



Teachers' perception towards early childhood literacy development methods in 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal kindergarten

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Abstract

The literacy ability of early childhood is inseparable from their teacher's role in teaching literacy for children. The knowledge and methods used by the teacher are expected to be able to improve children's skills to comprehend the content of text and become active readers in the future. This research aims to find out teacher's perception towards early childhood literacy development methods in 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) Kindergarten in Depok Sub-district. The research method employed in this research is qualitative descriptive. The sampling technique is purposive sampling in order to obtain 8 participants out of 4 kindergartens in Depok Sub-district. The research data were analyzed by thematic analysis technique using NVivo 12 software. The findings revealed that: (1) teachers' perception towards early childhood literacy development is mostly defined as the skill to reading and writing. (2) Teacher implementation on the early childhood literacy is carried out through activities involving printed learning media. (3) The development method for early childhood literacy learning is still limited to storytelling and writing. (4) School support for early childhood literacy development methods consists of providing facilities and infrastructures, and supporting teachers create published story books. However, the problems and obstacles faced by teachers are the lack of availability of reading books and inadequate infrastructure.

Keywords: Early childhood literacy, Literacy development methods, Teacher's perception

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is an effort to provide stimulation, guidance, care, as well as provide learning activities that will produce children's skills and abilities (Sujiono, 2013). One of which is early childhood literacy skills and abilities. The current definition of literacy is not only in the term of language, but it also has shifted to a broad understanding covering various terms. This is caused by various factors, one of which is the rapid development of information technology.

According to Dewayani (2019) literacy is the ability needed by modern education to face challenges in the digital era. The 21st century skills require students' skills in problem solving, communication, creativity, collaboration and innovation. All of these skills can be developed from an early age through literacy strategies of reading texts. Another argument says that literacy is the ability to use language and

pictures both reading, writing, speaking, listening, seeing, presenting and thinking critically about ideas (Abidin et al., 2017; Solin, 2018; Suhariyanti, 2018). According to Schmoker (2012) good or bad literacy skills will have an impact on academic success as well as students' lives and their career choices, so we need to have a deep and thorough understanding of literacy and how effective strategies are so that students have good literacy skills.

Based on the facts above, early literacy skills need to be developed from an early age for the children readiness to pursue the next level of education in developing knowledge, especially for students, from pre-school to higher education. Literacy in early childhood is different from literacy in general regarding to the interest in reading and writing, as Susanto (2018) argues that early literacy involves all elements of the communication process, namely reading, writing, speaking, listening, seeing and thinking. The same opinion was also expressed by Maharani (2019) who stated that early literacy theory emphasizes the natural development of skills through the enjoyment of books, the importance of positive interactions between children and adults, and the important role of literacy-based experiences. Based on this understanding, it can be concluded that early literacy (early literacy of early childhood includes all elements in children's language skills including reading skills that begin with children who like reading books even though they only open pages, writing skills, speaking skills, listening and thinking.

NICHD (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) (Ghoting & Martin-Diaz, 2006) divide early childhood literacy skills into six indicators and are pioneers of reading skills including; children's interest and pleasure in books (Print Motivation); the ability to hear and pronounce the initial sounds of simple letters or words (Phonological Awareness); ability to mention object names (vocabulary); the ability to tell an event or accident (Narrative Skill); attitude of children in treating books or reading materials (Print Awareness); and ability to recognize the difference between each letter even though some letters alike (Letters of Knowledge).

Based on the six indicators of children's early literacy skills above, during the learning process the teacher must pay attention to these indicators, especially in learning basic language skills for early childhood. This literacy ability begins with

children's enjoyment of books and children's motivation to read, listening skills, retelling stories heard, recognizing letter types and letter sounds.

In fact, various findings regarding to the early childhood literacy practices are still experiencing various problems, namely children have learning difficulty to read when they begin their elementary school with inadequate vocabulary (Cetin et al., 2018; Clemens et al., 2016). These findings indicate that the development of children's vocabulary in the preschool period greatly influences the process of children's basic language skills at the next level of education.

The phenomenon above also occurs in Indonesia. The current Indonesian children's literacy skills are still low compared to children from other countries. Based on the research Central Connecticut State University in 2016, Indonesia was ranked in the 60th out of 61 countries with low reading interest and habits (Dewayani, 2017). The research is not much different from the survey results of Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 by evaluating the literacy skills of 15 year old students in terms of reading, math and science skills. The results showed that Indonesia was ranked in the 74th out of 80 countries with the score of 371 (average OECD score was 487) for the reading ability category.

