



Application of ice-breaking activities for learning preparation for children aged 5-6 years at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo

Fida Beti Rohana^{1*}, Indah Setianingrum²

^{1,2}Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ma'arif, Indonesia

fidarohana2304@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Children aged 5-6 years tend to have a short attention span, so special strategies are needed to build their learning readiness from the beginning of classroom activities. This study aims to determine the application of ice-breaking activities for learning preparation for children aged 5-6 years at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo. The research method uses a qualitative descriptive approach. The subjects of the study were 20 children of Kindergarten B and 2 teachers. The results show that activities such as clapping games, interactive songs, and rhythmic movements are used to prepare children for learning before learning begins. However, the variation of activities is still limited, so it is necessary to develop more creative strategies. The recommendation of this study is that teachers can integrate ice-breaking activities inclusively and diversely in the daily curriculum.



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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECED) is an important foundation in children's cognitive, social and emotional development. One of the main challenges in ECD learning is the lack of variety in activities that trigger boredom, such as the use of repetitive ice-breaking (Iskandar et al., 2023). In the whole education process, learning is the most important activity. This means that the purpose of education depends a lot on how the learning process can take place effectively. Effective learning is when an atmosphere is created that causes children's learning concentration (Ng et al., 2020). Ice-breaking activities as a learning starter strategy can be a solution to overcome this problem.

Such as research conducted by Ratna (2020) *"Implementasi Ice-breaking dalam mengembangkan 6 Aspek Perkembangan Anak Pada Kelompok B3 usia 5-6 Tahun Raperwanida II Mataram Tahun Ajaran 2019/2020"*, which shows that the implementation of ice-breaking in group B3 at RA Perwanida II Mataram in learning activities teachers have been able to implement ice-breaking appropriately both spontaneously and planned. Where the planned ice-breaking implementation technique is carried out by including ice-breaking in the lesson plan, which is adjusted to the theme to achieve learning objectives, and carried out at the beginning or end of the activity. Meanwhile, spontaneous ice-breaking is carried out without any planning with the aim of calming and refocusing students' attention during the learning process both from the initial, core and final activities of learning by paying attention to conditions and timing so that students look active and excited in participating in activities.

Ice-breaking as a series of short, fun activities has a strategic role in creating a conducive learning atmosphere. These activities not only break the ice, but also increase children's enthusiasm, focus and readiness through physical and interactive activities (Hidayah & Filasofa, 2024). Examples include simple games, songs, or physical movements done at the beginning of learning or when children show signs of fatigue. Research shows that the application of ice-breaking improves children's focus and ability to complete play activities. Ice-breaking activities can be done at the beginning of learning, during learning, or at the end of learning through singing, games, gestures, and other means (Angelina & Rocmah, 2024). Some activities can be carried out with the aim that children are ready to do the learning that will be carried out.

This research focuses on the application of ice-breaking at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo, by observing activities such as patting games and rhythmic movements for children's readiness before carrying out activities. Initial observations showed that ice-breaking activities were carried out at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo and showed that children could carry out activities with enthusiasm after participating in ice-breaking activities. Ice-breaking activities have not been carried out in all kindergarten institutions because they require many references and need to be memorised by the teacher. But in this KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo, the teacher already has ice-breaking materials that will be used for children before starting the activity. Learning at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo has been running according to the lesson plan made by the class teacher, children are involved in listening to the teacher when they present the learning delivered by the class teacher, children are involved in their activities they prefer to focus on their own tasks rather than listening to the teacher when they present the lesson, each student wants to learn for different reasons and has a different definition of what concentration is (Puspitasari & Marzuki, 2023).

Mrs. Suparti said that the classroom atmosphere before ice-breaking was less conducive, sometimes many children were not ready to carry out learning, it could be that they were not interested in learning or could not understand learning after ice-breaking children were more ready and focused on learning.

