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STIMULATING EARLY CHILDHOOD CREATIVITY THROUGH A LOCAL WISDOM-BASED COOKING CLASS PROGRAM

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Abstract

This research aims to provide an in-depth description of stimulating creativity in early childhood through local wisdom-based cooking class activities at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin, Lampeji. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection techniques through participatory observation, structured interviews, and documentation. The cooking class activity is designed by combining the cooking learning process and the introduction of local cultural values through the activity of decorating traditional Apem cakes. Research results show that this activity effectively stimulates four aspects of creativity, namely fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration). In addition to enhancing creativity, this activity also fosters appreciation for local cultural heritage and strengthens children's social interactions with teachers, peers, and parents. These findings indicate that local wisdom-based cooking classes can be implemented as a contextual, holistic, and meaningful learning strategy to optimize the creativity potential of early childhood.

Keywords: early childhood creativity, cooking class, local wisdom

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan secara mendalam stimulasi kreativitas anak usia dini melalui kegiatan cooking class berbasis kearifan lokal di KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin, Lampeji. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara terstruktur, dan dokumentasi. Kegiatan cooking class dirancang dengan memadukan proses pembelajaran memasak dan pengenalan nilai budaya lokal melalui aktivitas menghias kue tradisional Apem. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan ini secara efektif menstimulasi empat aspek kreativitas, yaitu fluency, flexibility, originality, dan elaboration. Selain meningkatkan kreativitas, kegiatan ini juga menumbuhkan apresiasi terhadap warisan budaya lokal serta memperkuat interaksi sosial anak dengan guru, teman sebaya, dan orang tua. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa cooking class berbasis kearifan lokal dapat diimplementasikan sebagai strategi pembelajaran yang kontekstual, holistik, dan bermakna untuk mengoptimalkan potensi kreativitas anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci: Kreativitas AUD, Cooking class, Kearifan lokal

Background

Hery (2019) stated that: "Early childhood education is an educational level before the basic education level, which is an effort aimed at children from birth to six years old, carried out through providing educational stimulation to support physical and mental growth and development so that children are prepared to enter further education, organized through formal, non-formal, and informal pathways.

The ability to think creatively and imaginatively in early childhood should be optimized so that children have the experience and foundation to build the world in the future (Leggett, 2017). Creativity is an individual's ability, which in daily life is associated with exceptional achievements in creating new things or transforming existing things into new concepts, discovering problem-solving methods that most people cannot find, generating new ideas that have never existed, and seeing various possibilities that may occur (Maulana and Mayar, 2020). The manifestation of creativity is that children can express themselves in different and unique ways that are tailored to their learning needs and learning styles (Dere, 2019).

Basically, children naturally have creative potential, so they will always need various activities and stimulation that can develop their creative ideas. Naturally, curiosity and the desire to learn are human instincts. Therefore, children also naturally have the ability to learn something in their own way (Rachmawati and Kurniati 2010). In the reality of Early Childhood Education in Indonesia, various challenges are still found in optimally stimulating children's creativity. Many learning programs are still based on memorization and provide limited opportunities for children to explore and develop their creativity (Hidayat, 2020). Children aged 4-5 years generally face various problems in the development of creativity and critical thinking, including at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin, Lampeji. The lack of understanding of educators regarding learning methods. In learning activities, teachers focus more on academic material than on stimulating children's creativity. As a result, children still show limited development in their creativity. Therefore, some children still rely on assistance from

parents and teachers during learning. According to Santrock (2018), at this age, children are still in the exploration stage and often experience limitations in expressing their ideas and imagination optimally. Children often lack appropriate stimulation to develop their creativity, especially in activities that involve experimentation and problem-solving. This limitation in hands-on experience can affect the opportunities for children to hone critical thinking skills, such as observing, experimenting, and evaluating the results of the activities they engage in (Hidayat, 2020). Therefore, a learning strategy that can provide real experiences for children is needed, one of which is through locally-based Cooking Class activities that can serve as an effective means to address this issue.