This fact is supported by the data from the National Library which states that the low reading activity can be seen from the average reading frequency of three to four times per week, in a week only completing 0-100 pages of book, and the average number of books being read is only five to nine books per year (Puslitjakdikbud, 2019). These data is not much different from the data findings using the instrument of children's reading ability in the Early Grade Reading Assistance (EGRA), that 5.8% of second grade elementary school students cannot read, 26.3% cannot read but are not fluent, and 20.7% can read without understanding the content of the books (Putri, 2018).

The data above shows that children's literacy in basic education is still low, and literacy is not just the ability to read, but also how to understand the content of books. It is because of the stimulus or learning that children get in the previous level of education, namely early childhood education. Therefore, today's early childhood education teachers must be involved in pedagogy both in planned and unplanned

ways that require a variety of literacy teaching strategies, content knowledge, and continuously professional learning (Bracefield & Woodgate, 2020).

According to Padmadewi (2018), Hapsari et al. (2017) factors that cause the low literacy of Indonesian children are the lack of interest in reading books, as a formal institution, schools do not have a systematic literacy development program, conventional learning methods, and the lack of literacy facilities and infrastructure for children. It is supported by the research on teacher's perception to the early literacy conducted in 75 early childhood education teachers from eleven public and private schools in Yogyakarta shows the results that most teachers (62%) define early literacy in the traditional way, namely reading, writing, and the alphabet introduction (Maharani, 2019). According to those facts can be concluded that early literacy of early childhood needs to get attention because of the learning method inadequacy and teacher's perception on the new literacy is only reading and writing.

Previous case studies on Gerakan Literasi Sekolah (School Literacy Movement) in elementary schools report that school management sees literacy as merely reading and writing, and implement the government's GLS instruction without understanding the GLS' success indicators (Adawiyah & Gunasyah, 2018; Hidayah, 2017). Facts reported previously clearly show that early literacy of preschool children still needs huge attention, as the existing learning method is still insufficient and teachers' perception of literacy is limited to reading and writing activities.

Kostelnik et al., (2017) proposed that adults are very influencing to the children's literacy so that various aspects of language such as listening and paying attention, speaking, reading, and writing must be made meaningful and useful for children so that they are perfectly literate. Educators or teachers need preparatory programs to teach through adequate training, and the selection of the right method regarding to the literacy learning is very important because they most understand the conditions, differences and needs of students in the classroom (Abidin et al., 2017).

One of the educational movements that has implemented the concept of literacy is the kindergarten of 'Aisyiyah which was founded in 1920 by Nyai Ahmad Dahlan and was the first kindergarten in Indonesia. At first 'Aisyiyah Kindergarten named Frobelschool as a pioneer of early childhood education, was later changed to

be Kindergarten of 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) which was established in every branch of 'Aisyiyah. Since its establishment, the aim of this educational movement has been to eradicate illiteracy, especially for women (Darban & Baha'uddin, 2010). So basically, the Kindergarten of ABA is a legacy of the literacy movement in the form of a course program on the basics of Islam through singing and storytelling activities. Based on this background and history, it is necessary to know about the teacher's perception on the early literacy development, especially in 'Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) Kindergarten, especially in the Depok Sub-district, the methods used by teachers in developing children's early literacy skills and what obstacles are faced by kindergarten teachers. ABA in Depok Sub-district while providing literacy learning.

The research is important to conduct because literacy that is applied from an early age will have a positive impact on children's academic achievement to prepare themselves when entering the school. This is certainly related to the knowledge and methods of teachers in providing literacy learning for children, because literacy is not only limited to reading and writing. So it is necessary to know about the teacher's perception on the method of the early childhood literacy development so that in the future teachers have curriculum standards, appropriate lesson planning and literacy for early childhood. The present study aims to capture the teachers' perception of preschool children's literacy development method in TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal (ABA) in Depok District area. The result of this study is expected to provide teachers with consideration regarding curriculum standard, learning plan, and appropriate literacy development method for preschool children. This research is guided by the following research questions: (1) how is the teachers' knowledge at ABA Kindergarten in Depok Sub-district on early childhood literacy; (2) how is the teachers' implementation at ABA Kindergarten in Depok Sub-district on early childhood literacy; (3) what methods are used by ABA Kindergarten teachers in Depok Sub-district in providing early childhood literacy learning; (4) how is the school's support for the early childhood literacy development method carried out by the teacher.

