

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

## THE ROLE OF NURSERIES IN SUPPORTING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT: PARENTS' ASPIRATIONS, TEACHING APPROACHES AND EDUCATORS CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of nurseries in supporting children's early development through teaching and learning approaches, parents' aspirations and the challenges faced by educators. Qualitative research methods were used by conducting interviews with three nursery educators in Penang. The findings of the study show that the play-while-learning and multisensory approach is the main effective strategy in stimulating children's cognitive, language, emotional, social and fine and gross motor development. Parents' aspirations are focused on aspects of safety, care, health, as well as language and emotional development of children. To meet this expectation, the nursery implements two-way communication through progress reports in the form of pictures and videos, which have proven to increase parents' confidence in the nursery. However, several challenges were also identified including differences in children's developmental levels, negative behavior and unstable emotions. This study concludes that the role of the nursery is very important in providing a conducive environment for the holistic development of children and continuous improvement is needed to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** teaching and learning effectiveness, play while learning approach, parents, educators

### INTRODUCTION

TASKA or Taman Asuhan Kanak-Kanak is an institution that provides care and early education for children aged three months to four years. Nursery provides daycare services and activities for children while parents are working. According to Eka Najihah Ramly et al, (2020) stated that children are a trust that needs to be taken care of and protected. This is because caring for and educating children is a trust that becomes a responsibility for every parent and educator. At the nursery, children are fed, children's safety is taken care of and they are exposed to basic learning and social development activities. This nursery is held to stimulate the development of fine motor and gross motor, social development and cognitive development through a teaching approach while

playing. In addition, the nursery also plays a role in forming the foundation of discipline, communication skills as well as building children's self-confidence in preparation before entering the preschool world. Through daily activities such as singing, dancing, telling stories, playing, drawing and so on they can improve creativity, language comprehension and social skills. Therefore, the nursery not only functions as a care center but also becomes an important place in the comprehensive development of children in their early years.

In the context of teaching and learning (PdP) the nursery provides a conducive environment that combines care with early childhood education. Through structured activities such as arranging blocks, playing puzzles, drawing, singing and telling stories, children not only gain fun

experiences but they can master skills such as cognitive, language and fine motor coordination. This approach is in line with the concept of play-based learning that emphasizes exploration, interaction and practical experience. Educators at the nursery act as facilitators who guide, monitor and provide stimulation that is appropriate to the child's developmental level.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is to

1. Identifying the background of nursery educators as well as their experience in the field of early childhood education.
2. Knowing the teaching approach used in educating babies and toddlers as well as the relationship with the development of jeris.
3. Assess parents' expectations of the nursery in terms of safety, care and child development as well as the level of effectiveness of the approach implemented.
4. Identify the challenges faced by educators as well as suggestions for improvement to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the nursery.

## METHOD

As for the research method, the researcher has chosen to conduct a qualitative survey. Qualitative research is a research method that focuses on in-depth understanding of individual experiences and perceptions through non-statistical data such as images and words. Usually data can be collected through observation, interview and so on.

In this study, the researcher conducted an interview session at a nursery located in Penang. The sampling method used in this study was purposive sampling, a common technique in qualitative research. This technique involves the deliberate selection of individuals based on their knowledge, experience and relevance to the research topic. The interviews were conducted with educators to obtain information about the experiences, challenges and

approaches they use in implementing the teaching and learning process. Through this method, researchers can obtain direct data that is more accurate and can help provide a comprehensive picture of the nursery's role in supporting children's early development.

The study involved three female respondents with varying levels of experience in early childhood education ranging from four to fifteen years, all of whom work at a nursery caring for children aged three months to four years. Although specific ages and educational backgrounds were not disclosed, all participants are experienced professionals with a strong understanding of child development and caregiving practices.

## RESULT

Based on interviews conducted with three nursery educators, several main themes have been identified:

### *Teaching approach to learning in kindergarten*

All three respondents emphasized the play-while-learning approach where activities such as playing blocks, putting together puzzles, sorting objects by color, singing and telling stories are used to stimulate children's development. Next, for babies a multisensory approach is used involving the senses of touch, sound and movement. This is so because, the respondents stated that there is an effectiveness of the activities that have supported the physical development focused on fine motor and gross motor. In addition, the respondents also emphasized the children's emotions such as giving words that encourage them and using friendly intonation to them so that they feel safe, valued and more confident to explore the environment. This is effective because, when children share games, wait their turn and also interact with teachers and friends they can not only build self-confidence but also develop social skills that are important in everyday life. Emotional through positive interactions and words of praise, Spiritual through simple prayers and the application of virtues, Intellect through play activities that involve simple problem solving and social through group activities that teach children to share games, wait turns and interact.

