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IMPLEMENTATION OF PRACTICAL LIFE SKILL ACTIVITIES IN IMPROVING THE INDEPENDENCE OF GROUP A YOUNG CHILDREN IN KALIWEDI DISTRICT, CIREBON REGENCY

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Abstrak
Rendahnya kemandirian anak usia dini pada Kelompok A TK Permata Ujungsemi menjadi dasar utama dilaksanakannya penelitian ini. Kemandirian dipandang sebagai aspek perkembangan yang sangat krusial agar ditanamkan sejak awal, karena mempunyai hubungannya dengan kemampuan anak dalam menjalankan aktivitas kehidupannya tanpa tergantung denganorang lain. Peningkatan kemandirian anak diupayakan melalui implementasi aktivitas keterampilan hidup praktis (practical life skills), dengan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang dilaksanakan dalam 2 siklus. Setiap siklus terbagi atas rangkaian tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan tindakan, observasi, maupun refleksi. Adapun subjeknya berjumlah 24 anak usia 4–5 tahun. Instrumen pengumpulan data menggunakan observasi maupun dokumentasi melalui lembar observasi kemandirian anak, sedangkan analisis data dilaksanakan dengan deskriptif kuantitatif dalam bentuk persentase guna melihat perkembangan pada tiap siklus. Temuan ini memperlihatkan peningkatan kemandirian anak secara bertahap, dari 25% pada pra-siklus menjadi 54,17% di siklus I, kemudian meningkat hingga 95,83% di siklus II. Sehingga, ditarik simpulan bahwa aktivitas keterampilan hidup praktis efektif dalam meningkatkan tingkat kemandirian anak usia dini sekaligus membantu anak agar lebih percaya diri dalam melaksanakan aktivitasnya.
Kata Kunci: Kemandirian, Keterampilan Hidup Praktis, Anak Usia Dini, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas.

Abstract
The limited independence of early childhood learners in Group A at TK Permata Ujungsemi served as the primary rationale for this study. Independence is regarded as a fundamental developmental domain that needs to be fostered from an early stage, as it is closely related to a child's ability to perform daily activities without relying on others. An improvement in children's independence was pursued through the application of practical life skills activities, using a Classroom Action Research approach, over 2 cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The participants were 24 children aged 4–5 years. Data were collected through observation and documentation using an independent observation sheet. In contrast, data analysis was conducted using quantitative descriptive techniques, expressed as percentages, to track progress in each cycle. The findings indicated a gradual increase in children's independence, from 25% in the pre-cycle stage to 54.17% in cycle I, and then to 95.83% in cycle II. Therefore, it can be concluded that practical life skills activities are effective in enhancing early childhood independence while also helping children become more confident in carrying out their daily routines.
Keywords: *Independence, Practical Life, Early Childhood, Classroom Action Research.*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Independence, conceptualized as the capacity encompassing self-management, decision-making, and accountability for one's actions, constitutes a crucial aspect that must be instilled from an early stage in early childhood education (ECE). At this developmental phase, ECE serves as a strategic foundation for shaping character and fostering holistic individual development.[1]

Instilling independence in early childhood is essential, as it reduces children's dependence on others while fostering confidence and motivation to perform daily activities.[2]

Independence is also defined as the individual capacity for autonomous action, free from external dependence, and characterized by self-regulation.[3]

Children with well-developed independence generally exhibit high self-confidence, can solve simple problems, and demonstrate autonomy from others. Conversely, those lacking independence often struggle to adapt to their environment and tend to avoid responsibility for assigned tasks. In early childhood, independence develops through habituation and learning experiences, and it is closely intertwined with self-regulation skills and executive functioning.[4]

However, based on field observations at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten, several children still rely heavily on teachers during daily activities, particularly when tidying up learning materials and performing self-care tasks. This condition indicates that children's independence has not yet

[1] Amy C. Montroy, dkk., "The Development of Self-Regulation Across Early Childhood," *Developmental Psychology* 52, no. 11 (2016); Edward L. Deci dan Richard M. Ryan, "The 'What' and 'Why' of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior," *Psychological Inquiry* 11, no. 4 (2000): 227–268.

[2] Sukatin dkk., "Pentingnya Kemandirian Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* (2020).

