

Improving Children's Creativity Using Natural Materials from Leaves

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe the design of printing activities using natural materials to increase children's creativity. The novelty of this research is that it uses natural ingredients from leaves that can be found around us. The benefits of this research can develop children's talents, creativity, and interests in more creative learning activities and instill values of concern for the surrounding environment. The qualitative descriptive analysis method was chosen for data collection through observation, interviews, and documentation. In conclusion, data reduction techniques, data presentation, and data analysis show that natural leaf materials have the potential to support activities that increase creativity. The strategy to increase creativity in children is to carry out a printing activity based on natural materials by printing with natural leaf materials. It can be concluded that children's creativity can be increased through the activity of printing designs described based on natural materials obtained from the surrounding environment; the ability to explore is more maximal when early childhood is given instructions to get out of their comfort zone. The increase in early childhood creativity is obtained from fun activities, motor stimulation, sensory stimulation, and the stimulation of students' cognitive intelligence. Students complete the printing challenge with set rules for the freedom to channel their imagination.

Keywords: Creativity, Printing, Leaf Natural Materials, Early Childhood.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood includes children aged 0 to 6 years. This age group is called the "golden age." (Hurlock, 2002). It is not without reason that it is called the golden age, as this age group is significant for the growth and development of children. At this stage, the child proliferates, both physically and mentally. Children also exhibit characteristics that are very different from adults at this stage. In terms of activity, the child is very active and dynamic. Moreover, children have a high motivation to learn. They are very enthusiastic about what they see and hear, so it is important to instill and enhance their creativity at this age, as this period can stimulate their thinking patterns towards the things taught from an early age.

Early childhood education aims to advance the development of all aspects of a child's self, such as cognitive, language, arts, physical movement, moral and religious values, and social and emotional development (Devianti et al., 2020). Early childhood education is also when a child's mental and personality development begins before elementary school. (SD). (Yunus et al., 1386) Mardiani said: "Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a level of education before the primary level, an intervention aimed at children from birth to six years old, in which inputs are provided to support their physical growth and development through education and mental nurturing so that children are ready to pursue further education through formal, non-formal, and informal pathways." (E. Harahap, 2022)

Childhood is a crucial age for human growth and development. Menurut Hibana (Sholehah et al., 2022), The golden period is a necessary time to pay attention to a child's growth and development because young children are susceptible to various types of stimuli, making it highly possible for them to form and develop various potentials within themselves (Nisa et al., n.d.). Therefore, it will be incredibly beneficial in the future with support, stimulation, and the right environment. That is the key to achieving full potential during the golden age of humanity, specifically in early childhood.

Children at an early age undergo a lifelong developmental process (Sudarsana, 2018). Early childhood education involves the full participation of educators and parents in educating, nurturing, and developing children by creating an atmosphere and environment where children can gain experiences that enable them to achieve learning experiences. During that golden era, the role of parents was greatly needed. Parents should be able to create a learning-supportive environment by providing books and educational toys. Participating and involving children in academic activities is an obligation that must be fulfilled by parents (Hikam, 2020).

Early childhood should be encouraged to develop their creativity by engaging in various activities during play. This aims to maximize all aspects of development in early childhood. Creativity is one aspect of early childhood development during play activities (Sholehah et al., 2022). Creativity is honed naturally by playing without external pressure; the child will feel comfortable with the activity. Although every child has different levels of creativity, this aspect of creativity can be learned and developed. Creativity is a fundamental perspective that must be taught to every child from an early age because every child is born with a unique creative talent. The form of a child's imagination needs to be recognized because the imagination in a child's mind is related to creativity (Azizah & Diana, 2022).

According to Gardner, "humans are born with a certain level of intelligence," and not only does each student have intellectual talents that can be further developed, but each child also has different levels of creativity development. Therefore, developing creativity in early childhood is very important because several other aspects become the main focus of development during their golden age (Machali, 2014). Summarizing what the researcher has conveyed from several other researchers,

early childhood children have different levels of creativity depending on the pattern of stimuli applied, whether maximal or not. Another crucial support is the appropriate stimulus media (Safira, 2020).

The learning media used in early childhood education does not necessarily have to be purchased from a store; teachers and parents can create the media themselves. Media can use easily obtainable materials such as old wood and natural materials (Sholehah et al., 2022). However, learning media created by teachers and parents at home can be used to address various aspects of early childhood development, namely religious and moral, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, artistic, and creative development, which are necessary to stimulate the child's physical side (Aslindah, 2022). Especially in art education, it is essential to provide advice and encouragement by developing the child's potential and enhancing their imagination, creativity, and potential.

