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Peran Bimbingan Kelompok dalam Mengembangkan Kemampuan Kognitif Anak Usia Dini melalui Kegiatan Bermain Edukatif Di KB Raudhatul Husna.

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ABSTRAK:
This study aims to determine the role of group guidance in helping the cognitive development of early childhood through educational play activities at Raudhatul Husna Kindergarten. The background of this study stems from the fact that not all children can receive cognitive stimulation through instructional learning. Therefore, a play-based approach in the context of group guidance is considered a more appropriate alternative for children. The method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research subjects consist of a group of 4–5-year-old children and teachers as group guidance facilitators. Data were collected through direct observation, interviews with teachers and parents, and documentation of children's daily activities. The educational play activities implemented included object classification games, simple puzzles, and role-playing games that involved children's thinking skills. The results of the study showed that through structured yet enjoyable group guidance, children demonstrated improvements in attention, problem-solving skills, and logical thinking. Additionally, children were more active in participating, collaborating with one another, and expressing their ideas more clearly. Thus, it can be concluded that group guidance plays an important role in supporting the cognitive development of young children, especially when combined with play activities that align with their interests and developmental stages.

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1. Introduction

(Childhood is a golden phase in a person's life. At an early age, children are in a stage of rapid development, especially in cognitive aspects that form the basis for thinking, understanding, and problem-solving abilities. A supportive environment and appropriate learning approaches greatly influence how children develop their intellectual potential. This is where the role of early childhood education institutions becomes crucial, including how teachers and educators apply guidance methods that align with children's characteristics. One approach that can be utilized is group guidance through educational play activities, where children can learn while playing in a fun and exploratory environment.

Cognitive development in early childhood does not occur instantly but through a gradual process influenced by the stimulation they receive in their daily lives. Children learn most effectively when they are directly involved in meaningful activities, such as play. Play is not merely a time-filling activity, but the primary medium through which children explore their environment, develop their thinking skills, and hone their social and emotional abilities (Yuliani, 2020). In educational play activities, children not only interact with play equipment, but also with their peers, thus opening up space for group guidance to be applied naturally. This approach provides children with the opportunity to learn cooperatively, exchange ideas, and build critical thinking skills that support their cognitive development.

However, in practice, the development of cognitive abilities in early childhood often does not receive optimal attention, especially in terms of the approaches used by educators. In some early childhood education institutions, educational play activities are not yet fully utilized as a means to guide children in a structured manner through a group

approach. In fact, group guidance not only helps children understand basic concepts more easily but also trains them to think independently, solve problems, and adapt to learning situations involving others (Hasanah & Wijayanti, 2021). Based on initial observations at KB Raudhatul Husna, it was found that play activities tend to be individualistic and have not been maximally directed to support the achievement of cognitive development goals. Therefore, it is important to further examine how the application of group guidance in educational play activities can contribute to enhancing children's cognitive aspects.

Given these conditions, KB Raudhatul Husna is the ideal place to explore how group guidance can be effectively integrated into educational play activities. The school environment, which is open to innovation, and the diverse characteristics of the students provide opportunities to implement guidance strategies that emphasize children's active involvement in groups. By directly observing the implementation of group guidance in the classroom and its impact on cognitive aspects, this study aims to provide a more concrete understanding of the effectiveness of this approach. Additionally, the results of this study can also serve as input for teachers and PAUD institution managers in designing activities that are not only enjoyable but also capable of optimizing children's thinking abilities gradually according to their developmental stages (Rahmawati & Lestari, 2023).

Based on the above, this study was conducted to determine and analyze the extent to which group guidance plays a role in developing the cognitive abilities of young children through educational play activities at KB Raudhatul Husna. This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically, particularly in the development of learning strategies that align with the needs and characteristics of young children. Through a deeper understanding of the group guidance process in the context of educational play, the results of this study can also serve as a reference for early childhood education teachers in managing play activities that are not only enjoyable but also rich in educational value. Thus, group guidance is not only a platform for social interaction but also an important medium for stimulating children's intelligence comprehensively and sustainably (Fitriyani & Widodo, 2022).

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The selection of this method aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of group guidance in developing the cognitive abilities of early childhood through educational play activities at Raudhatul Husna Kindergarten. Case studies allow researchers to explore phenomena holistically in real-life contexts, which is particularly important in early childhood education research (Yin, 2018).

This study was conducted at KB Raudhatul Husna, an early childhood education institution located in [write full location]. The subjects of this study consisted of children in Group B aged 5–6 years, classroom teachers, and guidance teachers or facilitators of educational play activities. Children in this age group are assessed as beginning to demonstrate logical thinking skills and the ability to solve more complex problems, making them suitable for development through a group guidance approach (Berk & Meyers, 2020).

Data collection techniques were conducted through several methods. First, direct observation was conducted to observe children's activities during group guidance activities. The researcher recorded cognitive behaviors that emerged, such as the ability to classify objects, arrange patterns, or solve problems in games. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with classroom teachers and guidance teachers to find out how the planning and implementation of activities were designed to support children's cognitive development. Third, documentation in the form of teachers' daily notes, children's work, photos of activities, and learning tools were also collected as supporting data.

