



KINDERGARTEN TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF EARLY WRITING-RELATED SCHOOL READINESS

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Abstract: *One of the fundamental skills required for preparing for primary school is early writing readiness. This study aims to learn how kindergarten teachers view students' early writing readiness. With a sample of 26 kindergarten teachers in Rengas Village, this research was carried out through a survey to promote the development of learning media products. According to the findings, 38.4% of teachers used assignments, 34.6% used lectures, and 23.1% used demonstrations. The perception of instructors utilising children's worksheets is at its highest rate of 42.3%, and perceptions of teachers using writing supplies such as pencils or crayons are at their highest rate of 50%. According to a review of the learning activities conducted at the start of class, playing accounted for 61.5% of all activities. Based on the survey's findings, the researcher determined that the teacher's preparations, including the choice of tactics, methods, and learning material to be utilised, still needed to optimize the students' writing skills. Fun writing exercises encourage children to write well and develop their enthusiasm for the written word.*

Keywords: *Teacher's Perception, Early Writing, School Readiness, Kindergarten*

A. Introduction

Children's readiness to enter elementary school requires academic and non-academic maturity. Writing is one academic maturity skill that children need. However, based on data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in collaboration with the Central Statistics Agency (2018), the illiteracy rate of Indonesian children aged 5–6 years is still high at 49.84 per cent. Based on regional aspects, boys and girls in rural areas scored higher at 63.19 per cent compared to urban areas at 56.34 per cent.

Writing is one of the skills children need to develop to get ready for elementary school. Eye and hand coordination are necessary for the complicated skill of writing (Browne, 2007). Beginning writing with children requires fine motor skills. The most important thing to consider before children are taught to write the maturity and readiness of their motor functions. At first, the child holds the pencil by grasping the entire surface of the pencil, which is only used to make scribbles. Streaks that children scratch are forms of communication through writing to express desires, ideas, and feelings (Machado, 2016). Although writing is one of the essential activities to be carried out during the learning process, it should be noted that writing for kindergarten children is an introduction activity called "prewriting".

The stages of raising a child appear before the child reaches the age of 2 years (Dennis & Votteler, 2013). The first stage of writing done by children is to make graffiti (Brewer, 2007). Children holding stationery and making scribbles are part of the basis for writing readiness (Bruce & Spratt, 2013). The child explores making random streaks with the stationery he uses. Initially, the graffiti that the child draws does not yet have a shape, but as the child's age develops, the child's writing stages will develop.

Writing in kindergarten is an introductory writing exercise activity (Jackman, 2012). In preschool, children are at the alphabetic writing stage (Jalongo, 2007). This stage arises after the child passes the pre-alphabetic writing stage at 1 to 3 years old. Streaks that children make are no longer extended image symbols but take the form of letter symbols. Children

begin to write letters, numbers, or words, but the placement positions are still random. Preschoolers learn about letter shapes and sounds (Diamond & Baroody, 2013). Every sound word in a language has a different written form. The letters were then joined together to form words in patterns representing sound. Children need to understand letters with sounds to learn to write letters, write names, and spell (Cetin, 2015). Thus, the initial writing activity is carried out with a simple introduction concept and is done in stages.

Teachers, as educators, need to have the correct perception of the characteristics and needs of children. According to Baker, Tichovolsky, Kupersmidt, Voegler-Lee, and Arnold (2015), teacher perceptions influence children's academic success. The correct perception can aid in achieving and smoothly operating learning objectives. Conversely, teachers' perceptions that they do not understand the needs of children will hurt their development.

Based on the results of observations at Kindergarten Harapan Ibu, Rengas Village, Ogan Ilir Regency, and South Sumatra Province, it was found that CALISTUNG learning is done with learning activities that are dominated by children's worksheets. The application of pre-writing learning in kindergarten can be taught using the play principle. The teacher uses drill-based learning models to teach children writing skills.

Suppose children are subjected to academic stress due to rushed pre-writing learning, using strategies and drill-based learning. Academic stress is a condition of physical, mental, or emotional disorders due to a mismatch between environmental demands and children's abilities (Wulansuci & Kurniati, 2019). such as the demands of parents who want their children to be good writers or the requirements for admission to primary school.

Based on the problems stated above, the researchers are very interested in researching teacher perceptions that teach beginning writing. This study describes teachers' perceptions of readiness to start writing in kindergarten. Research data was obtained from survey analysis regarding (1) teachers' perceptions of learning strategies and methods; (2) teachers' perceptions of aspects of media and learning resources; and (3) teachers' perceptions of aspects of classroom management.