Creativity is an important aspect that must be developed in every early childhood child because no child is born without creative talent, as stated by Marwiyati and Istiningsih. The imagination of a child's brain is related to creativity (Akhyar & Ningsih, 2023). According to Gardner, "humans are born with a certain level of intelligence," meaning that each student has many intellectual talents that can be developed, and each child is different. This statement emphasizes that a child's intellectual abilities are formed, and creativity is stimulated when the child is continuously provided with activities that lead to creativity. So that children's imagination continues to develop, we need to adjust learning activities that encourage children's creativity. (Aisyiah & Pamungkas, 2023)

Creativity in early childhood is a natural or innate creativity that symbolizes the ability to generate original and unusual thoughts and respond to and develop ideas and activities flexibly. The natural creativity of young children is evident in their great curiosity, which is in line with the characteristics of early childhood. This is evidenced by the numerous questions parents ask about what they see. In principle, creativity in early childhood can be nurtured by both parents and school teachers in various ways. The role of teachers in schools, especially in kindergartens, requires different approaches and learning strategies that can enhance children's creativity. (Nurani., 2017) Indicators of early childhood creativity that need to be developed according to developmental theory are the ability to work, having a high sense of curiosity, doing something independently without the help of an educator, being able to answer simple questions, and being responsible for the assigned tasks. (Munar et al., 2021)

Learning media using natural materials is interesting to study, not only because natural materials are easily found in the environment of early childhood but also because they offer many options based on texture and color. A similar study was conducted by Sari et al. in 2013, which was titled "Analysis of the Utilization of Natural Materials as Media." In the survey, the natural materials used still needed to be varied. Hence, researchers need a variation of natural material media to determine whether early childhood creativity is maximized after the introduction of varied natural material media (R. Sari et al., 2013).

Aisyiah and Pamungkas also conducted similar research, but their study only focused on visual arts creativity (Aisyiah & Pamungkas, 2023). Next, the research was conducted by Solikah et al. in the Blitar area, with the research subjects being early childhood children aged 4-5 years (Solikah et al., 2023). The similarity in this research is the variable up to the research object with the same age. The results indicate that there is a significant improvement. Sholikah et al. used the Classroom Action Research method, whereas, in this study, the researcher attempts to use a different method to determine whether using various techniques and locations will yield similarly optimal results.

Considering similar previous research, the researchers wanted to conduct another study using different locations and methods and starting with innovation in the selection of natural materials. Therefore, the researcher believes it is necessary to research enhancing creativity through natural materials, but this study focuses on natural leaf materials.

Considering the importance of developing children's creativity, the author is interested in conducting research titled "Enhancing Creativity with Natural Materials from RA Al-Firdaus Ginuk Leaves" to develop children's talents and interests in classroom activities to be more creative, as well as to instill values of care for the surrounding environment and benefit the children.

2. METHOD

The research was conducted using a case study method and a qualitative research type. This method was chosen to capture the reality of children's increasing creativity at school and integrate it with printing activities using natural materials. (Akhyar & Ningsih, 2023). This research was conducted at RA Al-Firdaus Ginuk, in Ginuk village, Karas district, Magetan regency, East Java, Indonesia. The object of this research is a group of 32 students aged 5-6 years. The factor observed in this research is the improvement of children's creativity, and the activities carried out by the children are observed to enhance their creativity through printing activities using natural materials like leaves.

Data collection techniques were done through interviews and direct communication between the author, teachers, students, and parents. The author conducted interviews with many parties to ensure that the results obtained in this research were maximized and valid, followed by direct field observations and documentation. Source and technical triangulation are used as data validity checks to test data validity. Source triangulation is done by examining sources from different origins using the same technique. Triangulation techniques are then performed by checking the data using various techniques. In short, this research uses interview and documentation techniques, such as the data analysis method using the Miles and Huberman data analysis method (Muri, 2017).

This research method consists of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and finally, the conclusion stage. Data collection includes gathering data obtained from interviews and documents. Next, data reduction involves summarizing, selecting key points, and focusing on essential aspects relevant to the research topic.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's results showed that using natural materials from leaves significantly increased children's creativity in learning activities. By utilizing leaves' shape, color, and texture, children could produce various works, such as collages, printed patterns, and three-dimensional art. This process also improved children's fine motor skills by cutting, arranging, and sticking leaves. In addition, children showed high enthusiasm and enjoyed the experience of learning while playing, which strengthened their involvement in the learning process. This is in line with the theory that creative abilities are related to personality development in early childhood (Pertiwi & Mayar, 2020). When a child's creativity fully develops, they experience continuous personal growth. Children want to create an independent, confident, and productive personality early on. However, if a child's creativity does not grow as expected, the child will experience the formation of a dependent personality, becoming insecure, easily discouraged, and unproductive. Considering the importance of creativity for humans, striving to develop children's creativity is essential. Creating a supportive environment is one practice that encourages children's creativity from an early age. (Solikah et al., 2023).