[3] Barry J. Zimmerman, "Becoming a Self-Regulated Learner: An Overview," *Theory Into Practice* 41, no. 2 (2002): 64–70.

[4] Clancy Blair dan C. Cybele Raver, "School Readiness and Self-Regulation: A Developmental Psychobiological Approach," *Annual Review of Psychology* 66 (2015): 711–731; Adele Diamond, "Executive Functions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 64 (2013): 135–168.

developed to its optimal level. The development of autonomy in early childhood is significantly influenced by structured learning experiences and a supportive environment.[5] In addition, the development of children's independence is influenced by various factors originating from the family environment as well as the experiences children acquire within their life dynamics.[6]

Consequently, there is a critical need for instructional strategies that provide children with opportunities to practice and develop their independence through direct, hands-on experiences. One highly viable approach is to implement Practical Life Skills activities that actively engage children in everyday tasks such as self-care and environmental maintenance.[7]

Practical life skills encompass activities related to daily routines, such as self-care, environmental cleanliness, and the execution of simple tasks. These activities aim to train children to perform actions independently while simultaneously fostering responsibility and self-confidence. This approach is supported by experiential learning theory, which posits that effective learning occurs through direct, hands-on experiences.[8]

Theoretically, the relationship between practical life skill activities and child independence can be elucidated through Kolb's experiential learning theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Through direct, hands-on experiences in their daily lives, children have opportunities to learn, experiment, and develop self-management skills. Furthermore, a learning environment that encourages active participation plays a pivotal role in supporting the development of autonomy. Consequently, practical life skills activities not only cultivate daily living skills but also help children develop a sense of responsibility and self-confidence.

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[5] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

[6] Putri dan Suryana, "Faktor-Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Kemandirian Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* (2022).

[7] Angeline Stoll Lillard, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[8] David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2015).

Previous research indicates that routine activities can enhance children's independence.[9] Furthermore, children's habituation to executing various tasks autonomously without relying on others can be established progressively through direct, authentic learning experiences derived from practical life skills. Nevertheless, the vast majority of prior studies have predominantly focused on the general importance of routine activities and learning experiences in fostering child independence. Research specifically implementing practical life skill activities to enhance independence levels among children aged 4–5 years through Classroom Action Research (CAR) remains significantly limited.

As indicated by the observation results at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten, a low level of independence among Group A children was still evident. The children continuously required teacher assistance in performing self-care, executing tasks, and taking responsibility for their ongoing activities. This condition demonstrates that the current learning process has not provided sufficient opportunities for children to practice autonomy through direct experience. Therefore, this study is essential to offer an alternative pedagogical approach to enhance child independence through practical life skills activities. The novelty of this research lies in the systematic implementation of practical life skills activities through Classroom Action Research (CAR) targeting children aged 4–5 years at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten. Given this context, the primary objective of this study is to improve the level of independence among Group A children at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten through the application of practical life skills activities.

[9] Sara Panesi dan Sergio Morra, "The Contribution of Executive Functions to Preschoolers' Learning and Development," *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020).

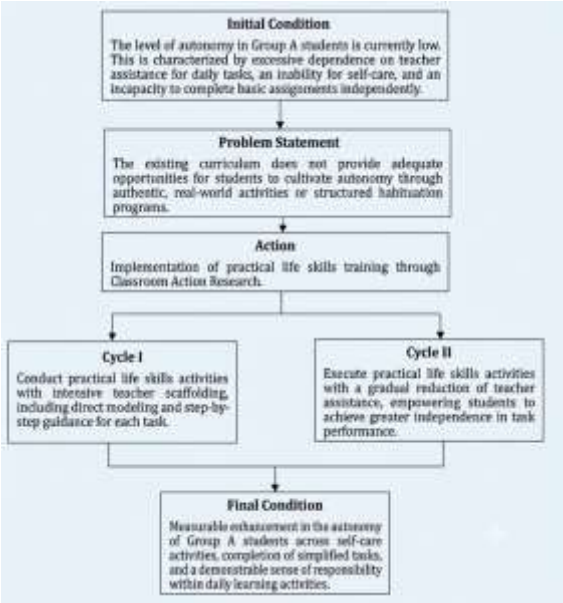


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

B. METHOD

This study was conducted at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten, located in Kaliwedi District, Cirebon Regency. The selection of the subjects was based on the consideration that children at this age are in the foundational stage of developing independence, thereby necessitating optimal stimulation through structured learning activities.