B. Method

This study aims to describe teachers' perceptions regarding the readiness to write about children's beginnings in kindergarten. The research method used was a descriptive survey with a questionnaire readiness to write. The research method used was a descriptive survey with a questionnaire. The survey analyzed teacher perceptions regarding learning strategies and methods, media and learning resources, and classroom management. The teachers who participated in this study were 26 teachers who taught kindergarten in Rengas Village, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra Province.

C. Findings

From the results of the distribution of questionnaires given to 26 kindergarten teacher respondents in Rengas Village, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra Province, the results of research on teacher perceptions in three aspects were obtained, namely teacher perceptions of learning methods, teacher perceptions of media and learning resources, and classroom management.

Teachers' Perceptions About Learning Methods

The researcher surveyed to determine the teacher's teaching method. According to the survey results, the assignment method (38.4%), lecture method (34.6%), or demonstration method (23.1%) was used by most teachers.

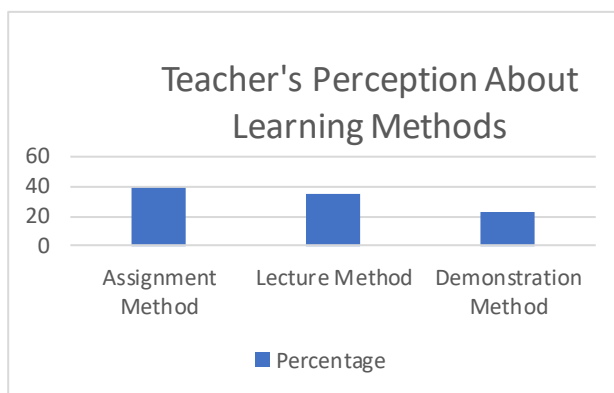


Figure 1. Teacher's Perception of Learning Methods

Teacher Perceptions About Media and Learning Resources

Based on the analysis results, it is known that the most significant percentage of 42.3% is the perception of teachers using children's worksheet media, 30.7% is sand, and the lowest percentage is card letters (27%).

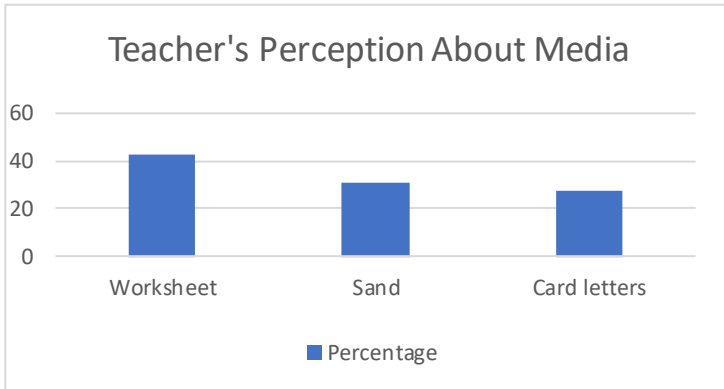


Figure 2. Teacher's Perception of Media

Furthermore, based on the analysis results, it is known that the most significant percentage of teachers' perceptions of using writing learning resources in the form of pencils or crayons is 50%, brushes or sticks are 26.9%, and children's fingers are 23.1 %.

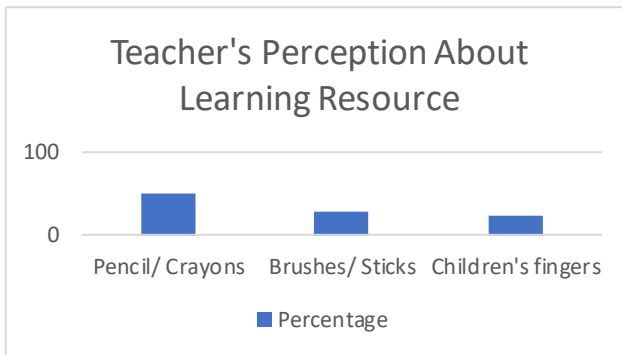


Figure 3. Teacher's Perception of Learning Resource

Teacher Perceptions About Class Management

According to an analysis of learning activities at the beginning of class, most activities were carried out by playing (61.5%), followed by coloring (27%), and storytelling (11.5%).

