is it limited to introducing children to certain ethics and manners. Education has a broader and more comprehensive scope than that. This highlights the importance of a holistic and comprehensive approach to education to ensure balanced and optimal development for children. By understanding the various aspects of education, we can design a comprehensive educational program that takes into account the holistic needs of children. For example, it involves not only providing academic knowledge but also considering moral development, social skills, physical health, and other aspects that contribute to the formation of a well-rounded individual.

METHOD

The type of research being conducted is qualitative with a predominance of action research techniques. Meanwhile, Sanford argues that conducting action research in the classroom is a cyclical process that includes analysis, implementation, further fact-finding, and evaluation. The research is conducted at the Al-Quran Assu'ada Early Childhood Education (PAUD) group located in Parungsari Village, Telukjambe Barat Subdistrict, Karawang Regency. The research was conducted between April and May 2023. To maximize the research outcomes, we divided the action plan into two phases: 1) Cycle 1 and 2) Cycle 2. The activities conducted in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 include planning, classroom action, observation, and reflection. The success criteria for the action are crucial in this research.

Furthermore, our research data is divided into two categories: primary data and secondary data. Primary data is collected directly from the research subjects, which are the students' abilities to improve their mathematics skills. Secondary data is gathered from various sources such as media, journals, books, or from previous researchers. The data sources are obtained from the students of Class B in the Al-Quran Assu'ada PAUD, Parungsari Village, Telukjambe Barat Subdistrict, Karawang Regency, for the academic year 2022/2023, to determine whether the use of Cuisenaire rods can improve children's early math skills and how effective they are in learning. The data collection techniques used are: 1) Observation, 2) Interviews, 3) Documentation. As for

data analysis, we adopted the Miles and Huberman Technique, the operational steps of which can be seen in the diagram below



Gambar. Miles and Huberman framework Data Analysis Diagram

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Improving Children's Counting Ability

Based on the observations made before taking action, the researcher found that the counting ability of children in Group A of Paud Al-Qur'an Assu'ada Karawang was still limited. The children were only able to count from 1 to 10 but were unable to demonstrate the quantity of objects. The majority of children were unable to show the symbolic representation of numbers according to the quantity of objects. This finding contradicts the theory proposed by Hartnett and Gelman, which states that by the age of five, children have developed the concept of one-to-one correspondence in numbers. They should be able to comprehend and assign numerical values to the objects they count. Therefore, the researcher attempted to take action to improve counting skills using Cuisenaire rods. The researcher has demonstrated that using Cuisenaire rods can enhance counting abilities in children in Group A of Paud Al-Qur'an Assu'ada Karawang. The improvement in counting abilities was evident from the average scores before and after the intervention. The average scores showed a significant increase in each cycle.

This improvement can be attributed to the fact that children learn to count by physically manipulating actual objects using Cuisenaire rods. At the age of 4-5, children are in the preoperational stage of thinking, as described by Monks et al. This stage is still highly egocentric, meaning children are not yet able to take the perspective of others perceptually, emotionally, and conceptually. Therefore, counting activities using Cuisenaire rods can assist teachers in delivering information and help children understand the concept of numbers more easily. When children comprehend the concept of numbers through Cuisenaire rods, they place the rods while reciting the corresponding numbers such as one, two, three, and so on. The rods represent the numbers mentioned by the children, making numbers less abstract for them. This aligns with Sudaryanti's view that numbers are considered abstract when they are not associated with physical objects because numbers are signs or symbols that represent objects. Therefore, the use of Cuisenaire rods in counting activities can provide concrete representations of numbers, aiding children in understanding the concept of numbers effectively.

In the learning activities of counting using Cuisenaire rods, children have the opportunity to directly count and place the rods on their respective segments, allowing

them to gain understanding. This aligns with Anggani Sudhono's viewpoint, stating that in terms of mathematical understanding, children will comprehend concepts through hands-on experiences or playing with concrete objects. Children engage in various counting activities such as finding and pointing to numbers as called out by the teacher, arranging numbers with objects, and searching for numbers and connecting them with the rods. These learning activities stimulate children's thinking to solve problems and find answers on their own. Through these direct experiences, children's understanding of counting can be optimized. This aligns with the principles of counting activities for children mentioned in the "Pedoman Permainan Berhitung di PAUD" book by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendikbud), which states that counting learning will be successful if children are given the opportunity to participate and are stimulated to solve problems independently.

The use of colorful Cuisenaire rods makes the counting activities more appealing and engaging for children. Additionally, various media such as number flags, number clouds, and magical number boxes are used to introduce number symbols. Children directly connect the numbers with the quantity of rods. With these diverse activities, children become more enthusiastic and enjoy participating in counting activities. This type of learning aligns with the principles of counting activities for children mentioned in the "Pedoman Permainan Berhitung di PAUD" book by Kemendikbud, which emphasizes that number learning requires a fun atmosphere and provides a sense of safety and freedom for children. Therefore, appropriate, attractive, and varied teaching aids or media that are easy to use and safe are necessary. Thus, the use of Cuisenaire rods can help develop children's counting skills and facilitate their understanding of number concepts. This aligns with Cucu Eliyawati's statement that Cuisenaire rods were created to develop children's counting skills, introduce numbers, and improve their reasoning abilities.

