

The Effectiveness of Pretend Play Method Based on Local Wisdom towards Social Skills of Children

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Abstract

Pretend play based on local wisdom is a method that is very fascinating for children. The purpose of this method is to stimulate the development of children's social skills. These skills are very essential to be stimulated in their life in order to socialize with people around them. However, the application of this method was still very rare in some kindergartens as most of the teachers there still used conventional methods in children's learning. Consequently, new methods of teaching were less to be applied in those kindergartens because the teachers concerned more with academic aspects rather than the children's development. This article presents one teaching method namely pretend play method based on local wisdom to stimulate the children's social skills. The design used in this research was quasi experimental research by using pretest-posttest of non-equivalent control group design. Data were collected through observations and documentations. The data were compared by using t-test in the experimental group and as well as in the control groups. The results revealed that pretend play method based on local wisdom was effective to be applied as the children's learning method to stimulate their social skills.

Keywords: Pretend Play, Local Wisdom, Social Skills

INTRODUCTION

Children as the next generation of a nation's struggle have strategic roles for the progress of the nation. Awareness of the progress has been shown by various countries that have been generally advanced in various sectors of life. Developed countries have invested heavily in coaching, developing and educating children, especially young children. The investment can be seen after ten or twenty years. In other words, investing in early childhood education and development programs is a long-term process (Hujala et al., 2016). Every child has his or her own ability to grow that occurs in a relatively short period in which it takes place most precisely in his or her early childhood. Early age (0-6 years) is a very decisive age in the formation of character and personality of the child. The stimulation after a passing critical period, it might have less optimal impact for the children's development. Therefore, this period is called as the critical period of the development. It is also known as the golden age of the critical phase of the development. This period underlies the children's learning and welfare in the future. Early childhood is there in the realm of unique growth and development processes. The children have a growing and development patterns (fine and coarse motoric coordination), power of thought, creativity, language and communication which are combined within their intelligence (IQ), emotional intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ). UNICEF or the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund explains that Early Childhood Development refers to a comprehensive approach to the policy and the learning programs for the children from birth to the age of 8 (Karlsson Lohmander, 2022). At that age, the intelligence capacity of the children reaches 50 percent, and by the age of 8, it reaches 80 percent. Thus, it can be identified how fast the growth of the children in that period. The stimulation is very important in this period to optimize the functions of organs as well as to provide the stimulation of the children's development. In this period, there is a formation of basic attitudes and behaviors and the development of dimensions of intelligence (intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, kinesthetic, and art) which are intensive. This golden period is only lasted once throughout the human's life span. If the basic potentials of the period are lack of stimulus then it is not impossible that the potential of the child will sink or not working at all (loss of capacity) as the children grow into adult individuals (Shanmugasundaram & Tamilarasu, 2023).

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The stimulus which is meant is the right touch of education in accordance with the stages of the children's development by using appropriate learning methods, and it can stimulate good development for the children (Latief et al., 2022). However, in fact, the process of teaching and learning in early childhood education in Indonesia is still not optimal. It is supported by the use of media or media procurement in schools which are still not complete enough, and there are still many teachers who are not professional or mastering the pedagogical teaching (Yatun et al., 2021). In addition, there are still many teachers who are less professional in teaching as well as the treatment and habits of learning methods used are still considered monotonous. It is also found that the teachers who have not been able to understand the characters of the children so that in the study, it is suggested to the early childhood education teachers to understand the children's characters. To attract children's attention in learning, the teachers need to vary their learning and teaching methods used so that the children will not get bored to follow the learning process (Pattier, 2024). Furthermore, it is found that the learning process in early childhood education is still monotonous, and it only focuses on the teachers. In general, the media used for the learning process have not yet been varied, and the learning has not been through playing (Priyandita, 2021).

From the findings above, early childhood education learning in Indonesia is still far from being optimal because playing has not yet been as a strategy or vehicle for the children's learning, and the learning methods used have not been varied. The implementation of early childhood learning is more focused on academic activities and ignores play activities as an incorrect early childhood education practice to stimulate the children's development. This is the cause of why the children are lack of the social skills because they are less to interact with their peers. The social skills are one of the most important things for early childhood education because the preschoolers' social skills are linked to school readiness and children's adaptation to the environment (Aliaga-Sáez et al., 2023). It is therefore necessary for adults, in this case are teachers and parents, to interact with the children and to help them develop their social skills. Positive interactions between the teachers and the students and between parents and the children will strongly motivate the children to solve social problems and help them to develop appropriate social skills (Claessens et al., 2017).