Widyastuti (2017) revealed that one alternative solution to address this problem is through Cooking Class activities based on local wisdom, which provide direct learning experiences for children. Cooking Classes allow children to develop their creativity by experimenting with ingredients, learning various cooking techniques, and presenting food in an appealing way. The activity not only stimulates children's creativity, but it can also serve as a means to enhance their critical thinking skills through the process of experimenting, observing, and evaluating the dishes they prepare. In addition to stimulating creativity, cooking classes can also teach children about scientific and mathematical concepts in a practical way, such as measuring ingredients, mixing colors, and observing changes in the shape and texture of food during cooking. Therefore, cooking activities are not only enjoyable but also serve as a holistic learning medium that can develop various aspects of children's intelligence (Setyaningsih, 2019).

Local wisdom-based cooking classes not only serve as an effective learning method for stimulating the creativity of early childhood, but also as a means of cultural preservation. KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin strives to introduce the values of local wisdom in teaching and learning activities through cooking classes. Through this activity, children are introduced to traditional food, namely Apem, which is decorated with various toppings. In this way, they not only learn to cook but also develop creative thinking skills through exploring ingredients, cooking techniques, and diverse food presentations. This approach allows children to gain valuable experience in appreciating and preserving their local culinary heritage. Moreover, cooking activities based on local culture can enhance a sense of togetherness and social interaction among children with peers, teachers, and parents (Vygotsky, 1978). With proper guidance, children are more motivated to learn and develop new ideas during the cooking process, allowing their creativity to flourish optimally (Santrock, 2011).

Method

Research in this journal uses a Qualitative Descriptive method. According to Moleong (2019), qualitative research is research aimed at understanding social phenomena in depth through the collection of narrative data. Meanwhile, descriptive research aims to provide a systematic depiction of an event based on existing facts (Sugiyono, 2020). This study will provide a detailed description of how cooking class activities based on local wisdom can stimulate the creativity of early childhood. Moreover, the issues raised are not related to numbers but rather to words that need to be analyzed and the problems described in more depth.

The data in this study were collected through triangulation using Observation, Interviews, and documentation, carried out at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin, Peji Mangar Hamlet, Lampeji Village, Mumbulsari Subdistrict, Jember Regency, East Java in the 2024-2025 academic year. Observations were conducted on the students of class A (4-5 years old) at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin for the 2024-2025 academic year by examining aspects of creativity, which consist of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The aspects of creativity were observed in depth using a participant observation system, meaning the researcher directly participated in the learning activities and the cooking class. The observations carried out focused on how children participate in cooking class activities, present ideas for cake decoration, and share their finished creations. Structured interviews were conducted with the principal, teachers, and parents to gain an in-depth description of the impact of creativity stimulation that arises in the children's learning and daily lives as a result of implementing cooking class activities based on local wisdom. Documentation was carried out on the cakes made by children during cooking class activities as supporting data for creativity in observation activities. The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman framework, which consists of data collection, data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

Results and Discussion

This research was conducted at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin, Lampeji, which is one of the early childhood education institutions actively developing children's potential through various experiential approaches. The purpose of this study is to describe how a local wisdom-based cooking class, particularly through the activity of decorating Apem cakes, can stimulate the creativity of early childhood group A (ages 4–5).

The results of the observation conducted at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin Lampeji indicate that the creativity abilities of children in Group A are still lacking in some children. Out of 12 children, only nine have shown well-developed creativity, while the creativity of the remaining

three children is still not well developed. Children often still depend on teachers or parents, children cry during learning activities, and there are also children who remain silent because they are unable to participate in the learning activities. However, parents still expect their children to be able to produce their work well. Therefore, to improve children's creative abilities, it is necessary to stimulate creativity in early childhood through efficient activities and learning.

This activity began with a coordination meeting with the school principal and teachers to plan the implementation of a cooking class integrated with local cultural values, as shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1. Coordination meeting for cooking class activities

Previously, cooking class activities at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin did not involve elements of local wisdom and were limited to simple activities such as kneading dough. As an early childhood education institution, KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin not only teaches reading and writing but also nurtures creativity from an early age. The local wisdom-based cooking class activity at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin is an educational innovation designed to stimulate the creativity of 4–5-year-old children through hands-on experience. This activity combines cooking lessons with an introduction to local culture, specifically through the activity of decorating traditional Apem cakes. Apem is a traditional Javanese food that is usually served during selamatan ceremonies and other events as a symbol of hope for blessings. In the context of learning, Apem is introduced as an educational medium rich in cultural values, as shown in Figure 2 below.