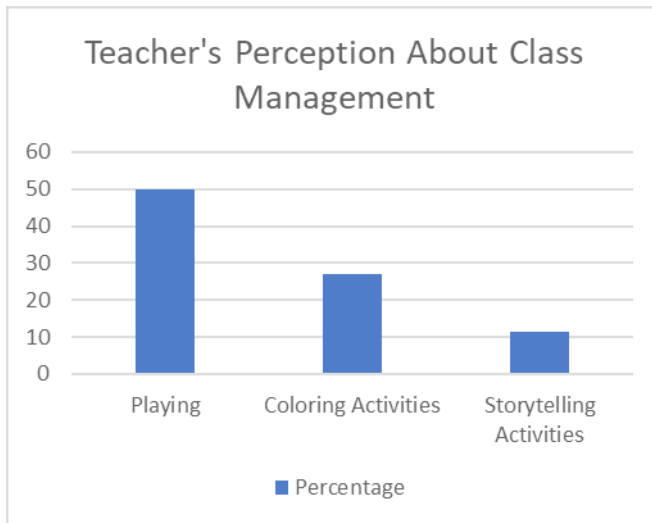


Figure 4. Teacher's Perception of Class Management

D. DISCUSSION

Teacher's Perception of Learning Strategies

PAUD is an early education unit that provides the basic framework for forming and developing the foundations of knowledge, attitudes, and skills in children. After the child completes his education in PAUD, they continue to the next level: elementary school. Children will experience a transition period, which is challenging because there are various demands between PAUD and elementary school. During the transition period, children from PAUD to elementary school need preparation. Graue (2010) defines readiness as "the set of skills and dispositions loosely coupled with success in school." Thus, remembering to write is a complex ability that requires readiness and the proper method for teaching it.

A professional teacher needs to understand the meaning of perception. Perception is a way of looking at everyone

about the same thing, but each person interprets it differently (Piaget, 2010). Every teacher has different perceptions of each child. Therefore, the perspective of the teacher and the provision of stimulus differ between the teacher and the child.

Ray and Smith (2010) expressed that the teacher's perception is one of the essential elements and can influence the teacher's teaching methods and behavior in the classroom. Children who get teaching from teachers who can manage perceptions appropriately positively impact the quality of their development and academic achievement (Auger, Farkas, & Burchinal, 2014). Motivation and attention given by the teacher during the initial writing activity encourage the child to keep trying to provide the best results.

The environment influences early writing and requires a fun and meaningful writing approach (Bingham, Quinn, & Gerde, 2017). Writing skills can be introduced to children in a fun way and begin with more leisurely activities. Teachers can use play strategies to teach writing skills (Ihmeidih, 2015). Young children benefit from opportunities and freedom to develop their writing skills. In addition to strategy, teachers also need to apply appropriate learning methods for children. Learning with the lecture method differs from a proper method of learning. Teachers must position themselves as models, set examples, and guide children. In this case, children are more active in activities (Bingham et al., 2017).

Appropriate learning methods will influence children's successful development. Although the teacher has implemented play-based activities, the play strategy needs to be supported by exciting learning methods. It is intended that children grow fond of and enjoy writing. Writing activities for early childhood are carried out gradually and repeatedly through direct practice (Campbell, Chen, Shenoy, & Cunningham, 2019). Depending on the child's age and ability, teaching them to write in stages is carried out consistently. Early childhood should not be used to force children to write as a drilling technique. This is because forceful methods of instruction will make children uninterested in learning to write.

Dhieni, Fridani, Muis, Yarmi, and Wulan (2013) revealed that the writing development strategy must be based on the

pleasant principle of hands-on learning. Hands-on learning is an activity where children can touch objects being learned, not just look at them. For example, touching the letters of the alphabet directly, and so on. This will be different if the child learns by looking at the teacher when she writes letters.

Teacher Perceptions About Media and Learning Resources

The use of media and learning resources has an essential role as a form of conveying learning content to children. Media and learning resources such as scaffolding help optimize children's abilities and development (Quinn, Gerde, & Bingham, 2016). The classroom environment should provide various media rich in print or letter symbols, such as letter cards, storybooks, and sensory boxes. Educational media relating to language skills can improve literacy development through knowledge about letters (Carr, Mokrova, Vernon-Feagans, & Burchinal, 2019).

