



Implementation of Child-Centered Learning to Increase Independence in the PKK Gemilang Tamansatriyan Playgroup

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Abstract

Child-centered learning is unique in contributing to early childhood independence. The implementation of child-centered learning requires extra attention from the teacher's side, but from the student's side, it requires focused attention that allows for the absence of teachers in activities. This qualitative descriptive study, which lasted for one year, explained the important role of teachers and parents in the process of early childhood independence using a centered learning approach. The research results show that the role of teachers in the process of increasing children's independence in learning requires a fairly high level of teacher innovation and sensitivity in the process of implementing centered learning. Teachers still need a considerable amount of time to build early childhood independence comprehensively. Starting from sensitivity to students, learning innovation in centers, and communication with parents. Teachers understand the importance of early childhood independence learning will greatly influence the character of early childhood in the future. Teachers' hard work in unique centered learning innovations must be appreciated because it has many complex functions and benefits for early childhood development.

Keywords: Child-Centered Learning, Independence, Teachers

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a very strategic educational stage in forming the foundation of a child's physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and moral development. Early childhood, especially ages 3–4, is known as the golden age, where children experience very rapid and fundamental growth and development. The abilities developed in children are expected to become a strong foundation for early childhood as they grow into adulthood (Juliana & Ismaraidha, 2025). Early childhood grows into adulthood and becomes individuals with character, strength, and the ability to become useful human beings both socially and individually.

Early childhood is also required to be equipped with learning that strengthens abilities and independence by teachers at school, so appropriate methods are needed according to the potential and criteria of individuals based on individual differences. Treatment and learning with these criteria increase children's independence with the hope that they will become complete human beings when they grow into adulthood. Independence is a child's ability to perform certain tasks independently without relying on adults, such as feeding themselves, tidying up toys, choosing activities, and being responsible for the choices they make. Early childhood independence learning does not just

happen; it requires considerable effort, methods, and patterns to provide optimal independence learning, tailored to the potential and characteristics of early childhood. Schools, teachers, and all involved parties require effective and integrated synergy to provide the best learning experience for early childhood, especially in the independence learning process.

The active role of parents at home, creative and innovative teachers, and other parties involved in the independence learning process for early childhood, from policy to practice, requires effective collaboration. The role of teachers in schools is central to providing appropriate learning tailored to the character and potential of early childhood. Schools and teachers are inseparable in the process of fostering independence in early childhood. Therefore, teachers must have specific strategies tailored to the specific conditions and goals of the school to facilitate independence learning in early childhood (Barus & Damanik, 2025).

The process of student independence learning in schools certainly has a unique and distinct chronology. Schools have specific, unique, and distinct methods, especially in terms of their learning models, despite sharing the same goals or curriculum designs: to improve the performance of early childhood learners. This is no exception for the independence learning process, which encourages teachers to develop effective assessment and student identification methods. Teachers are required to manage and facilitate comprehensive and targeted learning patterns for independence, based on individual differences (Sari & Mudjiran, 2020).

Not many schools are able to specifically facilitate learning with appropriate and suitable infrastructure, so teachers are encouraged to innovate, including modifying infrastructure, media, equipment, and strategies to effectively adapt the independence learning pattern. Teachers work hard to adapt appropriate learning strategies. Schools also face challenges and obstacles in implementing independent learning. This encourages teacher creativity and innovation in the learning process using existing resources. Conditions at the PKK Gemilang Tamansatriyan Playgroup (KB) are not much different from other early childhood education institutions.

Adequate infrastructure and highly committed human resources in early childhood education also require innovation to facilitate effective learning. Obstacles and constraints experienced are being minimized or overcome using all available resources. Obstacles and challenges include the persistence of some children's high dependence on teachers or parents for simple activities, passive attitudes and lack of participation in group activities, and crying when left by their parents or caregivers to study independently at school. Some children appear reluctant to be separated from their parents to the point of crying, are unable to make decisions about play activities, and lack initiative in learning activities and remain silent. This indicates that the learning process used does not fully provide space for children to explore and develop independently and requires innovation and modifications to suit the child's circumstances. To address this, a learning approach is needed that is specifically tailored to the child's developmental needs, particularly for the element of independence that is strengthened and integrated into the teaching and learning process.