Figure 2. Cooking class activities, stimulating the creativity of early childhood children

The activity of decorating apem cakes shown in Figure 2 above was initially guided by the teacher to familiarize with the ingredients used for decorating. After that, the children were asked to create their own apem cakes according to their imagination based on the ingredients provided.

Early childhood creativity in local wisdom-based cooking class activities is evident through various aspects analyzed based on Rachmawati & Kurniati's (2017) creativity theory, namely: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The following is a description of the observed development of children's creativity based on the results of observations, interviews, and documentation:

Fluency

Fluency relates to the child's ability to smoothly express and apply many ideas about the decorations that will be applied to the cake they are going to create. Based on observations and documentation, the children demonstrated the ability to decorate more than one Apem in a single session, and some even tried to make faces, flowers, or simple symbols using toppings. Results from interviews with the classroom teacher indicated that most children were able to arrange the decorations smoothly without hesitation, showing that the children have a fairly abundant flow of ideas.

The children looked happy and were able to decorate immediately without asking many questions. They were able to complete up to 2 cakes with different decorations." (class A guardian).

Flexibility

Flexibility is related to the child's ability to provide a variety of variations in the cakes they create. This is evident in the child's ability to change or try different toppings and decoration patterns. The child does not just follow the patterns given by the teacher but tries other decorating techniques, such as stacking toppings, mixing colors, or placing toppings asymmetrically. In the documentation of their artwork, some children rearranged their

decorations in the middle of the process. The flexibility of their thinking is reflected when they dare to try new toppings, change color combinations, and do not stick to the examples provided by the teacher. This flexibility demonstrates the children's ability to adapt and modify ideas according to the situation and available materials, a characteristic of early-level creative thinking.

There was a child who initially decorated with chocolate sprinkles, then said they wanted to switch to nuts and sprinkles. They tried various combinations and seemed happy." (Observation result).

Originality

Originality is clearly visible in the unusual decorative patterns. Some children create stories from their decorations, such as forming faces with colored sprinkles shaped like a smiling face using chocolate glaze. The uniqueness of ideas is very evident from the children's diverse and non-monotonous works, with some even depicting specific stories through decorations, like a bright rainbow made without any prior example. This indicates the presence of originality in thinking that arises from the child's imagination without direct intervention from adults. Some children who initially appeared shy and reluctant to try decorating Apem, after seeing their friends' enthusiasm and being gradually encouraged by the teacher, began to dare to take initiative and complete the cake with quite creative results. Interviews with the teacher and principal showed that the children were able to present ideas that had never been created before.

One of the children decorated the Apem like a flower, they said the flower design was very beautiful. This had never been taught before, it was purely the child's idea." (Class A Teacher)

Elaboration

Shown by children who add small ornaments in detail, such as tiny dots of sprinkles on the sides of the cake, or lines of chocolate glaze to create certain patterns. Some children even decorate the bottom and sides of the Apem, not just the top. Documentation of the children's work shows that they begin to think comprehensively about the final form of their decorations. This indicates that cooking class activities indirectly stimulate children's creativity, which is an important aspect of the learning process for early childhood. Children relate their work to stories or personal experiences. In an interview with teachers, it was found that some children mentioned that they make beautiful pictures and shapes which would later be given to their mothers. This indicates a transfer of personal experience and imagination into their work, which is a sign of deeper creativity integrated with the child's emotions.

Some children are very detailed; they notice parts of the cake and say it looks like hair or a frame. That is an extraordinary form of development." (Class A teacher)

These aspects are evident when children face challenges such as changing to a new topping, a fallen topping, or decorations that do not turn out as desired. Creative children do not give up; instead, they seek solutions by rearranging or substituting materials. This indicates the ability to recognize problems and respond with creative ideas, which is an important part of developing problem-solving attitudes from an early age (Santrock, 2011).