In the development of the social skills of the children, the learning methods that can be used vary widely, one of them is by using pretend play method. Pretend play is a very instrumental method for developing the children's cognitive, social skills, and autonomy as well as language abilities of the children (Cankaya et al., 2023). Furthermore, pretend play is recognized by a social constructivist theory as the best method to stimulate the cognitive development, social skills, language and autonomy of the children or self-regulation in early childhood (Flores Jameró, 2019). Piaget argues that pretend play is a symbolic function stage that is the first stage of preoperational thinking that occurs approximately starting at the age of 2 that can help adjustment and social understanding of the children, and they can get pleasure from the activities undertaken.

In this study, to develop early childhood social skills is by applying the method of pretend play. Using pretend play method is the most effective means to stimulate or encourage the development of the children because pretend play is a form of a game that uses media and tools to support the emergence of children's imagination, so the game is very stimulating for the children's social development (Kalkusch et al., 2021). In this case, the abilities that have been indicated by the children through pretend play are about real life in the roles like how the children behave, talk, and interact with others. However, to make it easier for the children in getting to know their real life and culture, the researcher used pretend play method based on local wisdom to facilitate the children to know the culture and the world around the environment. Learning based on local wisdom can help the children to recognize their own local wisdom (Nurdiana et al., 2023). The values of the local wisdom should begin to be taught from early age.

Teaching the local wisdom values from early childhood will give the children ideas in introducing their own characters and culture. The introduction of the local wisdom's values will also provide insights for the children related to the love towards all existing in their own residences and the ways of the children's interactions in their society. The children's learning activities have to be according to their culture in where they are living and through the real history and experiences of the children on the basis of the environment and the culture (Dewi

& Yufiarti, 2021). In addition, using the foundation of local wisdom in learning will facilitate the children to recognize the environment where they are staying. Because the local wisdom in Indonesia is a heritage passed down from generation to generation to maintain the harmony between humans and the nature as well as among humans (Kartika, 2016). Every human is familiar with his or her own local heritage, and it will be easier for the children to respond to the learning delivered by the teacher. Applying pretend play method based on local wisdom is expected to be effective for developing and improving the children's social skills. Thus, this study will be limited to the problem of the early childhood development of the social skills.

Children's social skills can be stimulated by various learning methods, one of them by using pretend play method to improve children's social skills. Such research was conducted by Jiayao in which the purpose was to obtain information about the relationship between pretend play and the children's social skills at the daycare when they were playing outside. The results showed that pretend play was very influential on the social skills of the children (Jaggy et al., 2023a). Introducing the method of learning or play activities that was the pretend play method based on local wisdom will make it easier for children to recognize the local wisdom and playing activities that followed the natural and reality in the lives of children or in the society so that the children can easily absorb it and gain experiences as stocks in their life in the society in the future (Anam et al., 2022). The pretend play is a role play with pretending elements that the children imagine to portray the attitudes and behaviors of others while the local wisdom is a tradition of the society or a custom carried out by the local society that is the ideas, values or views of a place that has the wisdom and good values attributed to and trusted by the society in such a place and has been followed by generation to generations (Kalkusch et al., 2021).

Pretend play involves the children to play mock by following an impromptu path where ventriloquism is used to speak objects in life through paralinguistic features such as movement gestures, gazes and sounds. These findings indicated that through ventriloquism action in mock plays, the children learn to engage in the complex meaning of making activities in fun ways, formulating oral characters and building a coherent and systematic storyline that can be identified as early literacy practices (Ramati, 2024). Most of the teachers make pretend play stories with medical themes, but the children are less influential as well as less fantasy and comfortable during the play. In addition, the children are reported to have more negative feelings about pretending to play about the medical. The children are more comfortable for pretending play about non-medical than about medical because it is considered as usual for the children. Such findings begun to help adults understand what children expect by pretending play (Parker et al., 2022). For this reason, it is needed to try pretend play as a new method based on local wisdom because it refers to the concerns of the society about the development of the children following the modern era and the loss of the local wisdom values that have been passed down to ancestral heritage as a guidance and directive of life in the society (Bredikyte & Brandisauskiene, 2023).