Learning preparation for early childhood is an essential foundation in determining the direction of development and success of children's future education (Gde Dhika Widarnandana et al., 2023). This process not only aims to equip children with basic skills before entering formal education, but also to shape their character and holistic readiness (Anggraena et al., 2022). Such readiness includes several key aspects of development: physical, emotional, cognitive, and social. In the physical aspect, the development of motor skills is an important point of attention. Children need to get enough stimulation to develop gross motor skills such as running, jumping, and climbing, as well as fine motor skills such as holding a pencil, cutting, or counting (Aminah, 2019). Mature motor skills are an important prerequisite for various learning activities at school, such as writing and following instructions independently. Therefore, physically supportive play activities should be designed in a targeted manner from an early age (Pratiwi & Utsman, 2022).

Furthermore, children's emotional development is instrumental in their readiness to face the school world (Firdausi & Ulfa, 2022). Children need to learn to recognize, understand, and manage their own emotions as well as understand the emotions of others. Through social activities and learning that provide space for the expression of feelings, children can foster empathy, resilience, and the ability to resolve conflicts in a healthy manner (Sukatin et al., 2020). Character education that starts early is the basis of children's emotional intelligence in the future. From the cognitive side, stimulation in the form of reading activities together, recognising numbers, colours, shapes, and inviting children to ask questions and explore the environment, is very important to grow their thinking capacity. Early childhood is known to have high curiosity, and this should be utilized as an entry point in building reasoning and critical thinking skills (Nurasyiah & Atikah, 2023). Providing meaningful cognitive experiences will make it easier for them when they begin to face academic challenges in primary school.

Meanwhile, social aspects cannot be separated from learning preparation (Firdausi & Ulfa, 2022). Children need to be introduced to social norms and rules through interactions with peers and adults. Group play, cooperation, and role-play activities will help them understand the concepts of turn-taking, sharing, cooperation, and respect for difference (Musthofiyyah et al., 2025). These social experiences are important so that children are not only academically prepared, but also socially adaptable when entering the formal school environment.

This whole process is part of holistic education, where children's well-being and development are seen as an interrelated whole (Khairunnisa & Fidesrinur, 2021). Early childhood learning preparation is not just an initial academic exercise, but a long-term foundational process that will influence a child's attitude towards learning, self-confidence, and desire to continue exploring the world around them. When children are given the opportunity to develop in a balanced way in all these aspects, they will enter the next level of education better prepared and with a greater chance of success (Gustiana, 2019). Thus, investments in early childhood learning preparation not only have an impact in

the present, but also make a long-term contribution to the quality of lifelong learning (Nofalia, 2024). In this context, the roles of parents, educators and the environment determine the direction and quality of the preparation process. This joint effort will ensure that children grow into individuals who are not only academically intelligent, but also emotionally healthy, socially skilled and resilient in facing the various challenges of life in the future.

Maria Montessori said that children have a natural drive to support this desire. Learning preparation, according to Montessori, involves independence, the desire to learn, creativity and innovation as well as the social ability to focus and participate in structured activities (Nofalia, 2024). By engaging in early learning preparation, children will be better prepared to succeed academically and socially when they attend formal school. In addition, early childhood preparation sets the stage for lifelong learning by instilling a love of learning, curiosity and critical thinking skills in young children. By focusing on the well-being and development of the whole child, early childhood preparation ensures that children have a strong foundation to build upon as they continue their educational journey (Nofalia, 2024).

This condition proves that the theory of learning readiness is very sustainable with reality, starting with fun activities such as singing, moving to the rhythm, attendance with songs, so that children are ready to take part in learning in a relaxed manner. The learning process that is seriously rigid without the slightest nuance of excitement will certainly get boring very quickly. If the activity is considered interesting and fun then the concentration power can be long. Children's concentration is closely related to their motivation to learn. If the child's concentration begins to decline, the child's motivation to learn will also decline.