Based on the research findings and description above, it shows that using Cuisenaire rods can improve counting skills in children of Group A at Paud Al-Qur'an Assu'ada Karawang. This can be seen from the average scores of the research indicators, which have shown an improvement. Prior to the intervention, the ability of children to count objects from 1 to 10 was only 30.43%. Meanwhile, the ability of children to count by pointing to objects from 1 to 10 with the criteria of proficiency was 21.74%. The percentage of children who met the criteria for making a sequence of numbers from 1 to 10 with objects was 26.09%. The ability to connect number symbols with objects from 1 to 10 was achieved by 26.09% of children with the criteria of proficiency. In Cycle I, the counting skills of children in Group A at Paud Al-Qur'an Assu'ada Karawang showed improvement. The average counting ability in Cycle I was as follows: counting a large number of objects from 1 to 10 with the criteria of proficiency reached 56.52%; counting by pointing to objects from 1 to 10 had an average score of 47.83% meeting the criteria of proficiency; making a sequence of numbers from 1 to 10 with objects reached the criteria of proficiency by 52.18% and had an average score of 52.18% meeting the criteria of proficiency; connecting number symbols with objects from 1 to 10 had an average score of 52.18% meeting the criteria of proficiency.

However, these results did not meet the predetermined targets based on the success criteria due to several obstacles, including: (1) The teacher explained the use of Cuisenaire rods in counting activities too quickly, making the children less understanding and resulting in confusion during implementation. (2) The teacher did not provide examples during the second meeting for each indicator. This required

explaining again one by one to the children, which took more time and delayed the children's break time. (3) Only one activity, counting with Cuisenaire rods, was carried out during the core activity. The children who were waiting for their turn had no activities, resulting in a noisy and restless classroom. (4) Some children still needed assistance from the teacher in counting. With these obstacles, it is necessary to implement Cycle II with improvements to address the obstacles that emerged during Cycle I. The improvements include: (1) The teacher provides more detailed explanations at a slower pace so that the children can understand the explanations. (2) The teacher demonstrates counting activities with Cuisenaire rods at each meeting, so that the children are not confused during the activity and less time is wasted. (3) The researcher and teacher provide other activities for children who are waiting for their turn to count, so that the classroom is better managed. (4) Children who cannot count yet are given motivation and additional guidance to help them succeed.

After implementing the improvements, the results of Cycle II showed a significant improvement. The average results of Cycle II were as follows: in the indicator of counting a large number of objects from 1 to 10, there were 89.13% of children who met the criteria of proficiency, and in the indicator of counting by pointing to objects from 1 to 10, there were 82.61% of children who met the criteria of proficiency. For the indicator of making a sequence of numbers from 1 to 10 with objects, there were 84.78% of children who met the criteria of proficiency, and in connecting number symbols with objects from 1 to 10, there were 84.78% of children who met the criteria of proficiency. Based on these results, no further action was taken in the subsequent cycles, as the results had already reached the predetermined target of > 80%. Considering the strengths and weaknesses throughout the research process, it can be concluded that using Cuisenaire rods can improve counting skills in children of Group A at Paud Al-Qur'an Assu'ada Karawang.

Improving Children's Cognitive Skills and Imagination

The development of cognitive skills in children is an important process in their intellectual growth. Cognitive skills encompass thinking abilities, attention, memory, problem-solving, language comprehension, and speaking. To enhance the development of children's cognitive skills, there are several approaches that can be taken. Firstly, it is important to provide appropriate and adequate stimulation for children. This can be done by offering a wide range of sensory experiences and opportunities for play and exploration. Through play, children can develop logical thinking skills, sharpen their creativity, and expand their understanding of the world. Additionally, reading to children and encouraging them to read on their own can help improve their language comprehension and speaking abilities. Secondly, positive social interactions also play a significant role in enhancing children's cognitive skills. Through interactions with adults and peers, children can learn to communicate, share ideas, and solve problems together. Involving children in group games, discussions, or collaborative projects can also stimulate their critical thinking and social skills. In this regard, an environment that is supportive and filled with emotional support is also crucial, as it provides the necessary sense of security and confidence for children to experiment and learn. By implementing these approaches, parents and caregivers can make a significant contribution to enhancing children's cognitive skill development. In facilitating this process, it is important to respect the individual pace and interests of children, provide challenges appropriate to their developmental level, and offer positive feedback that reinforces their achievements. In doing so, children can develop

strong cognitive skills that will help them explore the world, learn, and reach their intellectual potential to the fullest.

In our observation of teachers and students in the field, the classroom action research activities using block games have indeed contributed to improving cognitive skills. We highlight the improvement indicators from several aspects: 1) Attention and concentration: During the learning process, students focused on the given instructions, showed concentration, and enjoyed the learning activities. 2) Logical thinking abilities: Almost all students understood cause-and-effect relationships, recognized patterns, and applied logical thinking in problem-solving based on block games. 3) Language skills: Students demonstrated good understanding and usage of language, including vocabulary comprehension, sentence structure, and clear speaking abilities. 4) Creativity: The children showed interest in trying new things, using new methods to solve problems, developing their imagination, and using cognitive skills to generate innovative solutions in unstructured situations.

