

Literacy Stimulation Through Assistance with Simple Word Group Games for Migrant Children

*Ferlya Elyza¹

Universitas Abulyatama

Azhari²

Universitas Abulyatama

Afrijal Tjoetra⁴

Universitas Teuku Umar

Eka Suaib⁴

Universitas Halu Oleo

*Corresponding Author: ferliyaeliza_b.inggris@abulyatama.ac.id

Abstract: Migrant children in Batu Cave, Malaysia, face major challenges in obtaining adequate education. This is caused by limited access, language barriers and citizenship status. This community service program aims to improve the basic literacy of migrant children through a simple word group game approach at the Wira Damai Learning Centre, especially reading literacy and cultural literacy, especially the knowledge of Indonesia. 24 migrant children participated in this activity. The results of the activities showed a significant improvement in the literacy abilities and social skills of migrant children. This approach creates an interactive and fun learning environment, assisting children learn through hands-on experiences and strengthening their cognitive and social-emotional skills.

Keywords: Literacy, Migrant Children, Group Games, Interactive Learning, Learning Studio

Abstrak: Anak-anak migran di Batu Cave, Malaysia, menghadapi tantangan besar dalam memperoleh pendidikan yang memadai. Hal ini disebabkan oleh keterbatasan akses, hambatan bahasa, dan status kewarganegaraan. Program Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PkM) ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan literasi dasar anak-anak migran melalui pendekatan permainan kelompok kata sederhana di Sanggar Belajar Wiradamai, khususnya literasi membaca dan literasi budaya. 24 anak-anak migran yang menjadi partisipan dalam kegiatan PkM ini. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam kemampuan literasi dan keterampilan sosial anak-anak migran. Pendekatan ini menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang interaktif dan menyenangkan, membantu anak-anak belajar melalui pengalaman langsung dan memperkuat keterampilan kognitif serta sosial-emosional mereka.

Kata Kunci: Literasi, Anak Migran, Permainan Kelompok, Pembelajaran Interaktif, Sanggar Belajar

INTRODUCTION

Migrant children often face challenges in obtaining a proper education due to various factors such as citizenship status, language barriers, and limited access to formal education facilities (Ayu & Dita, 2018). In Malaysia, especially in the Batu Cave area, many migrant children from Indonesia experience difficulties in accessing formal education. Wiradam Learning Studio in Batu Cave is a community initiative that provides non-formal education for migrant children who do not have access to formal schools. However, the main challenge faced is the low basic literacy skills among these children (Sari & Budi, 2019).

Basic literacy education is an important foundation for children's cognitive and social development. Literacy is not only the ability to read and write, but also the ability to understand, interpret and communicate effectively. Research shows that children with good literacy skills have a greater chance of success in school and later life (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). However, for migrant children, language limitations and lack of literacy stimulation at home are often the main obstacles in achieving adequate literacy skills (Cummins, 2000).

Interactive and fun learning approaches, such as group games, have been proven effective in improving literacy skills in children. Vygotsky's social learning theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process. In the context of group play, children not only learn new words but also develop communication, cooperation, and problem-solving skills. Research by Slavin (2006) shows that educational games in groups can increase learning motivation and understanding of concepts in children.

At Wiradamai Learning Studio, Batu Cave, a simple word group play approach is applied to help migrant children overcome literacy challenges. This game is designed to improve basic vocabulary understanding, reading ability, and social skills of migrant children through fun and interactive activities. According to Woolfolk (2016), the use of games in learning can stimulate children's interest and reduce boredom, so that they are more motivated to learn.

Apart from that, this approach also aims to create an inclusive and safe learning environment for migrant children. In group play, children learn to communicate and collaborate with peers, which is very important for the development of their social skills (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Migrant children often feel isolated and lack self-confidence, so it is hoped that this approach can help them to be more open and active in interacting with their peers.

Direct experience in the learning process through group games also helps children understand literacy concepts more deeply and contextually. This activity invites children to actively participate and learn through experience, which, according to Dewey (1938), is the most effective learning approach. Thus, assistance through simple word group games not only helps improve migrant children's literacy skills, but also supports the development of their social and emotional skills.

Seeing the importance of literacy as a basic skill that underlies children's academic and social success, efforts to improve literacy in migrant children through creative and interactive approaches become very relevant and necessary. This approach not only focuses on cognitive aspects, but also on developing children's social and emotional aspects, which are very important in their overall learning process (Tompkins, 2014). Therefore, it is hoped that this service program can become an effective intervention model and can be replicated in other similar communities.