Considering the importance of early childhood creativity development for their growth as adults, which serves as a life skill to face the world's challenges, researchers focus on children's creativity development using nature-based play media, chosen for the ease of material availability and minimal risk, how to use natural materials as play media is by molding. Printing is one of the activities that can enhance children's creativity by using various materials. Graphic art is an artistic activity that involves the preparation of tools and the application of ink as a support to produce or reproduce a work of art. Media use can stimulate children's creativity through printing activities using materials (Istanto, 2015). Generally, printing is still aimed at preschool children in terms of the techniques, tools, and materials used in the printing activities. Natural materials are learning materials that originate from nature. Natural materials that are easily found in the environment can be utilized to support children's learning. Natural media aims to instill spiritual intelligence and environmental sensitivity in children. (M. Sari, 2018)

Using natural materials as a medium for learning can provide realistic experiences for children, and children find it easier to absorb knowledge through tangible objects like natural materials. Additionally, natural media allow children to think independently and manipulate simple natural materials into something new and more meaningful. Natural materials serve as learning media that enable educators to implement learning strategies quickly. Natural materials are available in the environment and effectively achieve learning objectives. (Purnama et al., 2023)

At this time, a spontaneous attitude towards taste is formed (spontaneousness) (Kusumawardani & Kuswanto, 2020). Children who have a good environment and parenting can develop a creative attitude. When humans are eager to explore, experiment, imagine, and dare to take risks. However, it depends on whether the child's learning environment supports that development. Why is creativity so important in life, and why should it be taught from an early age? Because when children are creative, they can express themselves and see how much they can do with whatever they are interested in (N. Harahap & Hasibuan, 2023)

Several studies discuss increasing creativity in early childhood conducted by (H. M. Sari & Nofriyanti, 2019), (Irmawati & Diana, 2021), and (Marsina, Sitti Rahmaniar Abubakar, 2024). Several studies have been conducted using materials such as origami paper, play-doh, and coffee grounds; they have yet to use natural materials with leaves, which is a novelty in this study. The benefits of this research can develop children's talents, creativity, and interests in more creative learning activities and instill values of concern for the surrounding environment. This research inspires the public to care more about the environment by teaching children to use natural materials wisely, reduce waste, and preserve nature.

The social benefits of this research are that it opens a detailed understanding of the use of natural materials in optimizing learning media for children. In addition to being child-friendly, it is efficient in terms of financing and can be used by every community cluster. Aljabreen, in his research, stated that the opportunity for children to determine the direction of their learning is the theoretical basis for achieving the Montessori, Reggio Emilia, and Waldorf educational approaches. The curriculum for each model must emphasize the role of natural materials and the environment, holistic child development, and peaceful conflict resolution. (Aljabreen, 2020).

Before conducting the research, the researcher met with the Head of RA Al Firdaus Ginuk on September 18, 2024. The researcher conveyed the purpose and objectives of this research to RA Al-Firdaus Ginuk. The principal then instructed him to meet with the B class teacher and request their willingness to cooperate in completing the study. On September 18, the researcher conducted the

first observation at RA Al Firdaus Ginuk, specifically regarding activities related to children's creativity.

Based on the results of communication conducted by the researcher with the teacher of RA Al Firdaus Ginuk class B, if children's creativity development is stimulated, it should be done through an activity, as it allows children to have direct experiences. In this case, the chosen activity is printing. Printing is an activity that involves the reproduction of images into various desired forms. Printing activities can be done in a simple or complex manner. Printing activities always require process support. Natural materials have been chosen to complement the natural materials present in the environment and to facilitate their maintenance by educators and students.

Natural materials are necessary because they are considered economical and safe for children, and they are not difficult to handle, especially if washed beforehand before use. Therefore, you can enhance your creativity through printing activities using natural materials. The series of processes yielded the following results:

1. Printing activities using natural materials are an appropriate activity that can be done early to enhance creativity.
2. Using natural materials is easy to obtain because they are available at home and school, and they have economic value and affordable prices.
3. The strategy implemented can help stimulate children's creativity.

In this study, students showed great enthusiasm while conducting experiments with natural materials that resulted in creation, as evidenced by the documentation below.



Picture 1. The students are printing natural materials from leaves in class.

In picture 1, students are seen engaging in activities during class. Picture 1 also shows the students' facial expressions of joy while using natural leaf materials during class activities. The students can make the most of the available time to create. This shows their enthusiasm for the natural materials, as they have never done such activities in class. Students enjoy the activity of printing because it stems from an inner desire, a desire to be engaged and attentive.

