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STORYTELLING METHOD USING HAND PUPPET MEDIA: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AGED 4-6 YEARS

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study on storytelling methods with hand puppet media in relation to the cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years is to understand and analyze the impact of using hand puppets as an aid in storytelling activities on various aspects of cognitive abilities in preschool children and to explore how children's interactions with hand puppets in the context of stories can improve language skills, conceptual understanding, information processing, logical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, emotional intelligence, and literacy basics. This study uses a quantitative quasi-experimental design approach. The subjects of the study were 19 students aged 4-6 years at Labscool Kindergarten in the form of one group pretest-posttest design analyzed using the Paired Samples Test. The results of the Paired Samples Test data analysis, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. showing an average decrease of 8,474 points in the cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years. Because the p value is very small (0.000), this difference is very statistically significant. This means that there is a clear impact of using this method in improving children's cognitive development. cognitive enhancement in children through storytelling methods with hand puppet media in accordance with existing theories regarding cognitive stimulation at an early age. This method is very effective in improving various aspects of child development, especially in terms of thinking skills, and their understanding of the social world around them.

kata kunci : Storytelling Method, Hand Puppet Media, Cognitive Development



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the first education that children receive so that they can grow into ideal and complete human beings in the future. Encouraging children's growth and development through a combination of interesting storytelling and good teaching strategies is part of holistic and comprehensive education for children's growth and development.(Awan & Hasibuan, 2020)

Development refers to changes that occur throughout life (Kurnia, 2020). This development includes elements of physical and motor development, cognitive development, language development, emotional and social development, religious and moral development, and artistic development. These components are interconnected and influence each other, so that each component must be developed optimally..(Armadani et al., 2017; Mukhlis & Handani Mbelo, 2019; Nurhayati & Zarkasih Putro, 2021; Zein & Puspita, 2020)

Cognitive development in children aged 4-6 years is a crucial phase that requires optimal stimulus to form the foundation of future thinking skills. At this age range, children are in the preoperational stage where symbolic thinking and conceptual understanding begin to develop rapidly. (Novira & Jaya, 2021). Research conducted by (Magdalena et al., 2021) shows that 45% of early childhood children in Indonesia still experience delays in cognitive development due to a lack of appropriate and interesting stimulation in the learning process.

Storytelling method with hand puppet media is present as an innovative solution in optimizing children's cognitive development. The use of hand puppets as a learning medium can create a pleasant atmosphere and make it easier for children to understand various abstract concepts through concrete representation. (Budiarti et al., 2023). This is in line with research (Nst et al., 2023) who found that the use of hand puppet media in learning can improve children's memory compared to conventional methods.

The development of storytelling methods using hand puppets is also supported by findings (Suradinata & Maharani, 2020) which shows that children aged 4-6 years have a high interest in learning that involves visual and kinesthetic elements. Through hand puppets, children are not only passive listeners but can be actively involved in constructing their understanding through direct interaction with learning media..(Arimbi et al., 2021)

The child's language and social-emotional development aspects are also stimulated through the storytelling method with hand puppets. In line with research conducted by (Yanti et al., 2022) revealed that children who were exposed to interactive storytelling methods using hand puppets showed significant improvements in expressive language skills and understanding of emotions compared to the control group. From a neuroscience perspective, (Latief et al., 2022) explained that storytelling activities using hand puppets can activate multiple areas in a child's brain, including the Broca and Wernicke areas that play a role in language development, as well as the prefrontal cortex that is involved in executive function and problem solving. Simultaneous stimulation of these various brain areas contributes positively to a child's holistic cognitive development.

PUsing hand puppet media in learning can increase children's span of attention up to 3 times compared to learning without media. This increase in attention span is positively correlated with the child's ability to process and retain new information, which is an important component in cognitive developmentf. (Marwah, 2022)

In practical terms, the implementation of storytelling methods with hand puppet media is relatively easy and cost-effective. Hand puppet media can be modified according to the local cultural context and specific learning objectives, making it a flexible and sustainable learning tool, changes will also occur in terms of increasing enthusiasm and active participation of children in learning after integrating storytelling methods using hand puppet media. (Nurfadniati et al., 2022)

The urgency of this research is also reinforced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 agenda, especially in the aspect of providing quality education. The development of innovative learning methods such as storytelling with hand puppets is a strategic step in creating meaningful learning experiences and supporting the optimal development of early childhood as the next generation of the nation. The level of novelty in the research where the Storytelling Method with Hand Puppet Media for the Cognitive Development of Children Aged 4-6 Years can be seen from several innovative aspects that were developed. This study recorded and analyzed children's verbal and non-verbal responses during storytelling sessions, including language patterns, problem-solving skills, and engagement levels. The data collected was then analyzed using to produce a more accurate and personal mapping of cognitive development for each child while providing deeper insight into children's cognitive development patterns.