The learning approach at KB PKK Gemilang, which is based on child-centered learning, is the basis for how the independent learning process has certain unique characteristics. This approach views children as active subjects in the learning process, where teachers act as facilitators who provide a safe, stimulus-rich learning environment tailored to the child's needs and interests. However, teachers must minimize their role and role to enhance children's abilities, particularly independence in the learning process (Khairiyah & Kurinci, 2022). Teachers must still provide support during the learning process but must also maintain distance to stimulate elements of independence within children. The effectiveness of movement and the learning process is key to the process of learning independence for students. In practice, this approach can be implemented through

the center method, a learning strategy that provides various play and learning areas according to the child's developmental aspects, such as art centers, block centers, household centers, book centers, and science centers. The center-based learning approach is designed to allow children to choose activities according to their interests, interact with peers, and complete tasks independently in a structured environment. Thus, children not only learn basic academic skills but also learn self-awareness, emotional management, decision-making, and responsibility—skills that are the foundation of independence (Putri, 2023).

The teacher's model has the unique ability to provide a pattern of independent learning through the implementation of child-centered learning. In the local context, such as that at the Gemilang Tamansatriyan Family Welfare Movement (KB PKK), this research presents a new contribution through a comprehensive descriptive study of how this learning model can concretely support the development of independence in children aged 3–4 years in the field. This study aims to describe the implementation of child-centered learning through the center method to increase independence at the Gemilang Tamansatriyan Family Welfare Movement (KB PKK).

METHOD

This research is a qualitative descriptive study conducted over a period of three months with a focus on participatory observation. The main goal of the study is to observe and analyze real-life phenomena related to the independence of children at KB PKK Gemilang Tamansatriyan. Many of these children face difficulties in demonstrating independence in their daily activities, such as self-care, decision-making, and completing simple tasks without adult assistance. Through close collaboration with teachers, the research aims to identify the root causes of these challenges and develop effective strategies to foster independence using child-centered learning approaches (Moleong, 2010).

The study adopts a participatory observation approach, allowing the researchers to immerse themselves directly in the learning environment. This approach ensures that the data collected truly reflects the children's daily experiences and the teaching practices implemented in the classroom. By being actively involved, the researchers can observe the interaction between teachers and students, assess the level of children's autonomy, and evaluate how specific teaching strategies encourage or hinder the development of independence. This method also allows for immediate feedback and adjustments during the research process, making it highly relevant and dynamic.

Multiple data collection techniques were employed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Observations of early childhood behavior were systematically recorded, focusing on how children attempted to perform tasks independently. Interviews with several parents were conducted to gain additional insights into the children's behavior and level of independence at home. In addition, documentation of learning activities, lesson plans, and classroom interactions provided supporting data. A literature review was also carried out to connect the findings with existing theories of independence and child-centered learning, ensuring that the research is grounded in a solid theoretical framework (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

For data analysis, the Miles and Huberman model was applied, which involves three key stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This method allows researchers to organize data systematically, identify patterns, and draw meaningful conclusions from the findings. The research subjects included all 4 teachers and 45 students at KB PKK Gemilang, providing a rich source of qualitative data. By combining observational insights with input from teachers and parents, the research provides a holistic understanding of the factors that influence children's independence and highlights the effectiveness of child-centered learning as a strategy for improving these skills.