METHOD

The research approach is a descriptive qualitative, namely research used for examining the condition of natural objects, and the collection technique is carried out by triangulation or combination (Sugiyono, 2017). Data collection was carried out by interviewing four participants as teachers and four principal informants for data triangulation. The sample collection technique is carried out by using a purposive sampling, which is a technique to determine the sample with certain considerations. The criteria for teachers participating in this research are at least 3 years of teaching at ABA Kindergarten, undergraduate education level and already certified. The research was conducted at ABA Kindergarten, Depok Sub-district, Sleman Regency, which consisted of 4 kindergartens including ABA Perumnas Condongcatur Kindergarten, ABA Pringwulung Kindergarten, Kentungan ABA Kindergarten and Karangmalang ABA Kindergarten. The research was carried out in December 2020 - July 2021.

The preparation of the interview guide consists of open questions regarding to the teacher's perception on the literacy development methods sourced from the main research questions. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way to teachers in their respective schools. In addition to open questions, we compiled a closed questionnaire observation guide based on Roskos theory (2013) which grouped early literacy activities into 8 categories, namely: 1) Conversations between children and teachers; 2) Reading books; 3) Phonological awareness activities; 4) Alphabet activity; 5) Support for stimulation of early reading abilities; 6) Support for stimulation of early writing skills; 7) The experience of reading books together; 8) Focused and integrated topic-based activities.

Interviews were conducted through face-to-face meeting in each participant's school and online using google meet. In-depth interviews in this study was conducted to collect complex information primarily in the form of participants' opinion, attitude, and personal experience. Notes and recording devices were utilized to avoid loss of information.

The data from interviews and observation were triangulated to ensure the validity. The items were arranged in a scale form and validated through expert judgment. The data from interview and observation were transcript, and input to NVivo 12. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), consisting of the following stages: familiarization, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the theme, defining and naming themes, making the report.

The method section structure should: describe the materials used in the study, explain how the materials were prepared for the study, describe the research protocol, explain how

measurements were made and what calculations were performed, and state which statistical tests were done to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Data that had been transcribed and imported into NVivo 12 software produced themes. The theme obtained was related to the knowledge and experience of teachers on early childhood literacy development methods. These themes were: 1) Teacher's Perception; 2) Literacy role; 3) Literacy activities; 4) Teacher's role; 5) Strategy; 6) Obstacles; 7) Facilities; and 8) Infrastructure. After the themes were obtained, the researcher then presented them in the form of pictures narratives. If it is described, the process of data analysis that researchers do will be as follows in **Figure 1**.