This activity also has a strong cultural component. By introducing traditional foods such as Apem cake, children not only learn food decorating techniques but are also introduced to local cultural values. This aligns with the view of Laely & Subiyanto (2020) that a cooking class based on local wisdom can serve as a medium for cultural preservation as well as meaningful contextual learning.

Based on the results obtained, cooking class activities based on local wisdom have proven to be an effective means of stimulating the creativity of young children. These activities provide space for children to explore, create, and freely express their ideas. In this study, children's creativity is seen through the uniqueness of the decorations on Apem cakes, their ability to choose and combine topping ingredients, as well as the way they solve small problems such as rearranging toppled toppings. The most prominent aspect of creativity in local wisdom-based cooking class activities is the aspect of originality and elaboration, namely the children strive to create works that are different by adding additional details to their cake creations, making them appear more lively and striking. The elaboration aspect that emerges in the children is supported by a desire to be different and unique compared to their friends' works, making this aspect the most prominent compared to other aspects.

This research focuses on efforts to stimulate the creativity of early childhood children (4-5 years old) at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin through cooking class activities based on local wisdom. This approach is carried out by integrating traditional food ingredients and traditional snacks or cakes, such as decorating Apem, which the children have never done before, as well as local cultural values into the learning process. This activity aims not only to stimulate children's creativity but also to instill an appreciation for local cultural heritage from an early age. The use of engaging media and teaching materials appropriate to the child's developmental stage also supports the effectiveness of learning, which is not yet commonly applied in early childhood education settings. Meanwhile, previous research has only focused on improving motor skills, and there has been no study focusing on a learning model through local wisdom-based cooking class activities conducted on early childhood children (aged 4-5 years) to understand its benefits in stimulating the creativity of young children who are lacking in this area.

In the local wisdom-based cooking class activity, it was not just about decorating apem cakes, but there was also a session where children presented the creations they had made. The children gave various interesting reasons for the cakes they had created, including:

1. "The more striking, the more appetizing it looks." This reason is given because children believe that cakes with striking decorations can enhance the perceived taste of the cake. This thought becomes unique because it is expressed by children aged 4-5 years old, who have a simple way of thinking. It makes sense because children tend to choose snacks that are striking in shape and have varied colors.
2. "Cakes that are pink are for girls, cakes that are blue are for boys." Girls tend to prefer colors that align with female characteristics, while boys choose colors that align with male characteristics, making color selection unique according to each child's personality.
3. "I don't like apem, but if it's made into character shapes, I like it." This view was expressed by a child who initially did not like apem cakes, but after they were shaped into certain characters that matched the child's imagination, the child started to like them. This provides a new perspective for parents to create unique designs in their child's meals so that the child is willing and happy to enjoy the meals prepared, even if the food was initially disliked by the child. The child and parent decorate the meals together, so this creativity influences the child's daily habits at home.

Based on these unique findings, local wisdom-based cooking class activities have a positive impact on the development of children's creativity and encourage children's imagination to be more varied. Local wisdom-based cooking class activities also have an impact on fostering positive habits in the development of children's creativity outside of school, whether in decorating food or other activities.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted at KB Rahmatan Lil Alamin, it can be concluded that locally-based cooking class activities are highly effective in stimulating the creativity of early childhood children. These activities are able to develop aspects of children's creativity, which include fluency (the ease of generating ideas), flexibility (flexibility in thinking), originality (uniqueness in ideas), and elaboration (the deep development of ideas).

Through the activity of decorating traditional Apem cakes, children not only gain enjoyable hands-on experience but also receive stimulation that supports the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In addition, integrating elements of local culture

into learning activities provides added value in instilling an appreciation for cultural heritage from an early age. The most prominent aspect of creativity that emerges in this local wisdom-based cooking class is the aspect of originality and elaboration, as children strive to create cakes that are unique and different from other cakes.

Thus, local wisdom-based cooking class activities can be used as an alternative learning strategy that is contextual, holistic, and meaningful in order to foster the development of creativity potential in early childhood.

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