TEACHERS' STRATEGIES IN MAINTAINING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDENTS AT RA AL-MUHKLISIN WARU TIMUR

Any Faridatus Supatmi[1], S. Fathiyatul Jannah[2]
[12]Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam Al-Marliyyah Pamekasan
[1]fhanezeefhanezee@gmail.com✉, [2]amirasyafa04@gmail.com✉

Article Info	Abstrak
Kata Kunci: *1; Strategi, 2; Psikologi, 3; Anak Usia Dini, 4; Guru*	Tujuan peneliti untuk mengetahui (1) bagaimana Strategi Bimbingan guru TK dalam menjaga Perkembangan Anak usia Dini (2) kendala guru dalam menjga perkembangan Anak usia Dini (3) faktor pendukung perkembangan psikologi Anak usia Dini. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian kualitiatif dengan jenis penelitian studi kasus. Teknik pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini adalah wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Adapun teknik analisis data dalam penelitian ini adalah reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa 1) yaitu menggunakan metode-metode pengajaran yang berbeda dan adanya perencanaan seperti apa pelajaran yang akan di ajarkan yang berkaitan dengan perkembangan psikologi 2) kendala yang dihadapi dalam menjaga perkembangan psikologi anak usia dini adalah ketika menghadapi anak yang IQ nya lemah, sabar dalam menghadapinya karena pada usia dini lain halnya denganyang sudah SD.3) Faktor pendukung perkembanga anak usia dini. yaitu seperti media pembelajaran yang ada di lembaga itu sendiri seperti alat permainan, alat praga, alat penulis, APE, buku modul, dan alat menggambar itu semua sangat mendukung bagi siswa.

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Keyword: *1; Strategy, 2; Psychologi, 3; Early Childhood, 4; Taecher*	*The researcher aims to find out (1) how kindergarten teacher Guidance Strategies in maintaining Early Childhood Development, (2) teacher constraints in maintaining early childhood development, and (3) supporting factors for early childhood psychological development. This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study research design. The data collection techniques in this study included interviews, observation, and documentation. The data analysis techniques in this study were data reduction and data presentation drawing. The results of the study reveal that 1) using different teaching methods and planning what lessons will be taught related to psychological development, 2) the obstacles faced in maintaining the psycological development of early childhood are when dealing with children whose IQ is weak, be patient in dealing with it because at an early age it is different from those who are already in elementary school. 3)Supporting factor for early childhood development. such as learning media that exist in the institution itself, such as game tools, APE, module books, and drawing tools, which are all very supportive for students.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Education is a learning process that helps individuals develop their potential comprehensively to face life's challenges throughout their lifetime. It not only fosters academic intelligence but also shapes character and moral values (Lica & Priyantoro, 2017; Juwairiah, 2017). Early childhood education, particularly during the *golden age* (0–6 years), plays a crucial role, as children's potential and development at this stage are rapid and unique, encompassing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects (Wiyani, 2016; Mulyasa, 2016). Teachers hold a key role as mediators of knowledge and facilitators of children's potential (Sudiani, 2015). Parents and early childhood education institutions (PAUD) also contribute significantly to nurturing children's talents through both formal and informal education (El-Khuluqo, 2015). With a holistic approach, education not only produces intelligent individuals but also instills good character and a sense of balance in life, enabling children to grow into well-rounded individuals physically, mentally, and socially.

The psychological development of early childhood encompasses social, emotional, and behavioral aspects that enable children to interact with parents, peers, and the broader community while developing empathy, independence, and the ability to share (Harun et al., 2012; Rasyid et al., 2012). Teachers play a central role as facilitators, mentors, motivators, and evaluators in shaping children's character through formal, informal, and non-formal education (Saleh, 2017; Suprihatiningrum, 2013). Well-developed social and emotional skills enable children to understand others' feelings, offer help, and show sympathy, which in turn enables them to function effectively as social beings. These skills also influence their ability to adapt to their environment. Therefore, early childhood education should emphasize cultivating self-awareness, cooperation, and positive interactions with teachers, families, peers, and the community, so that children can develop holistically and build a strong character foundation from an early age.

Maintaining the psychological development of early childhood requires a holistic approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. Effective early childhood education programs should apply pedagogical techniques that promote language, mathematical, and socio-emotional skills (Burger, 2015). Movement- and sound-based activities can enhance cognitive development, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Sriwidaningsih & Friskawati, 2022). Furthermore, secure attachment relationships with caregivers form a foundation for children's cognitive and emotional growth, including social understanding and problem-solving skills (Tošić et al., 2013). Psychomotor strategies such as coordination, balance, and motor skill exercises are also essential for physical and overall development (Mérida-Serrano et al., 2018). Teaching stress management strategies helps children regulate their emotions and build psychological resilience (Cywińska & Mickiewicz, 2021). Lastly, creating an inclusive and supportive environment through responsive relationships and caregiver involvement strengthens children's social-emotional learning (Blewitt et al., 2021).