From the perspective of Islam, education plays a crucial role in shaping the character and morals of children. The early generations of Muslims, known as the Salaf, placed great emphasis on the education of their children and even provided specialized educators for this purpose. A Hadith explains that children are born in a natural and pure state called "fitrah." However, education is considered crucial in preserving or shaping this natural state. This belief indicates that education has a significant impact on shaping the personality and behavior of children. On the other hand, scholars emphasize that children tend to imitate and adopt the values instilled by their parents. Particularly in their early years, the majority of scholars view the education provided during early childhood as more effective and influential than education provided at later stages. Therefore, the importance of providing quality education from an early age is emphasized.

Picture. The Learning Process at PAUD Assu'ada Karawang

Creating and Encouraging Interest in Learning Motivation

Creating and fostering interest and motivation for learning is key to creating a productive educational environment and achieving good outcomes. There are several

ways to achieve this. Firstly, it is important to create a fun and engaging learning atmosphere for students. Teachers can use innovative teaching methods, such as incorporating technology in learning, utilizing educational games, or providing hands-on experiences outside the classroom. This will help capture students' interest and actively involve them in the learning process. Additionally, providing recognition and positive reinforcement to students can also help increase their motivation. Genuine praise for their achievements, providing constructive feedback, and giving opportunities for active participation in class activities will provide additional encouragement for students to continue learning and improving themselves. Moreover, it is important to connect learning to students' personal interests and goals. Teachers can relate the learning material to real-life situations or students' specific interests. This will help enhance students' intrinsic motivation, where they learn out of their own desire to explore and expand their knowledge.

In our observation of teachers and students in the field, the classroom action research activities using block games have indeed contributed to increasing students' interest and motivation for learning. This can be observed by monitoring the attendance rate of the children and their active involvement in block game activities. We observed nearly 100% attendance of children at PAUD Assu'ada. They were highly enthusiastic and actively participated in the series of activities. The children made an extra effort to understand the material, carefully complete tasks, and engage in discussion sessions. One challenge we faced in the classroom was related to attention span. Children's concentration time for focusing on a single activity was limited, which is why it is important for teachers to optimize the internalization of religious values at the beginning of the lesson.

Muslim intellectual, emphasizes that this principle was applied by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in his teaching to his companions. He referred to this principle as "at-*tasyji' ala al-ikhtasr min al-khairat*," which means motivating to continuously seek positive and good values (Rawwas, 1988). Furthermore, the verses of the Quran and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also remind Muslims to safeguard themselves and their families from the fire of Hell, including fulfilling their prayers and providing guidance to their children. This shows that Islam places serious attention on the education of children and the importance of guiding them on the right path. In the context of developing students' interest and motivation in learning, the principles taught by Islam can serve as a strong foundation. When parents and educators pay special attention to the education of children, including teaching Islamic values and introducing them to the practice of prayer, they build a strong moral and spiritual foundation. This can help motivate students to learn with higher intentions and find purpose in their education.

Additionally, Islam also emphasizes the responsibility of parents and educators in raising their children (Ulwan, 1983). Fathers are seen as leaders in the family and responsible for the education of their children, while mothers also play an important role as educators and caregivers within the household. With the proper understanding of these responsibilities, parents and educators can create an environment that supports the development of students' interests and motivation in learning. In developing students' interest and motivation in learning, the principles taught by Islam can be applied through educational practices centered around religious values, setting a good example, and providing teachings relevant to students' lives. Linking learning materials to Islamic principles and demonstrating their connection to the values they adhere to can enhance students' interest and motivation to learn. Additionally,

providing meaningful instruction, offering praise and positive reinforcement, and creating a safe and supportive environment can help students feel motivated and actively engaged in the learning process. By integrating Islamic principles in the education of children with an approach that fosters students' interest and motivation in learning, we can create a positive and inspirational environment for them to grow and develop academically, morally, and spiritually.

Picture. Enthusiastic students in the learning process

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of Cuisenaire rods can enhance counting skills in Group A children at Paud Al-Qur'an Assu'ada Karawang. The average improvement from pre-intervention to Cycle I was 26.09%, and the average improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II was 33.15%. The improvement process was evident during Cycle I and Cycle II, with the following steps in the counting activity using Cuisenaire rods: 1) The teacher introduces Cuisenaire rods to the children. 2) The teacher invites the children to count the number of rods in each segment together. 3) The children are asked to show and count the number of rods according to the number mentioned by the teacher. 4) The teacher introduces number symbols to the children. 5) The children are asked to arrange the rods from one segment to ten. 6) The children are asked to find and connect the number of rods with their corresponding number symbols. Furthermore, another notable finding is that the block games seem to be a pathway to enhancing other abilities, such as cognitive skills, enthusiasm for learning (interest and motivation), and the ability to imagine.

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