This 3-month qualitative descriptive research through a participatory observation research process to observe real phenomena, namely the condition of children at the KB PKK Gemilang Tamansatriyan who experience difficulties in demonstrating independence to then be handled effectively by teachers through child-centered learning (Moleong, 2010). The analysis techniques used were observation of early childhood, interviews with some parents, and learning documentation, as well as literature review conducted by examining relevant theories of independence and child-centered learning to then be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The research subjects were all 4 teachers and 45 students at the KB PKK Gemilang.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The center approach is a learning approach that emphasizes children's direct experiences through meaningful play activities. Teachers act as facilitators by bringing the real world into the classroom, allowing children to connect their knowledge with everyday life. The center approach was implemented at the Gemilang Tamansatriyan Family Planning (KB PKK) program for one month, starting in early May 2024 and ending in late June 2025. Observations and interviews revealed that students' behavior, assessed by teachers, did not demonstrate independence when they first arrived at school. The most obvious observation was that MA was still accompanied by a parent during lessons. MA, a student at the Gemilang Tamansatriyan Family Planning (KB PKK), had not yet demonstrated independence at school. He often asked his parents to wait for him during the learning process. Teachers also conducted in-depth observations of MA on a daily basis. Based on these observations, it was discovered that MA displayed a lack of self-confidence, tended to be aggressive, was unable to follow rules, and was not yet as independent as his peers. The teacher's initial step was to observe MA's parents to determine their parenting patterns and child development at home. Observations showed that at home, MA often played alone, was easily angered, and rarely interacted or played with peers in the neighborhood. When arriving at school, MA often brought her favorite toys such as dolls, flags, toy cars, and other toys. When the teacher greeted her, MA displayed aggressive behavior such as hitting, screaming, refusing to shake hands or respond to greetings, and always clutching her mother's clothes and asking to be waited for during the learning process. The next day, MA still brought her favorite doll. The teacher took a different approach, namely by welcoming MA's mother and doll first, rather than directly greeting MA. The teacher also allowed MA to be accompanied by her parents at first while slowly finding ways to build an emotional bond with her. This process lasted approximately six months. During this approach period, the teacher consistently tried to approach MA with a gentle and non-coercive approach. The teacher did not demand that MA immediately participate in activities such as praying or playing with friends. Instead, the teacher slowly invited her through activities she enjoyed, such as painting, pasting, and playing puzzles. During this process, MA still preferred to play alone and did not want to mingle with her friends. The teacher continued to accompany MA and follow the flow of the game that MA enjoyed until he felt completely comfortable. Interestingly, while playing with MA, the teacher was not allowed to accompany the other children. However, the teacher continued to provide understanding and motivation that playing with friends can be more fun than playing alone. Although Alfarizki was initially uninterested, over time he began to show positive changes. Gradually, MA began to show self-confidence: he was willing to shake hands and respond to the teacher's greetings, started playing with friends, showed signs of mutual assistance, and began using the words "please" and "thank you" in interactions. He also demonstrated independence and the courage to play and learn without parental supervision. The teacher used various approaches and implemented child-centered, center-based learning because he recognized that each child has different characteristics and developmental stages. These differences can be influenced by many factors, such as parenting styles at home and the child's social environment. An empathetic

and child-centered approach allows the teacher to understand and support each child's development individually, with the hope that they can develop optimally according to their individual potential. In this process, centered learning appears to significantly influence MA students' adaptation to learning, particularly their independence when having to study alone. Several systematic steps can also be categorized into a specific scheme for independent learning for MA students.

Systematically, the cultivation of independence begins with the implementation of a centered approach, especially for MA (Islamic elementary school). The focus is on developing pre-reading, pre-writing, and pre-numeracy skills. Activities in this center include the introduction of letters, numbers, and various fine motor skills exercises that support children's readiness to learn to read and write. Implementation in learning at KB PKK Gemilang is an activity called hide-and-seek letters. Learning begins with educators preparing a plan developed together with parents. Educators and parents share tasks; parents are in charge of preparing the tools and materials to be used, while educators explain the rules and how to play to students. MA's parents are no exception. After completing their preparations, students are invited to search for each letter that has been prepared and hidden by the parents one by one. The independence seen in this learning is that students are more focused on learning, so students, especially MA, are slightly oblivious to their parents' presence at school. Students are happy to be able to find letters and be able to name the letters that have been mentioned. Thus, children's self-confidence begins to grow little by little. Efforts made by educators to instill independence in children are by: providing examples, getting used to it, and motivating (Sefriyanti & Diana, 2021).

The next step in fostering independence is the implementation of a block center. Children play with various types of blocks to build various structures, developing an understanding of shape, size, space, and simple mathematical concepts. This center also trains gross and fine motor skills, as well as children's creativity. Implementation in learning at KB PKK Gemilang is through block play activities where children can develop their creativity through block play activities such as stacking, building houses, constructing buildings, and building bridges using various shapes, sizes, and colors of blocks. The independence seen in block play activities is that students can play according to their imagination, are able to work together with their peers, and return blocks to their place after playing. MA students appear quite enthusiastic about participating in collaboration with their peers, although on several occasions the teacher also tries to focus MA on playing independently. The focus of students is on their play activities so that students can play in the classroom independently without being accompanied by parents, MA has sufficiently demonstrated the development of independence (Novia & Mahyudi, 2020).

The next step in fostering independence is the implementation of an art center where children express themselves through various artistic activities such as painting, drawing, coloring, making crafts, and so on. This center fosters creativity, imagination, and an appreciation of beauty. The implementation of learning at KB PKK Gemilang is through learning to make ecoprint batik using natural materials. Educators instruct parents to help children find and bring materials such as: flowers, leaves, hammers, stones, wood. Meanwhile, educators prepare the media used such as cloth and plastic. The next day the lesson begins with watching a video related to how to make ecoprint batik. After watching the video, educators and students work together to make ecoprint batik. Starting with preparing the tools and materials that have been brought, then leaves and flowers are arranged on the cloth according to the students' wishes. Then the children begin to beat the leaves that have been arranged on the cloth until they form ecoprint batik. The independence that is formed in this lesson is in the form of taking tools or art materials from storage to the artwork process. The ability of MA and other students when taking art tools or materials shows that MA and other students know what is needed to complete their work, as well as when children tidy up the art tools or materials that have been used to their

original place, children can do their own activities both before and after playing. The ability of children to take art tools and materials and clean them again is a characteristic of children's independence. One of the characteristics of early childhood independence is being able to do all their own activities even with adult supervision (Devi, et.al, 2023).