Based on the survey results, the highest percentage was 42.3%, namely teachers using children's worksheets. The lack of media and learning resources has made teachers take advantage of teaching initial writing using LKA. Learning to write using LKA too often will make children experience academic stress (Wulansuci & Kurniati, 2019). Therefore, the learning media users need to be varied so that children are motivated and eager to participate in the initial writing activities. Children like writing activities on the sand (Curtis, 2002). Writing activities in the sand is more effective than using worksheet-based media. Sand is a medium found in early childhood learning. Playing in the sand can train a child's tactile nerves, which helps fine motor skills. This is because the texture found in the sand turns on or stimulates the tactile nerve (Tassoni & Hucker, 2005).

The environment of writing activities not only includes a pencil and paper but also includes providing media such as alphabet letter cards and word cards to support children's early literacy growth (Zhang, Hur, Diamond, & Powell, 2015). In addition, researchers surveyed to determine the stationery used during writing activities. Based on the survey results, it is found that stationery, which is often used in the form of a pencil, is used by 30.8%, a brush or stick is used by 19.2%,

a child's finger is used by 23.1%, and a crayon is used by 26.9%. The development of children's writing readiness can be done with various activities, both with and without tools. However, in principle, these activities must be attractive and adapted to the stages of age and abilities of children.

One of the activities that can be carried out to optimize children's writing skills is stimulating tactile nerves in the child's fingers (Beaty, 2013). Tracing letters and writing in the sand involves kinesthetic and spatial-visual intelligence. This activity can help children imagine patterns, curves, and letter shapes. This image is formed between the coordination of psychomotor movements and the nerve regulating the proper brain movement (Fenech & Wilkins, 2017).

The teacher requires media during the learning process to create enjoyable learning activities. Media use is expected to build children's interest and improve the quality of the learning process (Moses, Golos, & Bennett, 2015).

Learning media is a tool for communicating knowledge to the intended audience and the other way around. Designing media requires consideration of its applications and functions. Both inside and outside of the classroom, quality media can be utilized. As a result, engaging media is necessary for the learning process.

Teachers' Perceptions About Managing Beginning Writing Classes

The implementation of learning in kindergarten classes should be adjusted to the conditions and the development of the children's characteristics. Teachers' perceptions of children's characteristics and development, particularly early writing, will impact teaching practices and child development (Nye & Sood, 2018). Based on the survey results, 61.5% of activities were carried out by playing. Child-centered learning with play activities is an activity that is characteristic of early childhood development (Thompson, 2019). Play is essential in early childhood learning and development (Marbina, 2011). Learning through play supports the development of literacy and early numeracy skills in an integrated approach (Ihmeideh, 2015). Moreover, it can develop children's social, emotional, physical, and creative skills.

Even though the teacher has done play activities, as many as 73.1% of the teachers revealed that they experienced obstacles when teaching children to start writing. This can be seen from the survey data regarding children's reactions when participating in learning. The highest percentage of 57.6% of children are not interested in learning, while the lowest percentage of 11.5% are very interested. Beginning writing instruction is done in a fun way so that children feel interested and comfortable and can participate in learning optimally. Learning that does not pay attention to children's development will be a burden that impacts behavior and other psychological disorders (Ray & Smith, 2010). Among other behavioral disorders, children will experience rebellion, boredom, and even depression until they reach adulthood.

The efforts made by the teacher to optimize the beginning of the child According to the survey results, 38.4% of teachers stimulated children's fine motor skills again. Some activities stimulating a child's tactile nerve by touching objects include squeezing, folding, cutting, drawing, playing with sand, and finger painting (Fisher & Terry, 1990). If a child's fine motor skills develop optimally, the child can write fluently.

E. Conclusion

Early writing is the process of learning to write in kindergarten. Appropriate teacher perception is essential for maximizing a child's writing abilities. A teacher's perception can affect the strategies and actions he/she will use and influence successful child development.

Through the participation of 26 kindergarten teachers in a survey research project in Rengas Village, Ogan Ilir Regency, South Sumatra Province, it was found that classroom management, media, learning resources, and instructional approaches were indicators of the three components of teachers' perspectives.

According to the findings, instructors' beliefs regarding practicing writing before starting elementary school are accurate. But there are still issues with how the learning process is implemented. Therefore, for teachers to generate original media in the future that will aid in maximizing initial writing, they require technical supervision and media enrichment. Thus,

developing enjoyable writing exercises will interest children and makes them enjoy learning. Early childhood curriculum stimulation emphasizes providing enjoyable writing experiences so that later writing skills develop effectively.

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