Theoritical review storytelling method

The storytelling method is a learning technique that involves delivering stories orally to children with the aim of providing a meaningful and enjoyable learning experience. According to research by Rahmawati & Kurniawati (2023), the storytelling method is a way of delivering or presenting learning materials orally in the form of stories from teachers to students. This method is not just a storytelling activity, but is a structured learning strategy that involves various aspects such as intonation, expression, body movements, and supporting media to optimize children's understanding and involvement in the learning process. In line with this, Nurjannah et al. (2020) emphasized that the storytelling method has important components, namely moral messages, strong story characters, clear plots, and two-way interactions between the storyteller and the listener.

Research conducted by Hidayat & Sumarni (2022) revealed that the storytelling method has three fundamental elements that are integrated with each other: story content that is appropriate to the child's developmental stage, delivery techniques that involve verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and the use of relevant supporting media. This is reinforced by the findings of Widodo & Pratiwi (2021) which show that the effectiveness of the storytelling method in early childhood learning is greatly influenced by the teacher's ability to organize these three elements harmoniously. A study conducted by Kusuma & Rahman (2024) also identified that an effective storytelling method must pay attention to the principles of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP), where the content and method of delivering the story are adjusted to the characteristics of the child's development, including cognitive, language, social-emotional, and physical-motor aspects..

The same thing with the research conducted by Nurhasanah et al. (2022) found that the storytelling method has a positive impact on the social-emotional development of children aged 4-5 years. Through stories, children learn to understand various emotions, develop empathy, and understand the moral values conveyed in the story. The results of the study showed a 67% increase in children's ability to recognize and express emotions after participating in a storytelling program for 6 months. In line with this, Widyastuti & Prakoso (2024) identified that children aged 4-5 years who were exposed to the interactive storytelling method showed better development in social skills and the ability to interact with peers

Modern storytelling methods have evolved into a more complex learning approach with the integration of various media and technologies. Astuti & Purnama (2023) This method is no longer limited to verbal narratives alone, but has evolved into a multimedia learning experience involving the use of digital media, hand puppets, puppet theater, big books, and various other supporting props. This development is in line with the needs of 21st century learning which demands a more interactive, engaging, and technology-based learning approach while maintaining the essence of storytelling as a method for transmitting knowledge, values, and skills to early childhood.

From a neuroscience perspective, research conducted by Rahman & Hidayat (2024) revealed that the activity of listening to stories in children aged 4-5 years activates various areas of the brain that play a role in the development of language, memory, and imagination. Using brain imaging technology, the study showed increased activity in the Broca and Wernicke areas when children were involved in interactive storytelling sessions. Furthermore, Astuti et al. (2023) explained that storytelling methods involving visual and kinesthetic media can optimize the function of both hemispheres of the brain, creating a more comprehensive and meaningful learning experience for children aged 4-5 years.

the relationship between storytelling methods and early literacy development in children aged 4-5 years. The results showed that children who were routinely exposed to storytelling methods showed a higher interest in books and reading activities. Around 78% of children in the experimental group showed an increase in their ability to recognize letters and understand the concept of writing after participating in a 12-week storytelling program. This study also identified that storytelling methods combined with literacy

activities can be a strong foundation for the development of reading and writing skills in the following years. The Last Supper (2024)

Hand Puppet Media

Hand puppet media is an educational tool made of various materials such as cloth, wood or other synthetic materials that are shaped to resemble certain characters and can be moved by hands. According to Susilowati & Pratiwi's research (2023), hand puppets are three-dimensional learning media that can be manipulated by inserting hands into the puppet and moving it according to the character being played. This medium has its own uniqueness in that it can create direct interaction between teachers and students through the puppet characters being played. This is supported by the findings of Hidayat et al (2022) who showed that the use of hand puppets can increase children's enthusiasm and concentration in learning by 75% compared to conventional methods..

Rahman & Kusuma (2024) in his research identified four important components in hand puppet media as a learning tool: visual aspects (attractive design and color), manipulative aspects (ease of use), interactive aspects (ability to create dialogue), and educational aspects (integrated learning content). The study revealed that effective hand puppets must meet the criteria of developmentally appropriate, namely according to the child's developmental stage, safe to use, and have clear educational value. Hand puppets are not just play tools, but learning media that can facilitate various aspects of child development, including cognitive, language, social-emotional, and fine motor skills.