His Classroom Action Research (CAR) was implemented through a two-cycle action framework. The research subjects comprised 24 children aged 4–5 years enrolled at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten. Data collection techniques utilized field observations and documentation, with a child independence observation sheet serving as the primary research instrument. The gathered data were subsequently analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate percentages, aiming to monitor the progression of children's independence across each cycle. In its application, the CAR design followed a cyclical process, with each cycle encompassing four sequential phases: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

This study employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model by Kemmis and McTaggart, implemented over two cycles, each comprising four phases: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The implementation of this model aimed to continuously improve the pedagogical process through a structured sequence of activities designed, executed, observed, and evaluated, in which the reflective outcomes from the preceding cycle served as the foundation for formulating the subsequent cycle. The success criterion for this research was set at a minimum of 75% of children achieving either the 'Developed as Expected' (DAE) or 'Well-Developed'

(WD) category across the observed indicators of independence.

During the planning phase, the researcher prepared instructional designs incorporating practical life skills activities, which included the provision of media, materials, and observation instruments. Subsequently, in the acting phase, pedagogical activities focused on implementing practical life skills within daily routines, such as self-care, tidying up educational materials, and completing simple tasks independently. Children's active engagement in this process is paramount, as it provides hands-on experiences that support the enhancement of autonomy.[10]

Observations were conducted throughout the instructional process, using observation sheets to monitor children's progress toward independence. This observational activity aimed to acquire accurate data regarding changes in children's behavior during the execution of the action. The observational findings were subsequently analyzed and utilized as the foundation for reflection to determine the success of the intervention and to formulate pedagogical refinements for the subsequent cycle.

This data analysis used descriptive statistics, converting the collected data into percentages. This technique is widely employed in educational research to systematically and reliably assess learning outcomes (Creswell, 2014). The calculation was performed using the following formula

$$\mathbf{P = (F / N) \times 100\%}$$

The results of the analysis were subsequently classified into four developmental categories: Well-Developed (WD), ranging from 76% to 100%; Developed as Expected (DAE), from 51% to 75%; Starting to Develop (SD), from 26% to 50%; and Not Yet Developed (NYD), from 0% to 25%. This classification was utilized to evaluate the success rate of the intervention in enhancing child independence and served as the empirical basis for decision-making in the subsequent cycle

[10] David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2015).

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings demonstrate that early childhood independence increased progressively across cycles through the implementation of practical life skills activities. In the initial phase (pre-cycle), the children's independence level was categorized as low, reaching a percentage of only 25%. This baseline condition indicates that the majority of the children were not yet capable of executing daily routines autonomously, which included tasks such as tidying up educational materials, eating independently, and managing their learning equipment without teacher assistance.

In Cycle I, the intervention outcomes revealed a progressive increase in children's independence, reaching 54.17%. Nevertheless, this achievement indicated that a segment of the children was not yet fully capable of completing tasks autonomously, thereby still requiring guidance and assistance. This limitation occurred primarily because the children were still in the adaptation phase regarding the newly introduced practical life skills activities.

The outcomes in Cycle II demonstrated a highly significant advancement, with the percentage reaching 95.83%. Nearly all children were capable of executing activities autonomously without relying on teacher assistance. The children also exhibited substantial improvements in various facets of independence, including self-care practices, accountability, and autonomous task completion.

The percentage of 95.83% represents the classical mastery level of children's independence, reflecting the total number of children who achieved either the 'Developed as Expected' (DAE) or 'Well-Developed' (WD) categories. Meanwhile, the percentage of 70.83% specifically denotes the proportion of children who attained the 'Well-Developed' (WD) category. Consequently, these two percentages carry distinct conceptual meanings; they do not indicate a discrepancy in the research findings, but rather illustrate different levels of developmental achievement.

