

FROM DEPENDENCE TO INDEPENDENCE: UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF CHILDREN LEARNING TO DRESS THEMSELVES

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Abstract

Independence is a crucial aspect of early childhood development, encompassing the ability to perform simple tasks independently, such as dressing oneself. This study aims to understand the learning process of children dressing themselves at TK Amal Insani, Sleman, Yogyakarta, including the factors influencing its success and the challenges encountered. A descriptive qualitative research method was employed, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that consistent routines and teacher support significantly improved children's independence. Initially, most children struggled to dress themselves without assistance; however, with appropriate approaches, their

fine motor skills, confidence, and independence improved. Challenges remained, such as parental overindulgence at home, anxiety, and lack of confidence in some children. Teachers and parents played vital roles in this success by providing positive reinforcement, attentive supervision, and collaborative efforts between school and family. This research concludes that consistent routines and teacher-parent collaboration positively impact children's independence. The findings can serve as a reference for designing strategies to support early childhood independence in educational and family settings.

Keywords

Independence; Early Childhood; Dressing Skills; Education

Introduction

Independence is a fundamental aspect of early childhood development (Erikson, 1977). It includes the ability to perform various simple activities without adult assistance, such as eating, tidying up toys, and dressing themselves (Lisrayanti & Fidesrinur, 2020). These activities involve not only fine motor skills but also planning, decision-making, and self-confidence (Suryani & Aulia, 2024). Therefore, fostering independence in early childhood forms a vital foundation for developing more complex life skills in the future (Noor, Nayyera, 2023). One basic skill that serves as an early indicator of independence is a child's ability to dress themselves (Wijayanti et al., 2019).

However, many children still exhibit low levels of independence (Arofah et al., 2023). For example, at TK Aisyiyah I in Palangkaraya, Central Kalimantan, children aged 4–5 years often struggle with dressing themselves

(Aida et al., 2023). This condition raises significant concerns, as independence in dressing not only reflects fine motor skills but also contributes to building self-confidence and the ability to solve simple problems (Sa'Diyah, 2017; Sari & Rasyidah, 2019). Therefore, appropriate support and approaches are essential to help children develop this independence optimally (Harahap et al., 2024).

In early childhood education, the focus often leans heavily toward cognitive development, while basic skills such as dressing independently tend to receive less attention (Dini, 2023). Yet, these skills are crucial as a foundation for fostering self-confidence, responsibility, and autonomy in children (Murdiono et al., 2023). In this context, the role of teachers and educators becomes pivotal. Teachers not only act as facilitators of learning but also as companions who can provide stimulation and encouragement for children to become independent (Mustofa, 2021). Unfortunately, the approaches implemented in some early childhood education institutions have not thoroughly emphasized the development of children's independence (Nawangasasi & Kurniawati, 2021).

This research aims to explore children's learning processes in developing independence, particularly in the skill of dressing independently. The study focuses on identifying factors influencing the success and challenges in developing this skill. Through a deeper understanding, this research aims to offer recommendations for more effective strategies for teachers and parents in supporting children's independence.

This issue is significant not only in the context of education but also has broader implications. For instance, the findings of this study are expected to provide new insights for educators and parents to develop more effective strategies in supporting children's independence. The research focuses on in-depth analysis aimed at providing a scientific basis for the development of early childhood education policy programs.

The study was conducted at TK Amal Insani, Sleman, Yogyakarta, chosen as a case study location. This school demonstrates characteristics relevant to the study's focus, particularly in fostering independence among young children. TK Amal Insani actively implements various programs and activities designed to support children in becoming independent in their daily lives. By examining the practices implemented in this school, this research is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding the development of independence in young children, both in family and school settings.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach, aiming to provide an in-depth description of the phenomenon and understand various aspects related to children's skills in dressing at TK Amal Insani, Sleman, Yogyakarta (Jailani, 2023). This approach allows the researcher to gather data that includes not only numerical figures but also narratives and richer insights into children's experiences and behaviors (Waruwu, 2023).

The research method used in this study is descriptive, focusing on depicting the observed phenomenon without altering or manipulating any variables. Data were collected

through observation, interviews, and documentation studies (Sarosa, 2021). Observations were conducted to study the children's independent behavior in changing and wearing clothes. Interviews were held with classroom teachers to gather information about the strategies applied to develop children's independence in dressing. Documentation studies were carried out to analyze the dressing activities descriptively.

This research is a case study, focusing on a specific event that occurred at TK Amal Insani, Sleman, Yogyakarta. The study delves into children's skills in dressing, considering the context and conditions present at the school. As a case study, this research aims to deeply understand the situation in a small group of 4-5-year-old children in Class A, totaling 22 students. This group consists of 14 female students and 8 male students. Although the study employs a descriptive method, it centers on analyzing a single case highly relevant to the existing situation and background at the school.

Data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation were analysed using the following steps of qualitative data analysis: a) Data reduction, where the researcher summarizes and selects relevant data to obtain basic information for further analysis; b) Data presentation, where the researcher organizes and presents the collected data in a way that makes it easy to compare and understand; c) Drawing conclusions, where the researcher makes conclusions based on the data analysis and verifies the information gathered from observation notes (Azwar, 2023).

Result and Discussion

The implementation of independence-focused activities differed between the 2013 curriculum and the Merdeka curriculum. The latter centers on student-driven learning, with teachers acting as facilitators (Marhamah & Zikriati, 2024). This approach enables students to learn more comfortably (Hasim, 2020) and fosters creativity and deeper understanding (Hattarina et al., 2022).

At TK Amal Insani, the habit of changing and wearing clothes independently is a daily routine aimed at enhancing student independence. After lunch, students are required to change their clothes under the supervision of their class teacher. This activity was introduced to children from their first day at TK Amal Insani.