Based on the results of initial observations, the researcher concluded that ice-breaking activities for learning readiness are effective at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam. Ice-breaking learning is effective and fun, and children can be more interested and involved in the learning process. In addition, this activity can also improve the quality of social interaction between children, in the process of preparing for learning, causing children to learn more actively, earnestly and enthusiastically. Learning preparation for learning needs to be considered because when children already have learning preparation, their learning outcomes will be better. The novelty of this article lies in the comprehensive and integrated approach to ice-breaking strategies for children's learning preparation that is tailored to the developmental characteristics of preschool children. This article introduces new methods or techniques that have been explored before, such as guessing games that hone children's emotional states. Areas of interest to research in this context include different types of ice-breaking games, the influence of technology use in increasing children's engagement, and the role of a supportive learning environment in increasing 4-6 year old motivation to learn. In addition, research could explore how factors such as children's emotional intelligence, learning styles and preferences may influence responses to specific ice-breaking strategies.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The focus of the study was on the implementation of ice-breaking activities at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam to prepare children for learning, involving 20 children aged 5-6 years and 2 accompanying teachers. The choice of a qualitative approach enables researchers to explore the phenomenon of ice-breaking in depth within the natural context of learning in PAUD.

Data were collected through direct observation over 4 weeks (February-March 2025), semi-structured interviews with teachers, and documentation of ice-breaking activities. Observations were conducted using structured observation sheets to record children's responses. Interviews with teachers were conducted once at the end of the research period, to find out the ice-breaking strategies and activities implemented. Documentation in the form of photos and video recordings were used as supporting data for analysis. This study is expected to provide an in-depth description of the effectiveness of ice-breaking in creating a more pleasant learning atmosphere and supporting children's attention during the learning process. The results of this study are expected to be the basis for developing more effective teaching methods at KB/RA Muslimat Nu Darussalam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Ice-breaking at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo

The ice-breaking method is applied before the learning session to create a more relaxed and fun atmosphere. This activity involves light games, singing and social interaction aimed at relieving tension and increasing children's enthusiasm. During observation, children showed increased attention and engagement in the learning process after the ice-breaking activity. In addition, teaching became more interactive, where children felt more comfortable to participate and ask questions. Ice-breaking activities at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo are implemented for 10-15 minutes before learning begins, every Monday to Friday, with the aim of improving children's learning readiness. Teachers apply a combination of clapping games, interactive songs and rhythmic movements to attract children's attention and enthusiasm. Based on observations, children showed a positive response to this activity, especially when using simple musical instruments such as drums or maracas. According to Ismi et al. (2021), the use of ice-breaking like this is effective in increasing children's learning concentration.

The implementation of ice-breaking follows a consistent pattern with daily variations: Monday (Pat Games), Tuesday (Interactive Songs), Wednesday (Moves and Songs), Thursday (Guessing), and Friday (Collaborative Games). This approach creates a routine that children can anticipate while maintaining an element of novelty. Four weeks of observation showed that 18 out of 20 children showed positive responses, such as cheerful facial expressions and excited body movements, when the teacher announced ice-breaking time. This indicates that the activity is successful in building positive associations with learning.

Based on the results of the interview with Mrs. Suparti, it is said that the implementation of ice-breaking is very influential for learning readiness because from children who are not focused to focus, such as a child named Rafan, it is very difficult to focus so that with the ice-breaking before learning or in the middle of learning the child becomes focused and ready to learn again.

The following are ice-breaking activities carried out at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo:

1. Clapping Games

Clapping games are one of the most effective types of ice-breaking in improving children's focus. Of the 10 children observed, 8 were focused on following the clapping rhythm while singing the song "Naik-Naik ke Gunung". Teachers reported that children were more ready to receive learning materials after this activity. For example, Andi (not his real name), who is usually difficult to concentrate, began to actively follow the teacher's instructions post-ice-breaking. As well as research from Ismi et al. (2021), stated that patting games increased children's focus duration from 3-5 minutes to 8-12 minutes, with the frequency of attention switching decreasing from 7-9 times to 2-4 times in 15 minutes of observation. For example, the teacher instructed the children to clap every time the teacher threw an object such as a ball or marker. However, if the teacher does not throw the object, the children should not clap.

Effective clapping games, such as "Cheer Up," combine patterned hand movements with positive affirmations such as "I-Can-Learn-With-Fun." This activity not only improves focus but also builds a positive attitude towards learning. Mrs. Suparti, one of the teachers, states: "Clapping games help children with excess energy in the morning. Children can channel their energy in a structured way, making it easy to sit quietly and pay attention afterwards." Hand clapping is an easy ice-breaking technique, as it does not require time-consuming preparation. Teachers can create their own clapping by modifying existing types and making their own existing clapping models (Nofalia, 2024).