RA Al-Mukhlisin Kindergarten, located in Waru Timur Village, Waru District, Pamekasan Regency, implements a center-based learning model that emphasizes a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable atmosphere to provide appropriate stimulation for early childhood development. The educators apply various methods, including marching activities, Qur'an reading lessons (*At-Tanzil*), book-based learning, writing and drawing exercises, structured

assignments, social play, and play-based learning. Based on observations, the psychological development of children at RA Al-Mukhlisin Kindergarten remains suboptimal, as reflected in their limited self-awareness, self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, and prosocial behavior. This condition underscores the importance of effective instructional strategies to support children's psychological development. Therefore, this study aims to identify the strategies teachers use in support the psychological development of early childhood students at RA Al-Mukhlisin Kindergarten.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study (field research) design to explore in a specific and realistic manner, the phenomena in the field related to the psychological development of early childhood. The case study design was chosen because it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of real-life situations and the interactions among research subjects, thereby providing a comprehensive picture of the existing conditions. The subject of this study was the psychological development of early childhood students at RA Al-Mukhlisin, Waru Timur. At the same time, the research focused on the strategies teachers implemented in maintain and support early childhood development at the institution. Data were collected through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Direct observation of children's behavior during the learning process; interviews with teachers and relevant stakeholders to obtain in-depth information about the strategies used; and documentation to complement the data with written and visual evidence.

After the data were collected, the analysis was conducted in several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This procedure ensured that the information obtained was systematically and relevantly organized. Data validity was maintained through credibility testing using triangulation, both in across techniques and sources to ensure the accuracy and validity of the research findings. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a clear and comprehensive description of teachers' strategies in supporting the psychological development of early childhood students at RA Al-Mukhlisin, as well as to offer practical recommendations that may benefit educational practices in early childhood education institutions.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The curriculum for RA Al-Mukhlishin was developed by an institutional development team comprising the principal, the foundation, the teaching staff, and the parent committee, under the guidance of the Madrasah/RA supervisor. This curriculum serves as a reference for implementing educational programs, managing learning activities, and evaluating the achievement of learning objectives. Through this institutional-level curriculum, teachers are provided with clear guidelines for conducting the learning process, assessing children's developmental progress, and designing activities that align with students' potential and needs. Moreover, the curriculum serves as a benchmark for continuous institutional improvement and quality enhancement, enabling RA Al-Mukhlishin to adapt to advances in science and technology and to societal expectations. Thus, the curriculum is not merely a formal document but a strategic instrument that ensures the success of early childhood education at the institution.

The study of early childhood psychology is of significant urgency, as this period marks the most critical stage in laying the foundations for personality, emotion, and social competence. Early education and intervention play a pivotal role in building a healthy and productive society, in which school psychologists are vital in supporting children's development (Alfonso et al., 2020; Stein & Albritton, 2022). A comprehensive understanding of children's learning processes and behaviors enables educators and professionals to detect developmental issues early and design appropriate interventions. High-quality early childhood programs have been proven to provide both short- and long-term benefits for children's cognitive and socio-emotional development (Clark & Kingsley, 2020). Furthermore, understanding how children perceive their well-being is essential for designing effective positive psychology interventions (Waters et al., 2022).

The urgency of studying early childhood psychology also lies in the importance of mental health and emotional regulation during the early years. Early childhood mental health programs have been shown to significantly contribute to brain development, emotional regulation, and the quality of interpersonal relationships (Dirani et al., 2018). One practical example is the *Early Childhood–Socio-Emotional and Behavior Regulation Intervention Specialist (EC-SEBRIS)* program, which equips educators with skills to manage challenging behaviors and support children's socio-emotional development (Ritblatt, 2016). Additionally, *Social Emotional Learning (SEL)* serves as a foundational element of children's emotional growth, with school psychologists playing a central role in implementing and evaluating such programs (Frydenberg, 2021). Moreover, play-based activities function as effective tools for communication and self-expression, helping children articulate emotions and build healthy social interactions (Charles & Bellinson, 2019).

RA Al-Mukhlishin officially began operating on January 6, 1987, at the initiative of Mr. Samsul Bahri, Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office in Pamekasan Regency. Research on teacher strategies in maintaining the psychological development of early childhood students employed triangulation techniques, namely interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as source triangulation, which involved primary, key, and supporting informants. The primary informant of this study was Mrs. Anis Wahyuni, Vice Principal for Student Affairs and homeroom teacher of RA B; the key informant was RA teacher Mrs. Lailatul Fajriyah; and the supporting informant was Mrs. Yuliatin.

The findings indicate that each teacher adopts different strategies to support children's psychological development, including habituation, emotional management, character strengthening, and facilitation of social interaction. These findings highlight the crucial role of teachers as facilitators, motivators, and mentors in shaping the social, emotional, and cognitive behavior of early childhood learners, ensuring optimal development for each child at their respective growth stage.