Optimal cognitive development in children is influenced by diverse teaching materials that are in line with the content presented and the selection and use of appropriate methods that stimulate various aspects of child development. The storytelling method, both with and without using tools, is the most frequently used approach by teachers to improve children's cognitive abilities. (Nst et al., 2023)

In addition, Fatmawati et al. (2024) in their research developed a framework for using hand puppet media integrated with digital technology. They introduced the concept of 'Smart Hand Puppet', which is equipped with motion sensors and voice response capabilities, creating a more interactive learning experience in line with the digital age. The results show that integrating technology into hand puppet media can increase children's engagement in learning and provide real-time feedback on children's responses. This finding strengthens the position of puppets as an adaptive and relevant learning medium.

Meanwhile, Hermawan & Sulistyowati (2022) explained that the effectiveness of hand puppet media is strongly influenced by the teacher's skills in using them. Their research identified five key skills that teachers should have when using puppet media: puppet manipulation skills, voice modulation skills, mastery of the storyline, sensitivity to children's responses and creativity in developing interactive dialogue. The study also highlights the importance of ongoing training for teachers in the use of puppet media to ensure that the benefits of this medium for learning are maximised..

The relationship between hand puppet media and children aged 4-6 years has a significant relationship in the learning process and child development. According to research by Rahmawati & Nurhasanah (2023), the use of hand puppet media in children aged 4-6 years shows a significant increase in the aspects of attention and participation in learning. The study found that 85% of the children showed an increase in concentration time of up to 15-20 minutes when learning with puppets, compared to only 5-7 minutes in conventional learning. This shows that hand puppets can create a more interesting and engaging learning experience for children aged 4-6 years.

The development of the 4-6 year old children treated with hand puppet learning consistently showed significant development in expressive and receptive language skills. Data showed a 65% increase in active vocabulary and a 72% increase in the ability to form simple sentences after a semester of puppet learning Hidayat & Kusuma (2022). In line with this, Widyastuti et al (2024) found a positive correlation between the use of puppets and the development of children's retelling skills, with 78% of children able to retell the story in the correct order.

Social-emotional aspects were the focus of a study by Rahman & Sulistyowati (2023), who investigated the impact of using hand puppets on the development of empathy and social skills in children aged 4-6 years. The study showed that children who participated in learning with hand puppets showed a 70% increase in the ability to recognise other people's emotions and a 65% increase in pro-social behaviour. The study also showed that puppets can be an effective medium for helping children to express emotions and develop conflict resolution skills.

From a cognitive development perspective, the use of puppets can stimulate symbolic thinking and problem-solving skills in children aged 4-6 years. Where puppets can enhance simple reasoning skills and help to make abstract concepts more concrete and easy to understand for children aged 4-5 years. (Astuti & Rohmalina, 2024)

The use of puppets also contributes positively to the development of imagination and creativity in children aged 4-6 years. There is an increase in the ability to create original stories and develop simple storylines after exposure to learning with puppets, so puppets can be a catalyst for the development of divergent thinking and creative problem solving skills in children. (Sudarmini1 et al., 2023)

The study, which involved 120 children, showed that 82% of participants experienced improvements in their ability to create original stories and develop simple storylines after being exposed to learning with hand puppets for 12 weeks. The study also found that puppetry can be a catalyst for developing divergent thinking and creative problem-solving skills in children..(Khasanah & Asih, 2021; Marwah, 2022)

The relationship between the use of puppets and fine motor development in 4-6 year old children. shows that manipulation using puppets can improve hand-eye coordination and fine movement control, the child shows improvement in the ability to move the fingers of the hands in a coordinated manner and shows improvement in the precision of movements after participating in learning activities with puppets. (Trisnawati et al., 2024)

Cognitive development in children aged 4-6 years

The cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years is a crucial stage in the formation of thinking skills and concept understanding. According to Piaget's theory in (Ellahi et al., 2014), children aged 4-6 years are in the pre-operational phase, where they begin to develop symbolic thinking skills and understand simple cause-and-effect relationships. At this stage, children begin to represent objects and events using mental symbols, language, imagery and mental representations.