After all the data was collected, the researcher used descriptive qualitative data analysis techniques. The process involved data reduction, data presentation, and thematic conclusion drawing. The researcher grouped the findings based on cognitive development indicators and evaluated the extent to which group guidance facilitated the process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2019).

To ensure data validity, the researcher used source and method triangulation techniques. For example, observation data were confirmed through interviews and reinforced with documentary evidence. Additionally, member checks were conducted, which involved confirming initial interpretations with the teachers who participated in the study. This step was taken to ensure that the research results truly reflect the reality in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3. Result/Findings

Learning at Raudhatul Husna Kindergarten is presented in an engaging manner through various educational games tailored to the children's age and needs. In their daily activities, the children are encouraged to arrange blocks based on size, match shapes and colors, or participate in simple group games. The classroom atmosphere is lively; children show high interest and actively participate during activities. They appear enthusiastic about following the teacher's instructions, asking questions, and exploring with the various available play tools. Such activities stimulate children's thinking skills, particularly in understanding differences, recognizing patterns, and grasping concrete concepts naturally. This aligns with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, where young children are in the preoperational stage and learn through direct experience and symbolic activities (Sari & Hapsari, 2021).

Although most children show enthusiasm when participating in educational games in groups, not all respond to activities in the same way. In one writing session, there was a child who tended to be reluctant to join his friends. He often moved away from the table, chose to be alone, or busied himself in a corner of the classroom. Realizing this, the teacher did not force him, but instead took a gentle and gradual approach. Through casual conversations during playtime, the teacher tried to understand the child's feelings and began introducing other media, such as a small whiteboard or sand letters, as a means of transition before returning to writing activities. In this way, the child still felt part of the group but was given the freedom to learn at his own pace. This approach demonstrates that flexible group guidance in educational play activities can provide real support for children's cognitive development. Children can learn in a positive social environment, without pressure, yet still receive stimulation to think, recognize symbols, and understand concepts gradually according to their developmental stage.

The mentoring strategies used by teachers in educational play activities reflect the principles of cognitive development theory proposed by Vygotsky. He explains that children learn most effectively through social interaction in a supportive environment, especially when they are in the zone of proximal development, which is the range between their current abilities and the abilities they can achieve with support from more skilled individuals. In this case, teachers act as guides who provide gradual assistance or scaffolding so that children can understand new concepts without feeling overwhelmed. For example, when a child appears to be struggling with writing, the teacher provides alternatives such as a small blackboard and sand letters as a first step. This approach allows children to remain involved in the group learning environment while slowly building their cognitive readiness. These findings underscore that effective group guidance requires flexibility so that each child can continue to learn at their own pace and according to their individual needs.

The findings at KB Raudhatul Husna are in line with research conducted by Hasanah and Wijayanti (2021), which states that group guidance plays an important role in encouraging the development of thinking skills in early childhood. The study revealed that group play activities provide children with opportunities to discuss, express opinions, solve simple problems, and learn to understand the perspectives of their peers. When teachers are able to provide guidance gradually and adapt it to the conditions and characteristics of each child, play activities are not only enjoyable but also meaningful in terms of cognitive development. This condition is also reflected in the implementation in the field, where a gentle and flexible approach, such as providing media choices or building personal communication, can help children who previously experienced difficulties to remain actively involved in learning. Therefore, group guidance that is carried out by paying attention to individual needs and human values can create a safe learning environment and support the maximum achievement of children's cognitive development.

Based on observations and analyses conducted, it is evident that the implementation of group guidance through educational play activities contributes positively to the improvement of cognitive abilities in young children. Teachers not only guide children to learn through play but also apply strategies tailored to the children's readiness levels and individual needs. The interactions that occur during group activities encourage children to think actively, solve simple problems, and understand basic concepts concretely. In situations where children experience learning difficulties, teachers can still provide support through a flexible and empathetic approach. Therefore, group guidance packaged in a play environment is not merely part of the learning routine but becomes an effective means to nurture children's thinking potential holistically, especially during the early childhood stage, which is the foundational phase of their long-term development

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at KB Raudhatul Husna, it can be concluded that group guidance plays a significant role in helping to develop the cognitive abilities of early childhood, particularly through educational play activities that are purposefully designed and enjoyable.

During the guidance process, children appear more focused, enthusiastic, and actively engaged in each game that stimulates their thinking abilities. Activities such as building blocks, matching colors and shapes, role-playing, and exploring educational tools have proven effective in enhancing children's understanding of basic concepts such as patterns, sequences, cause-and-effect relationships, and problem-solving.

Teachers also play a crucial role in guiding children in group settings. Through a patient, communicative, and attentive approach, teachers can create a comfortable and supportive learning environment. Children feel more confident to ask questions, try new things, and collaborate with their peers. This demonstrates that group guidance not only strengthens cognitive aspects but also supports children's social and emotional development.

Thus, group guidance activities packaged in the form of educational play are an effective learning strategy that aligns with the characteristics of young children, particularly in supporting the optimal development of their cognitive abilities. Moving forward, this method can continue to be developed and adapted to the needs of children and the school context, so that its benefits can be felt more widely.

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