

HOW CAN LIFE SKILLS IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD INDEPENDENCE?

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Abstract. This study aims to determine the teacher's efforts in increasing early childhood independence on indicators of physical ability, confidence, responsibility, discipline, sociability, sharing, and controlling emotions based on life skills. This qualitative research with a descriptive approach was conducted at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten, East Betung Bay, Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. The subjects of this study were Group B3 teachers and Group B3 children at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten. While the object of this research is the teacher's efforts to increase children's independence based on life skills, research data sources are obtained from interview techniques, observation, and documentation. Data analysis is done by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. While the data validity technique uses triangulation techniques. Based on the results of the study, the efforts made by teachers in increasing the independence of early childhood based on life skills are consistent with existing indicators, namely: teachers encourage children to want to do daily activities, teachers provide opportunities for children to make their own decisions, teachers let children do their jobs even though some are still wrong, teachers encourage children to express their feelings and ideas, teachers train children to socialize, and teachers give responsibility to children for discipline. Children in Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten have also improved in terms of independence. Children can put on and take off their shoes, tidy up stationery and learning equipment after use, share food with friends and teachers, and others. Although many children have improved their independence, there are still some who need more guidance from their class teachers. Parents are also an important factor in increasing children's independence.

Keywords: Life Skills; Early Childhood; Independence.

INTRODUCTION

There are eighteen characters in character education that must be developed in children, one of which is an independent character (Taufik, 2020). Lestari et.al. stated that independence is an attitude and behavior toward completing tasks that do not depend on others (Lestari & Marlina, 2019). In line with the opinion of Rozi et al., independence means that children are able to organize themselves into simple activities that are close to them in everyday life (Rozi et al., 2022). Meanwhile, independence is the act or state of being able to stand alone without depending on others (Abidah et al., 2020). According to Ramanda et.al., independence is a condition in which a person is able to manage himself without depending on others or being able to think, solve problems, and make a decision (Ramananda & Munir, 2023). Independence is the ability not to depend on others and to always try to solve all problems or always consider a decision that must be made (Zahariadis, 2019).

The importance of fostering independence from early childhood is stated by Rusmini and Samsu, who says that the potential that must be developed is independence because, at preschool age, children have begun to learn to separate themselves from their families and parents to enter a wider environment, namely the kindergarten or playground environment (Rusmini & Samsu, 2023). Independence is very important to develop in children from an early age so that they become individuals who are able to do all activities with their own abilities without the intervention of others (Iivari et al., 2020). For this reason, parents and adults around children must

provide guidance and direction to children to prepare them for life in the future(Humphreys, 2019).

According to Margolis et. al., independent children believe that if there is a risk, they are able to solve it without help from others(Humphreys, 2019). That way, the child will grow into a person who is able to think seriously and try to complete his target(Greenfield & Verissimo, 2019). Likewise, in the family and social environment, independent children will easily adjust(Goudeau et al., 2021). He will be easily accepted by the children and friends around him(Febriyanti et al., 2022). The most commonly recognized independence is self-help daily activities(du Plessis, 2021). Such as eating alone, bathing alone, putting on and taking off clothes alone, and putting on and taking off shoes alone(Nurlatifah, 2021). However, if explored more deeply, independence is closely related to coping skills, i.e., taking initiative, solving daily problems, persevering, and being able to do things without the help of others(Chang et al., 2020). Therefore, independence has a very positive impact on children at an early age because it will be their provision later when they have to socialize with other people and society(Rusmayadi & Herman, 2019). It must begin at an early age to train independence in children(Steed & Leech, 2021). Independence is closely related to children as individuals who have a self-concept, self-esteem, and self-regulation(Liu et al., 2019).

Independence in early childhood is not only physically related but also psychologically related, where children have a sense of confidence and responsibility and can make their own decisions(Coates & Pimlott-Wilson, 2019). If given the opportunity through continuous practice, independence can develop well(Febriyanti et al., 2022). The exercise can be in the form of giving tasks without assistance(Nyenhuis et al., 2020). Hasibuan et.al., argue that children who are not independent will hurt the development of their own personalities(Hasibuan & Rakhmawati, 2020). If this is not resolved immediately, the child will experience difficulties in further development(Carpenter & Moser, 2020). The child will find it difficult to adjust to their environment, tend to lack confidence and be unable to complete their life tasks properly(Churiyah et al., 2020). As a result, their learning achievements can be worrying(Teimouri et al., 2019). Such children are always dependent on others(Teimouri et al., 2019). According to Djunaidah et.al., indicators of early childhood independence are physical ability, self-confidence, responsibility, discipline, sociability, sharing, and controlling emotions(Djunaidah & Santy, 2022).

