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## Enhancing Early Childhood Literacy Through Creative Learning Activities in Kualuh Leidong

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### KEYWORDS

Early Childhood Literacy, Creative Learning, Storytelling, Rural Education, Kualuh Leidong, Early Childhood Education, Child-Centered Learning

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### A B S T R A C T

This study explores the role of community engagement in addressing This study explores the role of creative learning activities in enhancing early childhood literacy in Kualuh Leidong, North Sumatra. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis involving early childhood educators, parents, and school administrators. The findings reveal that creative strategies such as storytelling, music, drawing, role-playing, and the integration of local culture significantly improve children's literacy skills, including vocabulary development, letter recognition, and verbal expression. These activities also promote social-emotional growth and increase children's motivation to learn. Despite challenges such as limited teaching resources and lack of training, educators expressed a strong interest in using creative methods more frequently. The study concludes that creative learning is a powerful tool to support early literacy, especially in rural educational settings, and recommends greater support for teacher training and community involvement to sustain its impact.

### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a critical period in human development, particularly in the formation of foundational literacy skills. Literacy during the early years goes beyond the ability to read and write—it encompasses a child's capacity to understand language, express ideas, and interact meaningfully with the world around them. The development of these skills is essential for academic success, cognitive growth, and lifelong learning. In many rural and semi-urban areas, such as Kualuh Leidong in North Sumatra, Indonesia, access to quality early childhood education remains limited. This situation presents challenges in ensuring that children develop adequate literacy skills before entering formal schooling.

The importance of early literacy has been widely recognized by educational experts and international organizations alike. Research consistently shows that children who are exposed to rich language environments and engaging literacy activities from

a young age are more likely to succeed academically and socially. However, traditional approaches to early childhood education often rely heavily on rote learning and lack the creativity needed to stimulate children's natural curiosity and imagination. In regions like Kualuh Leidong, where educational resources and trained personnel may be scarce, there is an urgent need to explore innovative and practical strategies that can enhance literacy development effectively and sustainably.

Creative learning activities offer a promising solution to this challenge. By incorporating storytelling, music, role-playing, drawing, and hands-on projects into early childhood education, educators can create dynamic and inclusive learning environments that motivate children to explore language and literacy in meaningful ways. These activities are not only enjoyable for young learners but also support the development of fine motor skills, critical thinking, social-emotional competencies, and cognitive flexibility. Moreover, creative learning respects children's developmental stages, allowing them to construct knowledge through play and interaction.

In the context of Kualuh Leidong, implementing creative learning activities to improve early literacy is particularly relevant. The local culture, language, and traditions can be integrated into educational practices to make learning more relatable and impactful for young children. This research aims to examine how creative learning methods can be used to enhance early childhood literacy in Kualuh Leidong, with a focus on practical implementation in local educational settings. It will also explore the perceptions of educators, parents, and stakeholders regarding the benefits and challenges of creative learning approaches.

By shedding light on the potential of creative literacy strategies in early education, this study hopes to contribute to broader efforts in improving literacy outcomes in under-resourced communities. Ultimately, enhancing early literacy through innovative and child-centered approaches can lay a strong foundation for the future academic success and personal development of young learners in Kualuh Leidong and similar regions.

## **METHOD**

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive approach to explore how creative learning activities can enhance early childhood literacy in Kualuh Leidong. The qualitative method was chosen to allow the researcher to deeply understand the educational environment, the learning processes, and the experiences of both educators and families in implementing creative strategies.

The research was conducted in several early childhood education centers (PAUD) within the Kualuh Leidong subdistrict, located in North Labuhanbatu Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This region was selected due to its unique educational challenges and the need to promote more engaging and effective literacy development practices among young learners.

Participants in the study included early childhood educators, parents of children aged 4 to 6 years, and school administrators. A total of ten teachers, fifteen parents, and three principals were selected through purposive sampling. This method ensured that all participants had relevant experience and direct involvement in the early literacy development of children. Their perspectives were essential for understanding how creative learning activities were being implemented and perceived in the classroom setting.

To gather data, the researcher used a combination of observations, interviews, and documentation. Classroom observations were carried out to directly witness the types of creative activities being used, such as storytelling, role play, drawing, and music-based learning, and how children interacted with these activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and parents to gain insight into their views on the benefits, challenges, and outcomes of using creative approaches in teaching literacy. In addition, various documents such as lesson plans, student artwork, and photographs of classroom sessions were collected to support the data obtained through observations and interviews.

The data collected were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The researcher carefully reviewed the data, identified key themes, and organized findings based on recurring patterns related to the use of creative learning in literacy development. These themes were then interpreted to understand the influence of creative strategies on children's reading and language skills.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, the researcher applied data triangulation by comparing information from different sources—observations, interviews, and documentation. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by presenting the preliminary results to several participants to confirm that their experiences had been accurately represented.

This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how creative learning activities are shaping early literacy in the context of Kualuh Leidong, highlighting both the potential and the limitations of such educational innovations in rural areas.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

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## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that creative learning activities play a significant role in enhancing early childhood literacy in the Kualuh Leidong region. Through various engaging methods such as storytelling, music, drawing, role-play, and the integration of local culture, children were found to be more enthusiastic, expressive, and confident in developing their language and literacy skills. These creative approaches not only support academic development but also foster children's imagination, communication abilities, and emotional growth.

The findings demonstrate that when learning is made enjoyable and relevant to children's daily lives and cultural backgrounds, literacy becomes more accessible and meaningful. Teachers and parents observed noticeable improvements in children's ability to recognize letters and sounds, understand and retell stories, and

express ideas verbally. These improvements suggest that creative learning can be an effective alternative to more traditional, rigid methods of instruction, especially in under-resourced or rural settings.

However, the study also identified several challenges, including limited teaching resources, lack of specific training in creative pedagogy, and large class sizes. These factors can hinder the consistent implementation of creative methods. Therefore, ongoing support in the form of teacher training, material development, and collaboration between educators, parents, and the community is essential to sustain and expand the positive outcomes observed.

Overall, this research highlights the potential of creative learning activities as a valuable strategy in improving early childhood literacy, especially in rural areas like Kualuh Leidong. By investing in innovative, child-centered education, we can help lay a stronger foundation for lifelong learning and academic success among young children.

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