Mrs. Siti said that clapping games are also very related to children's enthusiasm to break the learning atmosphere, because in the clapping there is learning material that is inserted such as clapping the pillars of Islam, clapping ablutions, and clapping fasting in this way the children are more ready to take part in learning and enjoy more in the classroom.

2. Interactive Songs

Interactive songs have been proven effective in encouraging active participation. Children love things that are musical. When children hear a piece of music or a song, they will be excited and happy. The impact on children to train fine motor skills and coordination takes about ten minutes, the level of participation of children to interactive songs is almost perfect. But keeping in mind that in early childhood we need time to memorize lyrics and tones repeatedly, this activity helps create a cheerful and uplifting atmosphere for children. Shoolikhah (2024) states that activities such as the song “Siapa Namamu” which involves taking turns calling out children's names-increases participation by 90% and strengthens social skills. Interactive songs such as “Kalau Kau Suka Hati” with simple movements also increase children's initiative in communicating during learning, such as raising hands or sharing experiences. Ms. Siti, a PAUD teacher, said:

"Children are easier to get to sit still after singing together. They seem to be 'attracted' by the rhythm of the song. More importantly, children who are usually shy like Nisa and Rafi began to express themselves after we routinely do ice-breaking with interactive songs."

3. Movement and Song

Song and movement activities such as “Senam Fantasi”, involve simple movements to the beat of music or claps. Children mimic movements such as butterflies or trees blowing in the wind, which is not only fun but also improves motor coordination. Hariyani & Anggraeni (2023) stated that rhythmic movement improves children's physical readiness, seen from more stable sitting posture, reduced fidgeting behavior, and reduced sitting position adjustment time by 40% compared to days without physical activity. These movements and songs can improve children's gross motor skills. Mrs. Siti as a teacher also said that:

"This movement and song can be presented so that children are enthusiastic, children usually like songs and the movements are followed too. This activity is also useful for gross motor development in children"

4. Guessing

A simple activity that can improve thinking skills and concentration in children, it takes about seven to ten minutes but there are challenges for us because we have to adjust to the abilities of the children. Guessing in ice-breaking is a communication activity that involves alternating questions and answers with several people. The purpose of guessing is to create an entertaining, relaxed atmosphere and build closeness between children. Guesses are usually like questions with answers that have elements of puzzles, humor, or word games (Nofalia, 2024).

Guessing games can also increase curiosity and build children's creativity in answering questions, such as guessing about vegetables “I am a purple vegetable, what kind of vegetable am I?” Mrs. Suparti as the principal also said that

"The guessing game is very interesting for children who are less focused on learning, because they will grow curiosity besides that guessing can hone children's concentration, there are several children who are less focused on learning after that the teacher tries the guessing game to enter learning and it turns out that many children are enthusiastic about following."

The collaborative game method in the form of group assignments is a teaching method with group learning or cooperative learning to be able to improve children's learning better and improve helping attitudes in social emotional behavior (Ananda & Fadhilaturrahmi, 2018). Collaborative games are not just fun activities but also an effective tool for shaping children's collaboration skills, such as ball relay games children must work together with one group in order to achieve a goal, namely the finish, Mrs. Siti as a Paud teacher said that

"Collaborative games are very useful for building social-emotional skills in children and training themselves to be responsible with others"

Challenges in the implementation of ice-breaking during the research were limited variety, different levels of participation, time constraints, and suitability to the theme. Although in general ice-

breaking activities have a positive impact, several challenges were identified during the study, namely the first, limited variety. Teachers admitted to having difficulty in creating a variety of activities that consistently attracted children's interest. After the second week, some children began to show signs of boredom with repetitive activities. The second was the different levels of participation. Some children, especially those with quiet personalities or still in the process of adapting to school, showed reluctance to fully participate in group activities. The third is time constraints. An ice-breaking duration that is too long (more than 15 minutes) tends to be counterproductive, as it reduces time for core learning activities. Conversely, a duration that is too short (less than 5 minutes) does not have a significant effect. The fourth is compatibility with the learning theme. Teachers experience challenges in integrating ice-breaking activities with daily learning themes so that sometimes it seems separate from the overall learning context. Mrs. Suparti, head of KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo, stated:

"We realize the importance of ice-breaking, but sometimes find it difficult to develop new ideas that suit children's abilities and interests. We have a limited collection of activities and not much specialized training on effective ice-breaking techniques for PAUD."