MATERIALS & METHODOLOGY

Data

Data collection to answer the research hypothesis was through observation and documentation. a) Observation was selected as data collection technique in this research in order to examine the human's behaviors and attitudes. The observation was done by the researcher to obtain accurate information about all things related to the subjects of the research. The observation used was structured observation towards assessments of the children's social skills. This data collection technique was carried out in the form of instrumental sheets of the students' score checklist which had been provided the field notes. The stages were as follow. 1) Preliminary observation before the treatment was done to obtain the preliminary condition that was the assessments through observing in both experimental and control groups. The initial condition through the results of the observation as the preliminary information about the children's development, in this case was the social skills of the children. 2) The experimental group was given the treatment by using pretend play method based on local wisdom, while the control group was treated by using a conventional method. 3) The last observation after the treatment was the data gathering about the final condition that was the assessment. The final condition of the treatment through the results of the observation was as the descriptions of the development achieved by

the children, in this case was their social skills. The results of the last observation after the treatment was linked with the results of the assessments of the initial condition before they were given the treatment so that it had been recognized how effective was the learning method applied. b) Documentation was then used to complete the data that were pictures and videos of the children's activities. The documentation was the data collection technique through examining documents to obtain the information related to the research problems. This way was undertaken so that the information gathered was really obtained in the setting of the research. This technique was undertaken to capture all things happened as long as the researcher conducted the research.

The research about the effectiveness of pretend play method based on local wisdom towards the children's social skills had obtained the data of the assessment as the results before and after giving the treatment. The data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and prerequisite tests. The stages of the test were as follow. Descriptive statistics was data analysis to determine the development of social skills of children that was done with the calculation of normalized gain (gain standard/gain score). Prerequisite test was the normality test. The normality test of data was using the level of significance α 0.05 or 95% confidence level. Decisive criteria of the normality test were (1) if probability was greater than 0.05 then H_0 was accepted so that the data were distributed as normal, and (2) if the probability score was less than 0.05 then H_0 was rejected so that data were not distributed as normal. Homogeneity test was done to find out whether the covariance matrix of both experimental and control groups were homogeneous. The homogenous test conducted in this research used Homogeneity Test of Homogeneity of Variance (Levene Test) through SPSS 20.0 for windows program. The decisive criteria in using the homogeneity test variance were that the score of the significance was smaller than 0.05 then the data were obtained from the populations that had heterogeneous variance. The hypothesis test was done when the data had been analyzed and had met the normality and homogeneity. If both groups were normally and homogenous distributed then the -t test was used to test the hypothesis. The -t test was used to examine whether there was a significant difference between experimental and control group averages.

METHOD

Type of this research was quasi experimental research because not all variables and experimental conditions were measured completely. The purpose of this research was to explain the effectiveness of pretend play method based on local wisdom towards the children's social skills. The research used a quantitative approach because all the symptoms to be studied could be measured and converted into numbers. The study involved two groups of respondents that were designated as experimental and control groups. The experimental group was given the treatment by using the pretend play method based on local wisdom while the control group used conventional method (lecturing method). The design used in this research was Non-Equivalent Control Group Experimental Design.

This research was conducted in kindergarten of Dodu in Bima City with the research sample of 40 children in group B1 and B2 in which each consisted of 20 children. Group B1 was as the experimental group with the treatment of pretend play method based on local wisdom, and group B2 was as the control group by using conventional method. The sampling technique used purposive sampling. The purposive sampling was an intentional technique to get the sample. In this technique, the researcher determined her own sample because there were certain considerations. It was because the researcher examined the development of the behaviors and attitudes of the children so that the subjects of the research were the early children aged 5-6 years who were deliberately selected by the researcher. The researcher defined the sample of the study and determined that only one school was taken as the research sample for the experimental and control groups because the children had the same characteristics and visions. If the sample of the research was taken from different school to be the experimental and the control group, the researcher worried whether the children did not have the same characteristics because every school has different characteristics and visions. Finally, the researcher determined the children of group B in kindergarten of Dodu subdistrict of Bima City as the subject of research in which there was group B1 and group B2.

RESULTS

The data of the children’s social skills bellow were described from the results of the preliminary observation of the initial condition (before treatment) and the last observation (after treatment) and the gain score of the two groups. In short, the observation results are presented as follows.