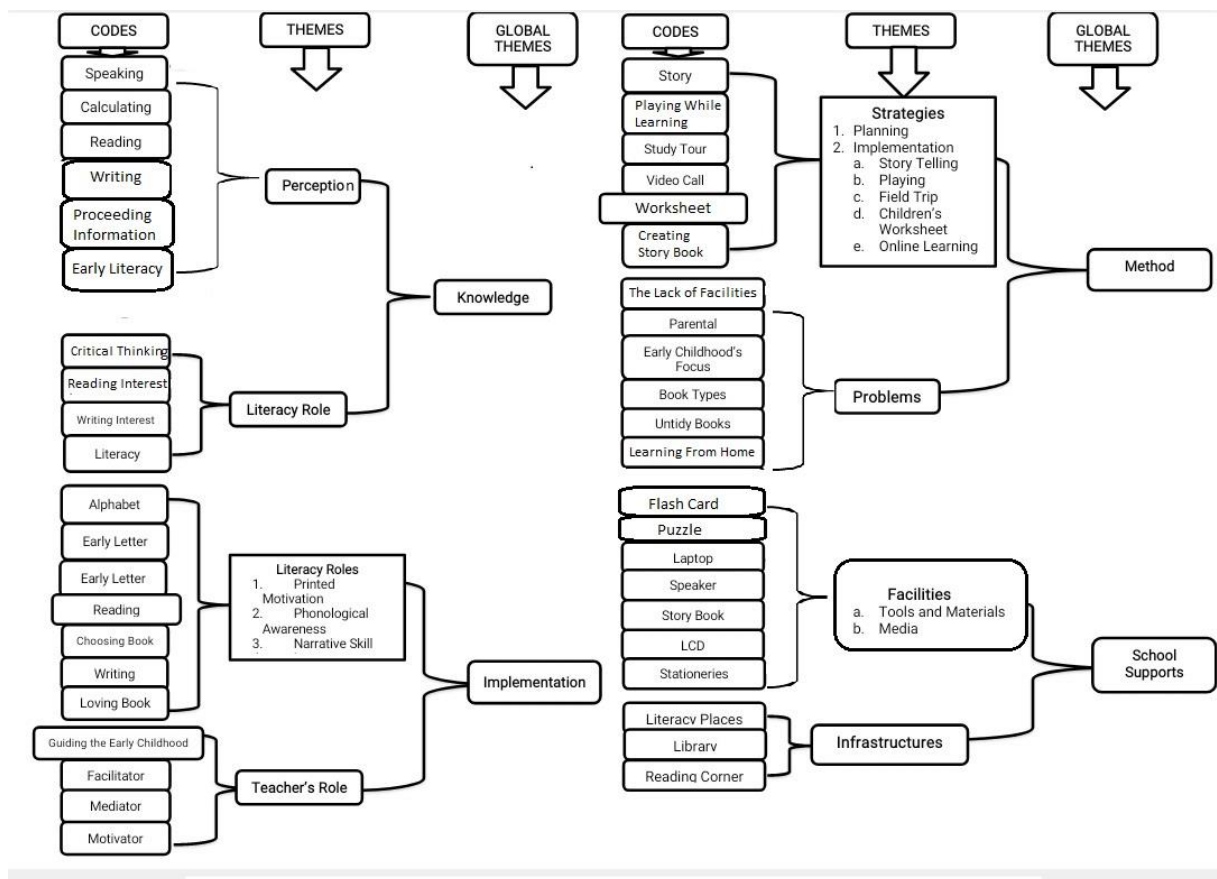


Figure 1. The process of data analysis

Discussion

This research resulted in eight themes including several sub-themes with certain meaningful categories. These themes were identified based on research questions, the first part of this discussion will describe the knowledge of ABA Kindergarten teachers in Depok Sub-district on early childhood literacy. The second part was teacher implementation on the early childhood literacy. The third part discussed the methods used by ABA Kindergarten teachers in Depok Sub-district in providing early childhood literacy learning. In the fourth section, we discussed school support for early childhood literacy development methods carried out by teachers.

To answer the first research question, the researcher found two themes, namely the theme of perception and the theme of the literacy role. Facts in the field showed that participants have different perceptions of early childhood literacy. Early childhood literacy was perceived as the ability to recognize letters, read, speak, and write. Some participants even argued that participants know that literacy is related to books, for example we found one response stating "As I know that literacy is related to books... So what comes into my mind is reading stories or fairy tales to children or introducing reading such that way...". In this case, Kostelnik et al. (Kostelnik et al., 2017) revealed that children's literacy experiences are usually carried out through printed experiences such as listening to stories, paying attention to pictures, recognizing letters, words and language. Other participants argued that literacy is a more complex matter, namely the ability to process information and understand the content of rebooks so that both teacher participants and principal informants assume that early childhood literacy is important for children's development and future life. The literacy defined by the participants is different but has the same view in expressing the role of literacy, indicating that the perception of a teacher is different from the perception of other teachers because the level of knowledge, experience and teacher interpretation of something is different (Warganegara et al., 2013).

The second research question regarding to the teacher implementation on the early childhood literacy, found the theme of literacy activities and the teacher's role. In the theme of literacy activities, there are five sub-themes regarding to the various kinds of literacy learning activities carried out by the participants. These five sub-themes included a print motivation, phonological awareness, narrative skills, letter knowledge and print awareness. This sub-theme explains the literacy activities given to teachers which are expected to bring out the children's abilities based on each indicator. Participants in this research carried out literacy activities involving printed, written and language activities. Based on observations, it

was found that literacy activities through printed teaching materials were found in the school environment and in every classroom including motivational words, class names, letters and numbers that were hung or attached, various educational game tools. and reading books.

This theme is also a new finding for researchers, based on the facts presented by participants regarding to the literacy activities in recognizing letters by using a guidebook adopted from the ABACAGA book. This manual is used by participants to teach children by memorizing vocabulary. For example, participants stated"... that reading is no longer using spelling words but memorizing... So it is like a ba ta ha ga,... no longer aba ba.... a ba...it's been learned...". According to participants, this method is effective for teaching children to read. To support various literacy activities as described above, the teacher's role is needed on the implementation of early childhood literacy learning. Both teacher participants and principal informants share the same view on the role of teachers in early literacy learning such as being a mentor, motivator, facilitator, and mediator.

Based on the coding that the researcher had done, the researcher determines two themes based on the investigation flow carried out, namely strategies and constraints. These two themes are the answer to the third research question regarding to the methods used by teachers in providing literacy learning. These themes discuss the methods used by participants in conducting literacy learning. In the strategy theme, the researcher divides it into two sub-themes based on the actions taken by the participants, namely planning and implementation. Teacher participants and school principals on this planning theme have the same opinion regarding to the literacy lesson planning that teachers do by designing the curriculum and the Weekly Lesson Implementation Plan or Daily Lesson Implementation Plan.