In this method, students also enjoy the printing activity by using stones to print on the leaves according to their own will, without being forced by others. To make students more enthusiastic, there are also specific criteria for selecting natural leaf materials, such as leaves with interesting shapes and colors. In addition to safety aspects, health considerations are also given significant attention. For example, natural materials like taro leaves/caladium are not used because these leaves

can cause itching if the liquid comes into contact with the skin. Cassava leaves, mango leaves, or leaves from nearby flowers can be an easy choice.

The researcher then conducted an interview with a student who stated that he felt happy engaging in printing activities. The students conveyed that printing is one of the most popular activities because it allows them to learn while playing, and they can pick leaves because the teacher permits it. According to him, the variation in learning with this method can avoid boredom in classroom teaching and learning activities. Next, from a school teacher's perspective, the feeling of joy in printing is also an essential indicator of supporting children's motor skills and encouraging their creativity.

Printing leaves that produce a nature-based artwork (AUD) can be seen as having many benefits, including being environmentally friendly because natural materials are more eco-friendly than synthetic materials. Using natural materials such as recycled paper, plant-based inks, and natural fibers reduces the environmental impact of the production process. Natural materials can support sustainable agricultural practices and the local economy, especially if the sources come from ethical and sustainable origins.

Sensory experiences using natural ingredients often provide a better sensory experience. The texture, aroma, and unique appearance of natural ingredients can create a more intense and enjoyable experience for its audience. The diversity and innovation of natural materials offer vast opportunities for innovation in design and printing techniques. This certainly encourages creativity and produces unique and interesting products for children.



Picture 2. The student is showing the results of what he has done

Children use their imagination and actively engage in creative activities, such as doing things slowly and neatly to match the shape and outcome of their printing activities to make them look beautiful. The children were enthusiastic about participating in the printing activity using natural materials, as evidenced from the beginning of the activity. The children couldn't wait and were asked to start the activity immediately. On the other hand, the children actively ask their friends, "How's your progress?" both while working and after the work is done. The effort to showcase their work is part of the child's expression of interest in creative activities.

Based on the explanation, the strategy to enhance children's creativity through printing activities using natural materials is an activity that can improve children's creativity because they can show interest in engaging in creative activities and express themselves creatively in various fields.

Based on the explanation above shows that printing activities using natural materials can encourage children's creativity in various fields. In this case, printing activities using natural materials can enhance children's creativity and allow them to explore freely according to their

imagination. They can choose colors, shapes, and so on according to their fantasies. Of course, this is the result of material-based printing activities.

Activities involving natural material printing indirectly encourage children to explore nature, even though their implementation does not include direct participation. Using different natural materials allows children to explore various materials used in printing activities. For example, when introducing printing activities using natural materials, children can explore and show joy while discovering the results of the printing activities with the natural materials the researcher initiated. Based on the presentation, printing with natural materials can stimulate children's creativity and make them enjoy exploration activities. Thus, printing with natural materials can stimulate children's imagination.

During the early childhood development period, specifically the age range of 0-6 years, there are several phases within that age range. The sensorimotor phase occurs at the age of 0-2 years. The preoperational development phase (2-7 years) is a period where early childhood children can absorb so much information, imitating demonstrations around them (Prasanti & Fitrianti, 2018). It is essential at this time to maximize its potential, as evidenced when the B-class children were instructed to carry out the activity of printing natural materials by observing the demonstration given by the teacher. The B class children quickly and reflexively printed natural materials and left explicitly, according to the teacher's instructions. The sensory receptors in the fingertips are well-trained, and the texture of various leaves stimulates the sense of touch.

The students' creativity becomes wilder when the B-class children are given rules not to be fixated on specific images. Students are allowed to pour their imagination into the printing activity. Joyfully, the child began seeking solutions so their work would differ from their friends. The students' creativity is increasingly unstoppable as they begin to explore the colors of leaves; the children learn that leaves are green and purple. A slimy texture when tapped or a somewhat dry texture if the selected leaf is old.

Printing activities based on natural materials can encourage children to express their imagination with words and convey their ideas according to their desires and imagination. During the process of printing activities based on natural materials, children will use their ideas as a form of expression of their creativity by creating new forms. The printing activities based on natural materials will differ from what is presented. I am using this presentation to show how nature-based printing can turn imagination into reality. In this case, activities involving printing with natural materials can enhance children's creativity.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that using natural materials from leaves can effectively improve children's creativity through fun, innovative, and environmentally-based learning activities. Children cannot only produce creative works, such as collages and three-dimensional art, but also show increased motor skills, enthusiasm for learning, and awareness of the importance of using natural resources wisely. Suggestions for further research are to explore the use of various types of natural materials other than leaves and to develop more structured learning strategies to ensure the sustainability of their positive influence on children's creativity, both at school and in the home environment.

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