### *Parents' Expectations*

All respondents agreed that parents expect their children to be safe, healthy, clean and awake during their time at the nursery. This is because parents want their children to be protected from any dangerous things. According to respondent 2, the teacher will ensure that the children are safe and comfortable, such as monitoring every movement of the children so that they do not play or do something that could injure them. In addition to the aspect of care, parents also hope that their children show positive development in terms of language, emotions and social skills. In addition to that, respondent 2 also stated that parents expect the nursery to always ensure that the food provided is nutritious and that the nursery room is clean and orderly.

### *Challenge*

Among the main challenges identified are differences in children's development levels such as children who learn quickly and those who are slow, behaviors such as tantrums, throwing toys or not wanting to do activities together as well as volatile emotions such as prolonged crying. According to the three respondents, this challenge requires a lot of patience, appropriate behavior management strategies and continuous emotional support to ensure that children can adapt better in their environment at the nursery.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that The results of the interviews with all three respondents emphasized the play-while-learning approach as the main strategy in teaching and learning in the nursery. Activities that are often carried out in nurseries such as playing blocks, putting together puzzles, sorting objects by color, singing and telling stories are seen to be effective in stimulating children's cognitive, social and language development as well as helping them to understand a concept more easily and deeply. According to Sakinah Mohd Khialdin & Suziyani Mohamed (2023) Early Childhood Education needs to emphasize creative teaching and learning processes to help children understand and explore their

environment effectively. In addition, respondents also focused on the multisensory approach used for babies in doing activities that involve the senses of touch, sound and movement. Respondents explained that multi-sensory stimulation can not only help babies' fine and gross motor development but can also improve their ability to recognize and explore the environment. Even as early as babies, the play-while-learning approach can foster physical development and encourage the development of their sensory exploration and motor skills (Leobach & Cox, 2022). It is clear that this approach to learning while playing and the multisensory approach has a positive effect on children's development in addition to making teaching and learning sessions more fun and meaningful for children's future.

Next, for the parents' aspirations, they emphasized the importance of safety, care, language and emotional development of their children while in the nursery. This is because parents expect their children to always be in a safe condition, cared for with attention and guaranteed in terms of health and hygiene. Respondents stated that the approach used successfully met parents' expectations when children began to show a positive change where they are more happy and comfortable to attend the nursery in addition to being confident in communicating. From the point of view of language development, parents hope that their children can improve communication skills through interaction with teachers and peers. In order to meet the parents' aspirations, the nursery has sent children's development reports in the form of pictures and videos as evidence of their child's development progress, in addition to holding two-way communication with parents to increase their trust in the nursery. This approach is in line with Bedel's study (2024) which shows that the use of e-portfolios that contain pictures, videos and reflections on student development not only facilitates communication between teachers and parents but also increases parents' confidence because they can see visual evidence of their child's development more clearly. Therefore, it is clear that parents' aspirations can be met through an effective approach that emphasizes safety, care, language and emotional development of children and can

build confidence and a stronger relationship between the nursery and parents.

In addition, it is a challenge faced by teachers during teaching and learning sessions together. One of the main challenges faced in the nursery is the difference in the level of development of children where some are quick to understand something and some are slower. This situation requires teachers to provide a diverse approach according to the ability level and each child. Next, children's behavior such as tantrums, biting friends, refusing to do activities and prolonged crying are also a big challenge for teachers. This is because this behavior can interfere with learning activities such as losing the focus of other children and requires extra attention from the teacher to calm the situation. If not handled well, it will create an uncomfortable atmosphere and affect the child's own emotional and social well-being.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study proves that the nursery plays an important role not only as a care center but also as an early education institution that supports the comprehensive development of children. The play-while-learning and multisensory approach is proven to be effective in stimulating cognitive, emotional, language, social and motor skills development. Parents' aspirations that emphasize safety, intensive care, hygiene and language and emotional development of children can be met through various strategies including visual development reports and two-way communication. Although educators face challenges such as differences in children's development and behavior levels and need to be dealt with with patience and flexibility so that educators can overcome them. For suggestions for improvement, respondents suggested that nurseries add more creative sensory-based play activities, hold regular training for educators, strengthen relationships with parents through annual meetings and involve them in activities such as reading sessions together, thus making nurseries an important platform in building a solid foundation for early childhood development.

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## DECLARATION OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Athirah binti Abdul Jamil does not work for, consult, own shares in, or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this manuscript, and has disclosed no affiliations other than those noted above.

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