Independence should be taught as early as possible to children according to the child's ability and development because independence has a positive impact on child development(Fadlillah et al., 2020). Helping to overcome the problems described above can be assisted by life skills-based learning(Saravanakumar, 2020). According to the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition, life skills are the ability to have a self-adjusting and positive personality that can make a person able to solve daily needs and problems effectively(Hou et al., 2020). According to Faisal et.al., life skills are very important interactions owned by someone who has knowledge and skills so that they can live independently(Faisal et al., 2019). Life skills themselves, according to Wahab, are the ability and courage to overcome past life problems actively and more actively in getting solutions to a problem(Shafie et al., 2019). From some of the opinions expressed about the meaning of life skills, it can be concluded that life skills are an ability that is owned and needed by humans as a basis for living independently in society(Alajmi, 2019).

Life skills education is one way to prepare students to have attitudes and life skills as a basis for later life through active, creative, and fun learning activities(Amirudin & Muzaki, 2019). Life skills taught in early childhood are more aimed at developing and optimizing all children's growth and development as well as training daily habits(Demchenko et al., 2021). Life skills can be taught through habituation, which can be used to foster an independent attitude and the ability to interact with the environment in a way that is useful for the child's next life(Wahyuni & Azwar, 2022).

It is important to have life skills for early childhood at all levels of early education so that it can provide a strong basic provision for life to succeed in life in the future so that one becomes better than the current generation and can adapt to the flow of globalization independently and can utilize its potential creatively(Kokkalia et al., 2019). When children are 4-5 years old, when they are in a period of high curiosity and strong memory, early childhood can be stimulated for life skills(Ismail et al., 2020). When we teach children about something that they find interesting and fun, they will quickly catch on and easily remember and learn it(Brooker, 2020). Even if the lesson is difficult, they will still remember it and store it in their strong memories(Kudina & Verbeek, 2019).

Therefore, at this age, children are very suited to be stimulated, taught, and modeled on good things so that they can follow and imitate easily (Osman, 2019).

Several related studies have been conducted, including research conducted by Daviq Chairilsyah, which states that in general, the independence of children aged 5–6 years in Pertiwi Kindergarten, Riau Province, is in the developing category (Daviq Chairilsyah, 2019). The equation with this research is both about the independence of early childhood, while the difference can be seen in my research examining teacher efforts and life skills-based while in this study analyzing the independence of early childhood. Research conducted by Dina Utami shows that the storytelling method can improve children's independence abilities at TKIT An-Naba (Utami, 2019). This can be shown by increasing children's independence by teaching them to put shoes in place, return toys after use, and take their food. The equation with my research is both about the independence of early childhood, while the difference is seen in my research based on life skills and in this study through the storytelling method. Research conducted by Eka Damayanti states that the application of the Montessori method can increase children's independence at the Bright Star Makassar School Playgroup (Damayanti, 2019). The entire sample is more independent after applying to learning using Montessori, and there is not a single child who does not experience progress in independence. The equation with my research is both about the independence of children of this age, while the difference can be seen in my research based on life skills and in this study through the Montessori method of learning. Research conducted by Musyafa Ali and Erni Munastiwi reveals that teacher creativity in teaching life skills in early childhood during a pandemic is one of the keys to the success of teaching life skills because creativity is one of the keys to success and can be done with various activities and media that are fun, interesting, challenging, and new to children (Ali & Munastiwi, 2021). The equation with my research is both about life skills, while the difference is seen in my research on teacher efforts to increase independence and in this study on the teacher's creativity in teaching. Research conducted by Vini Melinda and Suwardi explains that the efforts made by teachers to instill children's independence in the Art Center are carried out by giving examples (role models), habituation, and motivation (Melinda & Suwardi, 2021). These three efforts are carried out in every foothold, namely footholds before playing, footholds during play, and footholds after play. The equation with my research is both about the independence of early childhood, while the difference is that my research is based on life skills. The differences can be seen in my research based on life skills and in this study using learning at the art center.