The literacy lesson plan is currently listed in the Learning From Home (LFH) curriculum due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. Ideally, the LFH process through online learning can still accommodate children's learning needs to develop talents and interests according to their education level. According to Nurdin & Anhusadar (2021) to achieve this condition, we need the readiness of educators, an appropriate curriculum, the availability of learning resources, device support and a stable network so that effective communication occurs between students and educators. Based on the results of interviews, participants in this research designed a learning by doing various ways in carrying out children's literacy learning including the method of storytelling, playing, field trip, providing worksheets and utilizing online media WhatsApp Groups (WAG) via text messages, receive and send pictures, voice messages, video calls, video and document files. This online learning became the researcher's findings on the planning theme.

The next theme experienced by researchers were obstacles, namely the difficulties that participants encountered in using the early childhood literacy development method. Participants in this research revealed that there were several obstacles in providing literacy learning including the attention to the children when providing literacy learning, the books they owned were less varied and they did not have a library due to limited school space. Based on the observations, the researchers found that although the school did not have a special room for a library, each class is provided with reading books that are stored in the bookshelf. Participants' statements can be written as follows: "The problem is that we don't have a library and no one can manage it yet, so they are free to read, but not to take it home". Library is one of the places that becomes a source of reading and knowledge for early childhood. According to Ismail (2017) the library is one of the community's needs for information nowadays, so it is necessary to get children know from their early age. Therefore, what needs to be done is to provide adequate facilities for children's libraries. Although there are two schools that did not have libraries, the other two schools are equipped with libraries as facilities to support literacy learning.

To answer the research question regarding to the school support for early childhood literacy development methods, the researchers found two themes, namely facilities and infrastructure. Educational facilities are equipment and supplies that are directly used for supporting the educational process, especially the teaching and learning process such as whiteboards, markers, erasers, stationery, books, and teaching media (Kompri, 2015). The various supporting facilities include; stationery, story books, various natural materials to form letters or numbers, and educational game tools (APE). APEs that had been used by participants included puzzles, various forms of letters and numbers. In addition, the school also gave opportunities for teachers to create published story books. One participant stated: "... there is a teacher who makes a story book and then it is published...". This is a new finding for researchers, that the support provided by schools was not only in the form of facilities and infrastructure, but also gave support for teachers to be able to develop their abilities or potentials, one of which is by giving opportunities for teachers to create children's stories or poetry in a published book.

This finding contributes to the school's strategy in supporting literacy development, i.e., teacher book-writing for publication program, to improve the learning source diversity. This finding fills the gap left by previous literature that lack discussion on school's literacy development strategy.

Other facilities used in the research area were learning media such as speakers, television, laptops, and writings in the school environment. Infrastructure is the same factor as facility to support the quality and process of teaching and learning activities, so that these two things cannot be separated because they are related each other. Based on participant statements, schools had supported literacy learning in the form of available infrastructure including libraries, reading corners, literacy places, and preparation centers. The facts in the field revealed that not all schools had infrastructure such as libraries, but schools still provided books that were stored in each class.

Though adhering to an established scientific procedure, this study encounters several limitation and weaknesses, including limited number of participants that prevents a strong relationship among themes, and bias due to personal relationship between researchers and participants, leading to subjectivity. Another limitation also comes from researchers' limited access that prevents more in-depth interviews and observation, causing lack of documentation to support the study finding.

CONCLUSION

According to the results and discussions research above, it can be concluded that the teacher's perception on the early childhood literacy is mostly defined as the ability to recognize letters, read, speak, and write. The teacher's implementation on the early childhood literacy development method has been applied by the teacher in activities involving printed teaching materials. These various activities are categorized as a print motivation, phonological awareness, vocabulary, narrative skills, and letter knowledge. The school support for early childhood literacy by development methods, infrastructure and giving opportunities for teachers to create published story books. However, the problems and obstacles faced by teachers in providing literacy learning are the existence of libraries that some schools do not have libraries so that the availability of books is inadequate. Based on the results above, we recommend some suggestions for the next researchers to explore the teacher's role on the literacy development method because this research is less comprehensive. For schools 'Aisyiyah kindergarten, it's expected to provide support by facilitating for literacy learning process. At last for teachers, it is expected to be able to give a variety and interesting of literacy activities for children. Following the finding and conclusion of the study, future studies are recommended to broaden the participant scope in order to gain stronger data and to ensure the researchers and participants objectivity during the data collection process.

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