Table 1: The summary of the data description from observing the children’s social skills in the form of mean, standard deviation, highest score and lowest score of initial condition (before treatment) and final condition (after treatment)

Description of Children’s Social Skills	Experimental Group of Pretend Play Method Based on Local Wisdom		Control Group of Conventional Method (Lectures)	
	Condition Before Treatment	Condition After Treatment	Condition Before Treatment	Condition After Treatment
Mean	62.85	105.7	64.4	100.9
Standard deviation	5,92	2,93	5,56	3,58
Highest score	69	113	78	107
Lowest score	45	101	56	95

The results are also given in the Figure 1 as follow.

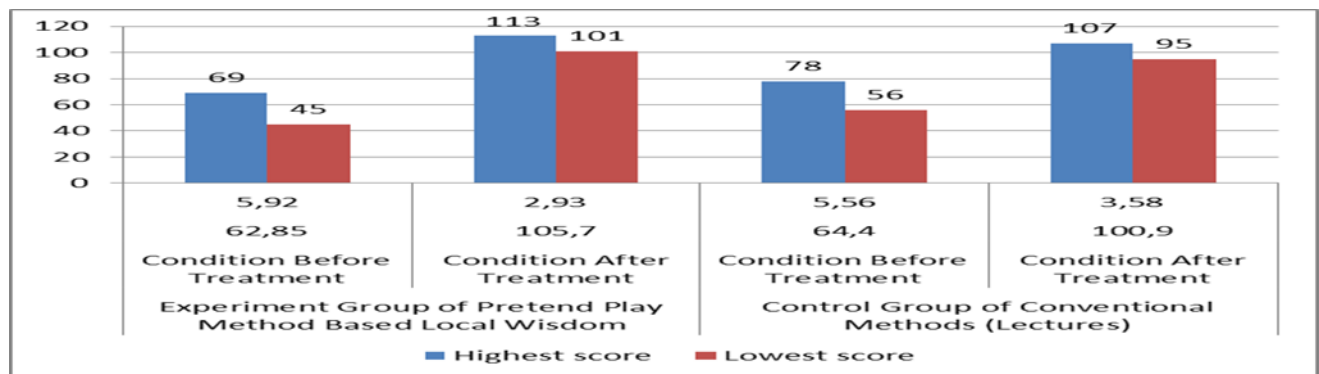


Figure 1 : The summary of the data description from observing the children’s social skills in the form of mean, standard deviation, highest score and lowest score of initial condition (before treatment) and final condition (after treatment)

Based on Table 1 and Figure 1 above, it can be concluded that the average score from the observation of the initial conditions (before treatment) in the experimental group was 62.85, while in the observation of the final condition (after treatment) the average score increased to be 105.7. In the control group, the mean of the initial condition (before treatment) was 64.4 and in the final condition (after treatment) the mean score increased to be 100.9. In the experimental group, the highest score of the initial condition observation (before treatment) was 69, while the final condition observation (after treatment) increased to be 113. In the control group, the highest score of the observation of the initial condition (before treatment) was 78, and in the final condition observation (after treatment) increased to be 107. Furthermore, the lowest score of the experimental group at the initial condition (before treatment) was 45, and in the final condition (after treatment) increased to be 101. The lowest score of the control group in the preliminary observation (before treatment) was 56, and in the observation of the final condition (after treatment) increased to be 95. In the experimental group, the standard deviation score in the initial condition (before treatment) was 5.92, and the final condition (after treatment) was 2.93. Moreover, in the control group, the standard deviation score in the initial condition (before treatment) was 5.56, and the final condition (after treatment) was 3.58.

Table 2: Gain score of the observation results of the children’s social skills

Criteria	Gain Score	Experiment Group Pretend Play Method Based on Local Wisdom		Control Group Conventional Method (Lecture)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
High	Gain Score > 0,7	16	80,0	7	35,0
Medium	0.3 < Gain Score < 0.7	4	20,0	13	65,0
Low	Gain Score < 0.3	0	0,0	0	0,0
Total		20	100	20	100

Based on Table 2 above, it can be inferred that the gain score of the children's social skills in the experimental group with high criteria were 16 children (80.0%), the medium criteria were 4 children (20.0%) and no children with the low criteria. Furthermore, the gain score of the children's social skills in the control group with high criteria were 7 children (35.0%), the medium criteria were 13 children (65.0%) and no children with the low criteria.