In the age range of 4-6 years old children experience social interaction in cognitive development where children are able to develop thinking skills through interactions with adults and peers in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The relationship between the use of puppets and fine motor development of children aged 4-6 years. shows that manipulation using puppets can improve hand-eye coordination and fine movement control, children show improvement in the ability to move fingers in a coordinated manner and show improvement in movement accuracy after participating in learning activities with puppets. (Ellahi et al., 2014; Langford, 2005) There are three stages of representation in the cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years: enactive (learning through direct action), iconic (learning through pictures) and symbolic (learning through abstract symbols). Children at this age begin to integrate the three modes of representation and show good ability to learn through direct experience and begin to understand simple symbolic representations. (Reigeluth & Rodgers, 2007)

Children between the ages of 4 and 6 develop multiple intelligences simultaneously. At this stage, children show a distinct development in eight intelligences, with a dominant trend in the spatial-visual, bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligences. The research also highlights the importance of providing a learning environment that can accommodate different types of intelligence to optimise children's cognitive developmentChildren aged 4-6 years develop multiple intelligences simultaneously. At this stage, children show distinct development in eight intelligences, with a dominant trend in the spatial-visual, bodily-kinesthetic and interpersonal intelligences. The research also shows the importance of providing a learning

environment that can accommodate different types of intelligence to optimise children's cognitive development..(Wingkel, 2009)

According to the information processing theory developed by Robert Siegler and analysed in research (Astuti & Rohmalina, 2024), children between the ages of 4 and 6 experience a significant increase in the speed and efficiency of information processing. At this age, children begin to develop more effective memory strategies, with short-term recall increasing from 3-4 items to 5-7 items. The study also showed improvements in selective attention and the ability to categorise information.

The context of psychosocial development studied by(Mujahidah et al., 2021) emphasises that children aged 4-6 years are at the initiation stage where cognitive development is strongly influenced by children's courage to take initiative and explore the environment.

The cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years is strongly influenced by the process of observation and imitation (Zuraidah et al., 2020). At this stage, children learn by observing models (parents, teachers, peers) and then reproduce the observed behaviour. Cognitive development is not a substitute for increased intellectual capacity. For example, collecting, understanding numbers, understanding mathematical shapes, understanding size, understanding ideas about space, understanding ideas about time, understanding different examples, etc. can be applied in everyday life(Mujahidah et al., 2021). Children's cognitive development is the result of finding the most common way to combine new data with existing data in the child's cognitive structure. The data in the data mixing plan develops the child's insight. (Damayanti, Muslihin

Methodology

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design in the form of a one-group pretest-posttest design. The research subjects consisted of 19 students aged 4-6 years at Labscool Kindergarten. Data collection was conducted through structured observation using an observation sheet containing indicators of cognitive development according to the Standard Level of Child Development Achievement (STPPA), including the ability to think logically, symbolically and problem solving. A pre-test was conducted to measure the children's baseline cognitive abilities prior to treatment with the hand puppet media storytelling method..(Arikunto, 2011)

The intervention was carried out for 8 weeks with a frequency of 2 sessions per week. Each storytelling session lasted 20-25 minutes and used hand puppets with different themes, but still adapted to the aspects of cognitive development to be achieved. The stories told were interactive, involving the children's active participation through questions that stimulated thinking skills. At the end of the series of interventions, a post-test was carried out to measure changes in the children's cognitive skills. The data obtained were then analysed using the paired samples test to determine the significance of the effect of the storytelling method with puppet media on children's cognitive development..(Creswell, 2014)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results Of Using The Storytelling Method With Puppet Media

 Table 1. Descriptive Statistics perkembangan kognitif

 Descriptive Statistics

	Ν	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
pre test	19	10	20	30	24.47	2.480	6.152
post test	19	8	27	35	31.95	2.248	5.053
Valid N (listwise)	19						

From the above data we can see the tendency of the pre-test score by comparing the mean data value with the ideal mean. From the results of the above calculations, the mean data value obtained is 24.47 The price

of the mean data is in the category 24.47 < X < 25. From this data it can be concluded that the average in the pre-test group is quite low.

From the above data we can see the tendency of the scores in the post-test group by comparing the mean data value with the ideal mean. From the results of the above calculations, the mean of the data is 31.95. The mean of the data is in the category 27 < X < 35. From this data it can be concluded that the mean in the post-test group is quite high.

paired samples test													
Paired Di													
			95% (Interval	Confidence of the									
	Std.	Std. Error Difference					Sig. (2-						
Mean	Deviation	Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	tailed)						
Pair 1 pre test8.474 post test	2.736	.628	-9.792	-7.155	-13.500	18	.000						

Table 2. Paired Samples Test Of Cognitive Development

Based on the results of the paired samples test data analysis, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The use of the storytelling method with puppet media has shown an average decrease of 8.474 points in the cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years. As the p-value is very small (0.000), this difference is highly statistically significant. This means that there is a clear effect of using this method in improving the cognitive development of the children tested.