METHOD

This Community Service (PkM) activity was carried out at the Wiradam Learning Studio, Batu Cave, Malaysia. The method used is a learning approach through simple word group games. Each session involves 5 -7 migrant children aged 5-13 years who are divided into several small groups. The PkM team designed games that focus on searching for syllables and matching words according to pictures, as well as "guess the word" games to improve reading skills and vocabulary understanding. Each session lasts 60-90 minutes.

Participatory observation was used to assess children's responses and participation during activities. In addition, interviews with local educators and administrators

were also conducted to obtain input and reflections on children's literacy development during this program. Data was collected and analyzed descriptively to see changes in children's literacy skills and social skills.

DISCUSSIONS

The results of this service activity show a significant increase in the basic literacy skills of migrant children at Sanggar Belajar Wiradam, Batu Cave, Malaysia. The simple word group game method has proven to be effective in creating an interactive and fun learning environment.

As stated by Tompkins (2014), learning that is participatory and actively involves children in the learning process can increase their motivation and understanding of the material being taught. In this context, migrant children involved in group games showed improvements in vocabulary and better reading skills compared to before the activities were implemented..

Furthermore, this group play approach provides an opportunity for children to develop important social skills. According to Johnson & Johnson (2009), group games can improve the ability to communicate, collaborate, and develop empathy between fellow group members. This is evident in this activity, where children not only learn to understand new words, but also learn how to cooperate with peers, listen, and respect other people's opinions. Thus, this activity not only focuses on literacy as a cognitive skill, but also as a tool for social-emotional development.

Group games such as “guess the word” and “make words” provide cognitive stimulation that stimulates language development in children. Based on Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development (1978), social interaction is key in children's language and cognitive development. During the game, children engage in conversation and discussion, which helps them to broaden their understanding of language structures and improve their language skills. This approach incorporates Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) concept, where children learn more effectively when assisted by more competent peers or mentors.

Syllable cards and picture cards are prepared for each group. And game instructions are given by the facilitator. It can be seen in the following PkM Team activities;

Picture 1.

PkM Facilitator Provides Game Instructions to Participants and Studio Teaching Team who are involved in PkM activities.



Picture 2.

Children look for syllable cards that can form words that match the pictures on other cards. As seen in the following picture of PkM activities:



After finding the correct syllable, children match the word with the relevant picture to earn points. Apart from that, the positive influence of this method is also reflected

in increasing children's self-confidence in using everyday language. Bandura (1986) in his social learning theory suggests that learning through models and direct experience can increase children's self-efficacy or confidence in their own abilities. In the context of group play, migrant children who previously felt hesitant or lacked confidence to participate in learning activities, began to show the courage to speak, argue and provide answers. These changes are important for their personality and social development.

Enthusiasm and improvement in basic literacy skills were observed during the activities. Children who were previously passive began to show courage in actively participating. This can be seen in the following PkM activities.

Picture 3.



The importance of a fun learning approach is also reflected in the children's positive response to this activity. Woolfolk (2016) emphasized that interesting learning activities can increase student engagement and reduce feelings of anxiety or stress related to learning. This is especially relevant for migrant children who may face additional stress due to migration situations and cultural adaptation. Through play, children can learn in an atmosphere free of pressure and feel safe to explore.

Children were asked to share their experiences during the game, identifying difficulties, and the strategies they used. Increased literacy abilities and social skills,

as well as children's self-confidence. This can be seen clearly when Pkm activities take place.

Picture 4.



However, although the results of this activity are very positive, there are several challenges that need to be considered for further development. One of them is limited time and resources. Group games require a competent facilitator and sufficient tools to ensure the success of the activity. More support from relevant parties, including local communities and educational institutions, is needed to expand the scope and impact of this program. Apart from that, there needs to be a greater variety of games to maintain children's interest and motivation to learn.

Another recommendation that can be implemented is the use of technology in literacy learning. Digital media such as word game applications and e-learning platforms can be an effective alternative to complement conventional methods such as group games. The use of technology can also help children to learn independently at home and provide a more varied learning experience.

Overall, this program shows that a learning approach through group play is an effective strategy for improving literacy and social skills in migrant children. This model can be a reference for other communities facing similar challenges, by

adapting it according to local context and needs. In the future, it is important to continue to evaluate and innovate in teaching methods to ensure that every child has the same opportunity to learn and develop optimally.

CONCLUSION

This Community Service Program has succeeded in showing that literacy stimulation through assistance with simple word group games is effective in improving the basic literacy abilities and social skills of migrant children at the Wiradam Learning Studio, Batu Cave, Malaysia. This approach creates an interactive, fun and inclusive learning environment, allowing children to learn in relevant and meaningful ways. These activities also support children's social-emotional development, helping them adapt and interact better with peers. In the future, broader collaboration with various parties and the development of innovative learning methods are needed to expand the positive impact of this program.

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