Initially, teachers explained and demonstrated the steps involved, such as unbuttoning shirts and correctly putting on clothes. Direct demonstrations helped children understand each step. As Ms. Yunti stated during an interview:

“At the start of the term, my fellow teachers and I explained these tasks in ways children could easily understand. We demonstrated how to change clothes step-by-step. Over time, the children became skilled in dressing themselves” (Yunti, 2024).

Nevertheless, the process was not always smooth. Success depended on factors like children's physical and cognitive readiness. Children with better fine motor skills were more adept

at dressing themselves. Emotional support and motivation from teachers and parents also played significant roles.

Challenges included habits of overindulgence at home, where children were not given opportunities to perform these tasks independently (Sembiring, 2024). Ms. Yunti remarked:

“Initially, it was challenging. Some children are pampered at home and not introduced to independent dressing, while others have tried but still struggle.” (Yunti, 2024)

With teacher persistence and time, most students eventually dressed themselves without assistance. Teachers also communicated with parents to ensure these practices were reinforced at home. As Ms. Yunti noted:

“I often ask parents to implement similar practices at home. This collaboration helps reinforce the habit.” (Yunti, 2024)

Parental involvement significantly impacted the children’s progress. One parent shared:

“I support my child’s independence, especially in dressing. At home, I encourage my child to dress independently, supervising and guiding when necessary. This practice boosts confidence and responsibility ” (Parent, 2024).

Collaboration between teachers and parents enabled children to develop this essential life skill, laying a foundation for greater independence in the future.

On another occasion, researchers tried to explore the actions that exist in schools and parents related to children's independent

behavior. Observation data showed the following symptoms in the treatment of children:

1. Students who get an introduction to dressing independently appear more skilled in dressing independently compared to those who never get treatment to be introduced to dressing independently
2. Students feel challenged to do many things themselves if they are added with instructions and rewards for independent behavior at home and at school
3. Reinforcement in the form of praise can be used as a key to developing students' character to be more independent in doing many things

The results of this study indicate a significant improvement in the students' independence, particularly in the process of learning to change clothes independently, over time. In the first semester, most students still struggled to change their clothes without assistance. However, with the implementation of consistent routines and guidance, their motor skills and independence improved. Indicators of independence in 4-5-year-old children, according to early childhood development theories, include the ability to make simple decisions, perform personal tasks such as dressing themselves, maintain personal hygiene, take responsibility for personal belongings, complete tasks without adult assistance, and show initiative in solving simple problems (Erikson, 1977).

These indicators refer to the concept of independence as the child's ability to carry out daily activities independently and responsibly. This is an essential part of their socio-emotional development. Based on the theory and the observations conducted

by the researcher, the approach applied by the teachers at TK Amal Insani, Sleman, Yogyakarta, proved effective in enhancing the children's ability to dress independently, which is an important indicator of their independence.

The success of improving children's independence at TK Amal Insani cannot be separated from the various factors that influence the learning process. Additionally, there are several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure that children's independence develops optimally. This study identifies several supporting factors that contribute to successful learning, as well as obstacles that need further attention.

a) Supporting Factors

The success of the children's independence learning process at TK Amal Insani is influenced by several supporting factors. One of the main factors is a consistent routine. In this factor, the teacher regularly integrates the activity of changing clothes as part of the daily routine at school. This approach gives children the opportunity to practice continuously until it becomes a habit.

Moreover, active support from the teacher is also a crucial factor. The teacher provides not only technical guidance but also emotional support, helping children feel more confident when facing difficulties.

Good cooperation between teachers and parents also strengthens the implementation of independence at home, creating an environment that supports children to practice dressing and undressing themselves. Positive reinforcement in the

form of rewards, such as praise, plays an important role in boosting the children's confidence to try independent activities.

b) Obstacles to Enhancing Children's Independence

Despite the various supporting factors, this study also identified several obstacles in the process of fostering children's independence. One of the main challenges is the habit of being pampered at home, where children are used to receiving full assistance from their parents. This habit makes it difficult for children to follow independence activities at school.

Differences in fine motor development among children also influence the success of the activity of dressing and undressing themselves. Children with less developed fine motor skills require more time to master the activity of changing clothes independently. Another obstacle is the lack of alignment between the routines at school and at home, where inconsistency in implementing the practice of dressing and undressing can hinder children's development.

Overall, the implementation of this routine has a positive impact on the development of the students' independence (Puspita & Harfiani, 2024), although there are still aspects that need further improvement. The success of improving students' independence aligns with the concept of learning based on character development and independence, as applied in the Merdeka Curriculum (Fatah & Zumrotun, 2023).

Conclusion

This study concludes that consistent routines in teaching dressing skills significantly improved children's independence at TK Amal Insani, Sleman. Over time, improvements in fine motor skills and confidence were evident, although some challenges, such as anxiety and parental indulgence, persisted. Teacher efforts and collaboration with parents played a crucial role in this progress.

This study have a Thesis that in Future efforts could involve:

1. Enhanced Parental Involvement, Providing specific guidelines for parents to support independence at home.
2. Varied Teaching Approaches is needed to Introducing creative methods, such as educational games or visual aids.
3. Positive Reinforcement, Offering praise or rewards to motivate progress.
4. Regular Evaluation, Conducting periodic assessments and reflecting on challenges to design effective interventions.
5. Psychological Support, Addressing children's confidence and anxiety issues.
6. Strengthened Teacher-Parent Collaboration, Ensuring consistent practices across home and school settings.

These recommendations aim to optimize children's independence development and support educational goals for fostering self-reliant and confident individuals.

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