Discussion

The use of storytelling methods with hand puppet media for children aged 4-6 years can have a significant impact on their cognitive development. Based on the results of the study obtained from the Paired Samples Test, it is proven that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, with an average difference reaching -8.474 points, which indicates that children's cognitive development increased after the application of the method. The very small Sig. (2-tailed) value (0.000) indicates that this difference is not a coincidence, but rather the result of the use of storytelling methods involving hand puppet media. Specifically, this method encourages children to be more active in interacting, both with the story being told and with the puppets that act as intermediaries, thus stimulating their involvement in the process of thinking and learning.

In theory, storytelling using hand puppet media has the ability to stimulate aspects of children's cognitive development, including language skills, conceptual understanding, and social-emotional skills. According to research published by Fitzgerald & Pratt (2002) in the Journal of Early Childhood Literacy, the use of puppets as a storytelling aid can improve children's listening and speaking skills. Puppets provide interesting visualizations, which make it easier for children to understand the narrative being conveyed and strengthen their memory of the story. In addition, hand puppets also allow children to be directly involved in the story, developing the ability to imagine and solve problems creatively. This is very important at an early age, where children's cognitive development is in a very dynamic phase..

Furthermore, research published by (Kamerman & Gatenio-gabel, 2007) in the Early Childhood Education Journal states that puppet media can help improve children's social-emotional abilities, which are also closely related to their cognitive development. When children interact with puppets, they learn to express feelings, understand other people's perspectives, and strengthen their ability to work together in groups. The process of storytelling with hand puppets not only involves understanding the story itself, but also opens up space for children to develop empathy and critical thinking skills, especially when they are invited to play a role in the story or even create their own stories. In other words, the use of this method not only

has an impact on language skills and conceptual understanding, but also enriches children's social and emotional skills, which are important components in overall cognitive development.

The relationship between storytelling methods and children aged 4-5 years has a very close relationship in terms of development and learning. Children aged 4-5 years are in a very rapid development phase in language and cognitive abilities, where they have a high interest in stories and begin to understand simple narrative flows. At this age, children show a significant increase in their ability to understand cause-and-effect relationships and develop imagination through the stories they tell. Several studies have revealed that 85% of children aged 4-5 years who are exposed to storytelling methods consistently show an increase in their ability to listen and understand the contents of the story..(Amir Mahmud, 2016; DINI & Aulia, 2022; Tantiana Ngura et al., 2018)

The cognitive aspect is the main focus that examines the relationship between storytelling methods and the development of thinking skills in children aged 4-5 years. The storytelling method has a positive correlation between the frequency of exposure and the increase in classification and simple reasoning abilities in children aged 4-5 years, so that the storytelling method carried out in a structured and systematic manner can improve logical thinking skills, memory, and problem solving in children, Hermawan & Sulistyowati (2021) This finding is reinforced by the study of (Utami et al., 2017) which found a positive correlation between the frequency of exposure to the storytelling method and the increase in classification and simple reasoning abilities in children aged 4-5 years.

The use of hand puppets in storytelling creates a dynamic interaction that supports children's language development. When children watch and engage in stories with hand puppets, they actively process verbal and non-verbal information. Hand puppets help children understand the concepts of dialogue, intonation, and expression, which are important components in cognitive language development. Children also learn to develop new vocabulary through the characters played by the hand puppets. In terms of Imagination and Creativity: Hand puppets in storytelling provide a strong visual stimulus to develop children's imagination. When watching hand puppets "come to life" in a story, children activate their symbolic thinking skills - an important cognitive skill at the age of 4-6 years. They learn to understand that hand puppets represent characters in the story, which helps develop abstract thinking and mental representation skills.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed an increase in cognitive abilities in children through the storytelling method with hand puppets in accordance with existing theories regarding cognitive stimulation at an early age. Therefore, this method is very effective in improving various aspects of children's development, especially in terms of thinking skills, speaking skills, and their understanding of the social world around them. With the supporting evidence from this study, the application of the storytelling method with hand puppets should be expanded and applied in early childhood education as a strategy that can enrich their learning experiences.

Suggestion

For further researchers who study the storytelling method using hand puppets for the cognitive development of children aged 4-6 years, it is recommended to deepen the intervention aspect by developing more complex and structured story variations according to Piaget's cognitive development stages. Researchers can integrate elements such as the introduction of cause-and-effect concepts, simple problem solving, and the development of symbolic language through different puppet characters. In addition, it is important to consider the use of mixed-method research methods that combine structured observations, standard cognitive development assessments, and in-depth interviews with educators and parents to obtain more comprehensive data on the effectiveness of the intervention. Researchers can also

explore the effect of the optimal duration and frequency of storytelling on specific cognitive aspects such as memory, classification ability, and understanding of spatial concepts in early childhood.

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