1. Teacher Strategies in Maintaining the Psychological Development of Early Childhood Students

This research began with data collection concerning kindergarten teachers' strategies in maintaining the psychological development of early childhood students at RA Al-Mukhlishin, Waru Timur, Pamekasan, which served as the central focus of this study. The researcher examined the psychological development of early childhood students as a case study to assess the level of psychological growth among children at RA Al-

Mukhlishin. Based on these data sources, the researcher analyzed the strategies employed by teachers, the challenges encountered, and the supporting factors involved in guiding young children's development. Data were gathered through observation, interviews, and documentation, providing a comprehensive overview of the learning process.

The focus of this research includes how teachers plan, implement, and evaluate learning activities oriented toward children's psychological development—socially, emotionally, and cognitively. Preliminary findings indicate that teachers employ a range of structured teaching methods emphasizing psychological stimulation appropriate to each developmental stage.

Based on observations, the strategies implemented by teachers at RA Al-Mukhlishin to maintain early childhood psychological development include various teaching approaches, such as lesson planning that considers children's psychological aspects; conducting morning assemblies; reciting prayers before lessons; greeting and checking attendance; and evaluating children's creative works. Teachers also use personal approaches, such as singing, using humor, attracting children's attention, and reviewing previous lessons, to help children more easily comprehend and internalize the learning content. In addition, teachers prepare appropriate learning materials and teaching aids, including visual media, reading guides, and practical Qur'an reading methods (*At-Tanzil*), to ensure that children acquire strong literacy foundations before entering primary school. These strategies demonstrate the teacher's crucial role in integrating academic instruction with character formation and psychological skill development in early childhood education.

Kindergarten teachers' strategies in supporting children's psychological growth must also consider the creation of a learning environment conducive to social and emotional development. Well-designed classroom interiors can positively influence children's cognitive and social development while fostering a psychologically healthy atmosphere (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Moreover, the implementation of *Social-Emotional Learning* (SEL) programs in early childhood settings has been shown to improve children's emotional regulation, social awareness, and cooperative skills (Bierman et al., 2021). Through such programs, children learn to manage emotions and build positive relationships from an early age. Teachers must also possess a strong understanding of various behavioral and psychological disorders that may arise in young children to apply effective intervention strategies that support their emotional well-being (Kim & Brown, 2012).

In addition to emotional and environmental management, kindergarten teachers play an essential role in implementing behavioral interventions to prevent emotional and behavioral difficulties. Programs such as *BEST in CLASS* provide performance-based training and coaching to help teachers manage the behavior of at-risk children effectively (Vo et al., 2012). Furthermore, children's readiness for primary school should be supported through transition programs that emphasize cognitive, socio-emotional, and self-regulation skills, with special attention to children with special needs or non-native language speakers (Mashburn et al., 2018). Additionally, digital tools such as robotic toys

can serve as interactive learning media that foster logic, creativity, and problem-solving skills among young children (Havlásková et al., 2019).

2. Challenges Faced by Kindergarten Teachers in Maintaining the Psychological Development of Early Childhood Students

The challenges teachers face in maintaining children's psychological development at RA Al-Mukhlishin include working with children with lower IQs. Teachers are required to be patient and understanding in handling differences in cognitive ability, as teaching early childhood learners requires a distinct approach compared to primary school students. Young children need gentle, creative, and play-based stimulation; therefore, teachers must adapt their strategies to keep students motivated without feeling pressured.

Meanwhile, supporting factors in maintaining children's psychological development include the availability of various learning media at the institution, such as educational toys (*Alat Permainan Edukatif* / APE), visual aids, writing tools, learning modules, and art supplies. These facilities enable teachers to combine play, reading, and writing activities creatively, allowing children to learn in a more enjoyable way. By utilizing these media, teachers can effectively balance learning and play activities in accordance with the psychological needs and developmental stages of early childhood.

D. CONCLUSION

This study, conducted at RA Al-Mukhlishin, Waru Timur, focused on kindergarten teachers' strategies in maintaining the psychological development of early childhood students. The strategies employed by teachers in guide children's psychological growth were implemented through several methods. First, the writing method, which involved writing in both Latin and Arabic scripts on notebooks and blackboards, helped children develop strong writing skills upon completing their studies at the institution. Second, the reading method utilized instructional books and the Qur'an (*At-Tanzil*) to familiarize children with letters, reading patterns, and basic comprehension of Qur'anic content. Third, the personal approach method enabled teachers to interact closely with students, making it easier to deliver lessons while ensuring that children felt comfortable and supported in the learning environment. Fourth, the review method encouraged children to revisit previously learned materials, enhancing their understanding and retention of lessons. Fifth, the assessment method allowed teachers to evaluate children's learning outcomes and measure their progress in mastering specific skills. In addition to these strategies, teachers also encountered several challenges in maintaining children's psychological development. These challenges included the need for teachers to exercise patience when working with children with lower IQs or those who are low-motivated and reluctant to learn. Meanwhile, supporting factors that facilitated teachers in guiding children included the availability of adequate learning media, such as educational toys, visual aids, writing tools, learning modules, *Alat Permainan Edukatif* (APE), and art supplies. These materials enabled teachers to creatively integrate learning and play, allowing children to learn in an enjoyable and effective manner in line with their psychological and developmental stages.

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