Based on the background that has been described, the research problem can be formulated, namely, how the teacher's efforts in increasing the independence of early childhood are based on life skills. Thus, this research is very important to do to analyze the teacher's efforts to increase independence in early childhood based on life skills.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research is field research that uses a qualitative approach. The subjects in this study were class teachers at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten in East Teluk Betung and students at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten in East Teluk Betung. While the object of this research is how the teacher's process increases children's independence based on life skills at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten, East Teluk Betung, data were obtained through observation, interview, and documentation techniques. Observations were made directly by observing and recording learning in the classroom and the development of children's independence at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten, East Teluk Betung. Interviews were conducted with class teachers at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten, East Teluk Betung. Data analysis was carried out through several stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

1.1 Teachers' Efforts in Improving the Independence of Early Childhood Based on Life Skills

Teachers' efforts to increase children's independence based on life skills at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten are carried out through the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes. At the time of planning, the teacher prepares the lesson plan that will be used that day and also

prepares learning materials and learning support tools and materials. At the time of implementation, the teacher is seen making efforts that encourage the increase in children's independence, including efforts as a motivator to encourage children to want to do their own daily activities by providing support, advice, and motivation so as to increase independence for children. Teachers have also made efforts as mentors to encourage children to want to do their own daily activities by giving them an understanding of their actions and giving examples first, continuously, so as to increase their independence. Teachers have made efforts to provide opportunities for children to make their own decisions by giving them several choices and then giving them the opportunity to make their own choices, so as to increase their independence. Teachers have made efforts to let children do their own tasks even though there are still mistakes in teaching children to complete their own tasks because teachers see the process of children learning and not the results, so as to increase independence for children. Teachers have made efforts to encourage children to express their feelings and ideas by asking them questions to help them express their feelings and ideas, so as to increase their independence. Teachers have made efforts to train children to socialize by singing together and mentioning the names of children in the class so that children will easily memorize the names of friends in class. Teachers also teach children to lend stationery or share food with friends or teachers so as to increase their independence. Teachers have made efforts to give children the responsibility to train discipline by giving them the responsibility to put and keep their respective stationery in place. At the time of evaluation, the teacher is not focused on the results obtained by the child but is more concerned with the process of how the child learns. According to Butterbaugh et.al., independence is an attempt to break away from parents with the intention of finding himself through the process of seeking ego identity, namely the development towards a stable and independent individuality (Butterbaugh et al., 2020). Independence in early childhood is characterized by the ability of children to choose for themselves, have creativity, and initiative, regulate behavior, be responsible, be able to restrain themselves, make their own decisions, and overcome problems without any influence from others. Independence is a behavior that can have many positive effects because independence in children will appear when they do simple daily activities. In general, early childhood independence can be measured through how children behave physically and their social-emotional behavior.

Children in Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten seem to be able to be left by their parents, no more crying, no more waiting in the classroom. There is one child in class B3, he has been able to complete his assignments well, socialize with friends and teachers in class, and like to help friends. But here, helping a friend is used to help his other friend do his friend's work. This is wrong, because although the child's action is to help a friend, if he does his friend's work like that, then his friend may not be independent in the aspect of responsibility.

Each child has a different development. Some have been independent in physical ability indicators but not in confidence indicators. Some children are independent in the indicators of discipline and control of emotions but not in the indicators of responsibility. Like a child named Abram, Abram on the indicator is responsible for the sub-indicator tidying up stationery and learning materials after use; there, Abram did not immediately clean up his stationery even though the teacher had told him to. Until it was time for recess, Abram was still busy cleaning up his stationery while other friends were preparing to pray. But Abram is very good at sharing indicators and sub-indicators of sharing food with friends. Abram already had the initiative to share the food he brought with the friend next to him without his friend asking. That's where the teacher must pay attention to the child, whose indicators are not yet independent. Then, from there, efforts can be made effectively.

Independence is not a skill that children can suddenly acquire; it needs to be taught to children at an early age so that they can do daily activities without having to ask for help from parents or other adults. If children do not learn to be independent from an early age, it can cause them to be confused about how to help themselves, become independent, and always depend on their parents. If this behavior is allowed to continue, it will be very detrimental to the development of children, so the problem needs to be overcome so that children can carry out activities without always having to depend on others.

In one class, teachers face a variety of children's characters. These characters have been determined by the child's family upbringing. Some children are not used to people, so they seem to be quiet in class. Some children can immediately do the task well; some children repeatedly ask the teacher to understand the task. Some children can put on and take off their shoes and put them

on the shoe rack. Like tidying up their desks after learning or after they finish eating lunch. Children will tidy up their desks according to the teacher's instructions. Some children have not tidied up their desks, and the teacher approaches the child and tells him again to tidy up his desk. Likewise, when eating lunch, children will wash their hands and will take their lunch, and eat themselves at the table. After finishing eating, they will tidy up and put it back in the bag and wash their hands.