The research also shows that child-centered learning significantly encourages the development of independence in early childhood at the Gemilang Tamansatriyan Family Planning (KB PKK Gemilang Tamansatriyan). This is evident in changes in children's behavior, such as the courage to choose activities, taking responsibility for play equipment, and demonstrating initiative and independent decision-making. Meanwhile, interviews during the learning process at the Center revealed obstacles that contributed to the suboptimal development of children's independence. This was due to obstacles stemming from parenting styles at home. These problems were evident when some children refused to pick up art tools and materials and work on their artwork, citing fatigue, reluctance to return, tidy up, and clean up tools and leftover materials, and unwillingness to cooperate or share with friends during play at the Arts Center. Teachers can address these obstacles through communication through discussions with the children. This is consistent with the belief that clear communication facilitates children's understanding and comprehension. Therefore, the Arts Center Teacher's goal regarding these obstacles can be understood by the children (Mayasari, 2021).

The results of this study also strengthen active learners who construct their own knowledge through interaction with their environment. Through centers, children in the Family Welfare Movement (PKK) are given the opportunity to explore, build understanding, and attempt to solve problems without direct intervention from teachers. Optimal child development occurs when children are given challenges that are slightly above their current abilities and are assisted by adult guidance. In this context, teachers act as facilitators, providing scaffolding when children need help, but still encouraging children to be independent. Early childhood is building self-confidence and autonomy when children are given the freedom to choose activities and manage themselves, as is done in the child-centered learning model. They learn that they are capable, thus fostering independence. Those who support this approach welcome it as a positive step because children become more confident, active, and creative. This approach is considered appropriate for the characteristics of early childhood, who learn through play and direct experience. Parents who are accustomed to providing space for children to be independent will support this method. Some teachers or parents accustomed to traditional (teacher-centered) learning methods may doubt the effectiveness of this approach because it seems "less structured" or "free." Parents with protective parenting styles may feel concerned when children are left to make their own decisions. In large class conditions or limited teaching staff, the implementation of this model can experience obstacles in personal supervision and guidance of children. However, teachers consider these objections more related to implementation obstacles and not the substance of the approach itself. This shows that child-centered learning requires cultural adjustments, teacher training, and support from all parties (Qori'ah, Hafidah & Dewi, 2019; Rahayu & Sarmini, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions outlined previously, it can be concluded that the implementation of child-centered learning through the center method is able to provide a significant contribution to the independence of early childhood in KB PKK Gemilang Tamansatriyan. This model sufficiently encourages children to be actively involved in learning, make their own decisions, and complete simple tasks without relying too much on adult assistance, building character, although in some cases behavior still requires the assistance of the role of teachers for the best implementation (Dewi, Musa, & Dewi, 2020). The implementation of learning that provides a choice of activities, space for

exploration, and emotional involvement makes children feel valued as capable individuals. Children become braver, more confident, responsible, and able to adapt to their social environment, and begin to leave their attachment to their parents to be attached to learning in the classroom independently (Hermansyah, 2019). The application of this method also proves that educational strategies that value individuality and provide direct freedom can shape children's character from an early age, especially in the aspect of independence. Provision of adequate center facilities, as well as a child development evaluation system that is not only cognitive but also affective and social (Wulansari, et.al, 2023). The implementation of a center-based learning system as a standard in daily school activities can also build an active collaboration system between teachers and parents through regular communication forums. The implementation of a center-based learning system also builds pedagogical skills in implementing a child-centered learning approach through continuous training, integrating religious values and independence into every play activity, both explicitly and implicitly (Nurhasanah, Wardan, & Dwiyama, 2022). Parents are also expected to provide space and time at home for children to learn independently, for example, allowing children to eat alone, choose clothes, or tidy up toys, avoid overprotective parenting, and shift to a democratic parenting style by providing opportunities for children to make decisions, become active partners with the school in shaping children's character, including in the habit of independence. Thus, the implementation of child-centered learning is not only an effective learning strategy but also a model for early character education that can equip children to face future challenges with a strong sense of self-confidence, responsibility, and independence. Future research is expected to develop patterns of independence in early childhood through innovative media in learning centers.

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