The improvement in children's independence was evident across several observed indicators, namely the

capability for self-care, the capacity to complete tasks autonomously, accountability for ongoing activities, and the ability to tidy up learning materials after use. At the baseline of the study, the majority of the children still required teacher assistance to perform these activities. Following the progressive implementation of practical life skills activities, the children began to demonstrate the ability to execute tasks independently with a decreasing level of guidance. This transition indicates that the hands-on experiences and habituation provided throughout the instructional activities effectively support the development of child autonomy.

The children also exhibited behavioral changes characterized by increased self-confidence when engaging in activities. They displayed no hesitation to try new things, demonstrated the ability to complete tasks to completion, and began to manifest a sense of responsibility toward themselves and their environment. This positive shift was evident from the children's enhanced capability to organize learning materials, follow instructions, and conclude activities without relying on teacher assistance.

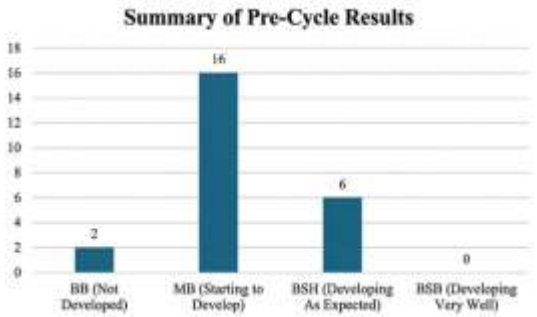


Figure 2. Pre-Cycle Recapitulation Diagram

Based on the results presented in the diagram, it can be concluded that the level of children's independence during the pre-cycle phase remained low. The majority of the children were classified into the 'Starting to Develop' (SD) category, indicating that while they had begun to exhibit autonomous behaviors, they were not yet fully capable of executing them without teacher assistance. This baseline condition underscores that children's independence urgently needs to be enhanced through the practical life skills activities scheduled for implementation in Cycle I.

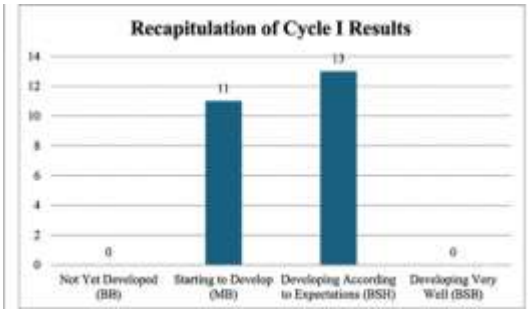


Figure 3. Cycle I Recapitulation Diagram

When compared to the pre-cycle baseline, the level of children's independence demonstrated satisfactory development. This progress was evident from the complete absence of children in the 'Not Yet Developed' (NYD) category, alongside an increase in the percentage of children reaching the 'Developed as Expected' (DAE) category, which climbed to 54.17%. However, 45.83% of the children remained in the 'Starting to Develop' (SD) category, indicating that a portion had not yet achieved full autonomy and still required assistance with activities.

This condition indicates that the implemented intervention had begun to yield positive effects, yet it remained suboptimal at enhancing independence among all children. Based on the recapitulation data from Cycle I, although a noticeable improvement was evident, subsequent refinements and reinforcement are required in the next cycle. This next phase aims to ensure that children's independence develops more maximally and equitably across the group.

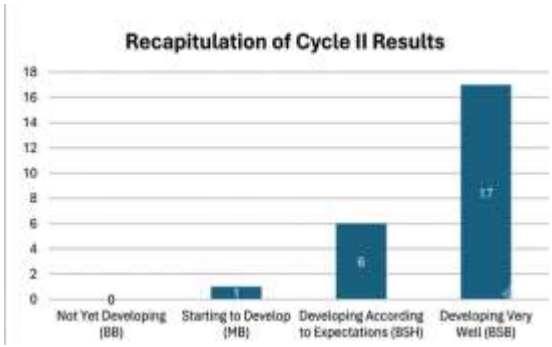


Figure 4. Cycle II Recapitulation Diagram

In Cycle II, the development of children's independence demonstrated an exponential increase compared to the preceding phase. The majority of the children achieved the 'Well-Developed' (WD) category, at 70.83%, with no children remaining in the 'Not Yet Developed' (NYD) category. This milestone demonstrates that practical life skills activities can effectively enhance children's independence.