Every Thursday, children practice praying at school. Each child is required to bring their prayer tools. Boys bring a cap and prayer mat, and girls bring a mukenah and prayer mat. After finishing taking ablution, the teacher ordered them to spread the child's prayer mat neatly and by the shaf. Girls who bring mukenah immediately wear their mukenah. After finishing the prayer practice, the children are required to pack their prayer tools. Boys will only fold the prayer mat, while girls are required to fold the prayer mat and mukenah they brought. Some children carefully fold the mukena so that it is neat, but there are also children who just casually put it in the bag. Here, the teacher modeled the mukenah to be folded neatly, and then the children immediately practiced what the teacher had modeled.

It is not uncommon for children to urinate at school. Every day, some children want to urinate or defecate. The child will tell the teacher in their class when they reach the toilet door. The teacher will ask them if they can urinate and clean themselves. If the child cannot, then the teacher will help the child defecate in the toilet; for children who can defecate on their own, the teacher will just wait outside the toilet.

The family environment plays an important role in shaping children's independence. This is because children have more time in the family than in school. Children's lack of independence can be caused by factors of parental care and caregiver treatment that consider children unable to do something on their own, always helping children do something, and demanding too much of children so that if children do something slowly, parents will get angry and criticize the results of activities carried out by children.

Teachers in class B3 have their tricks for increasing children's independence, one of which is holding a challenge to take off their shoes and put them neatly on the shelf. On several occasions, the teacher does this challenge in the morning after the children line up and before entering the classroom. Children are required to take off their shoes and put them neatly on the shelf without the teacher's help. The teacher tells the children that those who quickly and neatly take off their shoes and put them on the shelf will be rewarded with three stars. Rewards like this make children more enthusiastic and conscientious about tackling the challenge of taking off and putting shoes on this rack.

According to Yuningsih et.al., a reward is a response to a behavior that can increase the likelihood of repeating the behavior (Yuningsih & Sunaryo, 2022). The teacher takes the child. In line with Djamarah's opinion, learning must be able to cause reinforcement and strong motivation for children to achieve instructional goals. One of the stimuli for increasing learning motivation is reinforcement in the form of rewards. All things that have been done in early childhood must be rewarded so that they do not feel that their actions are in vain.

Apart from that, teachers also have their tricks for increasing children's independence in children who are not confident enough to come forward to the front of the class, namely, if the child does not want to come forward, then come forward to the front of the class with other children. So they don't immediately go to the front of the class by themselves. It is done repeatedly by slowly reducing the number of friends who come forward together. From five advancing together, then three advancing together, the child advances alone to the front of the class. This is in line with Rastiti et.al. opinion that self-confidence is a basic ability that children must have and that arises because it is deliberately stimulated by involving several factors, namely internal and external factors (Rastiti et al., 2021). These internal factors include self-concept, self-esteem, physical appearance, and life experiences. In line with this, according to Mugabi et.al., external factors that build self-confidence include encouragement from family, acceptance from the environment, and one's learning history, both formal and non-formal (Mugabi et al., 2021).

1.2 Supporting and inhibiting factors for teachers in increasing the independence of early childhood based on life skills

There are inhibiting and supporting factors in teachers' efforts to increase children's independence based on life skills. Supporting factors include the teacher's awareness of children's independence because the teacher knows that independence is important for children. This can be seen from some of the efforts made by teachers that are not done by other class teachers. Another supporting factor is the habituation of independence that has been carried out by parents at home. Habits made by these parents will be carried over to the school. It will be seen in the child's behavior with the habituation of independence that his parents practice at home.

The inhibiting factor for teachers' efforts to increase children's independence based on life skills is parents' lack of awareness of children's independence. Parents sometimes do not understand that children are learning to be independent; most parents always help children with anything. Whereas letting children do their things will help children in their independence, in doing these things, children remain under the supervision of parents. Another inhibiting factor is the insufficient number of teachers in one class. If, in one class, there is only one teacher for 20 students, the teacher is less focused on paying attention to the details of child development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research data analysis that has been presented in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the teacher's efforts to increase children's independence based on life skills have been good efforts to increase the independence of these children. Efforts made by teachers to increase children's independence based on life skills include: 1) By holding challenges and giving rewards, the teacher makes this effort so that children can be more enthusiastic about doing something. Children are challenged to complete their tasks. After completing the task well, children will get a reward for what they have done. 2) Furthermore, in the implementation of learning, the teacher becomes a motivator and guide for children in the learning process. Teachers motivate children to complete their own tasks and guide them when they have difficulty completing their tasks. The efforts made by teachers are also inseparable from supporting and inhibiting factors. There are supporting factors for teachers' efforts in increasing children's independence based on life skills at Qurrota A'yun Kindergarten, East Betung Bay, which are teachers' awareness of children's independence and parents' habituation of independence at home. While the inhibiting factors are parents who lack awareness of children's independence and the number of teachers in one class.

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