DISCUSSION

The results of this research revealed that the pretend play method based on local wisdom was effective and significant towards the social skill of the children in group B in kindergarten of Dodu subdistrict of Bima City. It was shown $\text{Sig} < \alpha$ ($0,000 < 0,05$) which meant that the gain score of the children's social skill in group B1 was significantly different from group B2. In addition, it can be seen from the mean score in the pretest (preliminary observation) was 62,85, after using the pretend play method based on local wisdom, the mean score was 105,7. While in using the conventional method (lecture), at the time of the pretest (preliminary observation), the mean score was 64,4 and at the time of the posttest (last observation) was to be 100,9. This indicated that the highest mean score was that using the pretend play method based on local wisdom. The results of the gain score also showed that the social skills of the children in group B1 with the high criteria were 16 children (80.0%), the medium criteria were 4 children (20%), and no children with the low criteria. While the results of the gain score of the social skills of the children in the B2 group with high criteria were 7 children (35%), the medium criteria were 13 children (65%), and no children with the low criteria.

The results of this research reinforced previous research concluding that the pretend play method could improve the children's social skills and their interactions between peers. The results of the observation showed that the children who were involved in playing pretend play tended to be less disturbing their friends and always participating in group activities (Bredikyte & Brandisauskiene, 2023). The pretend play method was a very important to stimulate the children's development such as cognitive, language and social skills as it was evidenced by the results of a research that used the pretend play method on average having improvement in the development (Jaggy et al., 2023b). The methods teachers used in teaching and educating greatly influence the development of the children's social skills because the pretend play method was needed to build the social skills of the preschool children (Samta & Suparno, 2019).

Playing pretend play allowed the children to start and maintain their social relationships with peers. The children formed the relationships when they said, "Let's play pretend play!" and offered a role to the other friends in the narrative. Moreover, through pretend play, the children could learn to understand what the other friends felt in which their roles were played. Furthermore, through pretend play, the children could express themselves in the aim for they could be more independent person and able to control themselves and understand about responsibility (Bredikyte & Brandisauskiene, 2023). Therefore, the researcher applied the pretend play method based on local wisdom for the children's learning. The use of the local wisdom in the learning method of the children was very important, for example, in society' activities in agriculture areas such as planting rice, fruits, vegetables, and raising and sharing with others in a group were activities that always interacted with others and always helped each other like planting various plants together (Jaggy et al., 2023b). These activities would stimulate the children's social skills through the pretend play based on local wisdom they played. The local wisdom could enhance the interaction between neighbors with the habits of the society such as working together, helping each other, inviting each other, and fulfilling the invitations of others, and preaching activities (Zhu, 2021). Those activities would be played by the children so that in this case the pretend play based on local wisdom could stimulate the children's social skill.

CONCLUSION

The pretend play method based on local wisdom was effective and significant on the children's social skills. This method could be used as an appropriate method to stimulate the aspects of the children's development because there were values that could be developed. Therefore, through the pretend play method based on local

wisdom, the process of the children's play activities could be more fascinating and had important values because it would add new experiences for the children the children could have good social attitudes.

Based on the results obtained in this research, it was necessary to have playing activities in the form of the pretend play method based on local wisdom that was included in the lesson plan. Through this playing activity of the pretend play based on local wisdom would stimulate the children's development, especially in their social skills combined with the local wisdom of the area that would facilitate the children to learn and of course the children should recognize the habits or activities undertaken by the local societies. Therefore, kindergartens need to apply the pretend play method based on local wisdom as an alternative to stimulate the children's development and support the children's knowledge about the local wisdom of their region.

Based on the conclusions above, there are some suggestions that can be given that the teachers are expected to be able to continue the use of the pretend play method based on local wisdom in the lesson plans so that the social skills of the children can continue to grow. In addition, it is also expected for other researchers to utilize the results of this research as an improvement and effort in the use of the pretend play method based on local wisdom so that the children's social skills can be more optimal. Before applying the pretend play method based on local wisdom, it is necessary for the teachers to firstly choose or determine the subjects or stories to be played in order to fit the situation and the right conditions and the steps. It is then expected to stimulate and help the children to achieve their competences in social skills.

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