1. Comparative Analysis Across Cycles (Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, Cycle II)

Table 5. Comparative Summary Across Cycles

Phase	Total Children	Completed Children	Completion Percentage (%)
Pre-Cycle	24	6	25
Cycle I	24	13	54.17
Cycle II	24	23	95.83

Based on the comparison of classical mastery, a continuous upward trend is evident across each phase of the study, spanning from the pre-cycle to Cycles I and II. In the initial stage, the

attainment level stood at only 25%, subsequently increasing to 54.17% in Cycle I, and ultimately reaching 95.83% in Cycle II. This progression confirms that the number of children meeting the mastery criteria expanded significantly with each successive cycle.

These shifts demonstrate that the implementation of the instructional intervention exerted a positive impact on enhancing children's independence. Consequently, practical life skills activities are empirically proven to foster the gradual attainment of child autonomy, ultimately leading to optimal outcomes.

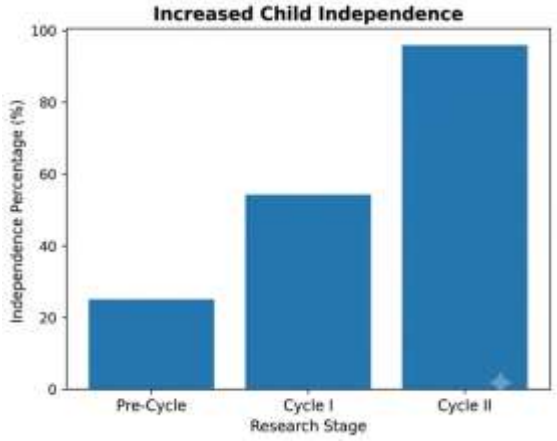


Figure 5. Comparative Chart of Each Cycle

Overall, the cumulative increase from the pre-cycle to Cycle II reached 95.83%, demonstrating a highly significant development in children's independence. Consequently, the implementation of practical life skills activities is empirically proven to be effective in enhancing child independence in a gradual and sustainable manner.

The findings of this study are elucidated through the lens of Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory[11], which asserts that learning becomes more meaningful when individuals acquire direct, hands-on experiences. Through practical life skills activities, children are actively engaged in various daily tasks, thereby gaining opportunities to learn and construct their independence through real-world experience.

Furthermore, these findings align with Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which posits that the learning environment plays a crucial role in shaping child development. A learning environment that offers opportunities for children to actively participate and execute various tasks autonomously is empirically proven to

[11] David A. Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2015).

support the development of child independence.[12]

This finding is consistent with a study by Sukatin et al. (2020), which demonstrates that the habituation of daily activities can significantly contribute to the development of early childhood independence.[13]

Furthermore, this finding supports the research by Panesi and Morra (2020), which indicates that learning experiences involving executive functions and children's active engagement contribute to the development of self-regulation skills, serving as a critical foundation for the formation of independence.[14]

Consequently, these findings further reinforce previous studies regarding the importance of practical life skills in supporting the development of early childhood independence. The primary contribution of this study lies in the systematic implementation of practical life skills activities through classroom action research (CAR) tailored for children aged 4–5 years at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten. In contrast to prior research, which generally discusses child independence in a broad context, this study demonstrates how simple, routine activities—such as eating independently, tidying up tools, and completing tasks autonomously—can be systematically implemented to enhance independence in early childhood education.

D. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the implementation of practical life skills activities successfully enhances the level of independence among Group A children at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten. This improvement is manifested in the children's ability to perform various activities autonomously, including eating independently, tidying up their dining area, completing learning tasks, and organizing learning materials after use.

[12] Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
[13] Sukatin dkk., "Pentingnya Kemandirian Anak Usia Dini," *Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini* (2020).
[14] Sara Panesi dan Sergio Morra, "The Contribution of Executive Functions to Preschoolers' Learning and Development," *Frontiers in Psychology* (2020).

Observational data indicate a progressive increase in children's independence, rising from 25% at the pre-cycle baseline to 54.17% in Cycle I, and ultimately reaching 95.83% in Cycle II. Consequently, practical life skills activities are proven effective in enhancing the independence of children aged 4–5 years at Permata Ujungsemi Kindergarten.

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