Inclusive ice-breaking development strategies based on the research findings are classified activity banks, integration with learning themes, differentiated approaches, involving children in design, and using technology. The first is the activity bank. Developing a collection of ice-breaking activities classified by purpose (improving focus, developing motor skills, building social skills) and difficulty level. The second is integration with learning themes. Designing ice-breaking activities that are aligned with daily learning themes so that they also serve as an introduction to the concepts to be learned. The third is the differentiation approach. Providing alternative participation for children with different characteristics, for example allowing shy children to participate gradually or in a way that is more comfortable for them. The fourth is involving children in the design. Regularly inviting children to provide ideas or choose the type of ice-breaking activity they prefer increases ownership and active participation. The fifth is the use of technology. Utilize simple audiovisual media to enrich the variety of activities, such as animated videos of simple movements or educational songs with interesting visualizations.

Ice-breaking activities also have long-term impacts, including increased emotional closeness between teachers and children, the development of a culture of mutual support among children, reduced incidents of disruptive behavior during learning activities, and increased children's confidence in expressing ideas and feelings. After four weeks, ice-breaking increased teacher-child closeness, a culture of mutual support, and children's confidence, in line with research (Hariyani & Anggraeni, 2023).

5. Child Study Preparation

Preparation for learning is the stage taken before children enter learning. It involves establishing the basic skills, attitudes and knowledge needed to start the learning process properly. Children's learning preparation is carried out to help optimize their learning potential early on and children adjust to the school environment. With good preparation, children are better prepared to follow the learning process and develop optimally (Hariyani & Anggraeni, 2023). Before learning, children at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo do ice-breaking activities. Activities are carried out to provide enthusiasm before carrying out learning activities. Children look happy, excited, and happy when doing ice-breaking. Children's energy is still full when it is still morning and still actively moving (Komalasari et al., 2023), so ice-breaking is right to do in the morning before learning activities are carried out. The activities provided will have an impact and are needed for learning preparation and during the learning process, children will feel happy and can concentrate (Adi et al., 2021).

Learning preparation for children will be successful if children can be conditioned by concentrating and can be arranged to sit. When children can condition their bodies, it can be said that learning is ready to take place. When ice-breaking has been done, children are ready to learn with enthusiasm, enough energy, and stimulation can enter the child's brain. The benefits of doing ice-breaking activities are to eliminate anxiety, boredom, and fatigue, and make activities more fun and relaxed (Sari et al., 2021).

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that preparation for learning and enjoyable learning is an object or activity that will encourage children to devote more attention to the object. In the learning process, preparation causes children to learn actively, earnestly and enthusiastically. Readiness in participating in learning needs to be considered because when children are ready to learn, their learning outcomes will be better. The development of ice-breaking activities is closely related to learning readiness for early childhood.



Figure 1. Ice-breaking Activity

CONCLUSION

Ice-breaking activities are proven to be used for early childhood learning preparation at KB/RA Muslimat NU Darussalam Alastuwo. Activities can be carried out in other institutions and can serve as examples to other institutions. Clapping games, interactive songs, and rhythmic movements can significantly improve children's focus, active participation, and physical condition to follow learning. The results showed an increase in children's focus duration from an average of 3-5 minutes to 8-12 minutes after ice-breaking activities. Variations in individual responses indicate the importance of diversifying activity types to accommodate children's diverse characteristics.

Implementation challenges include limited variety of activities, different levels of participation, time constraints and integration with learning themes. To improve effectiveness, it is necessary to develop a bank of classified activities, integration with learning themes, differentiated approaches, involving children in activity design, and utilizing technology in implementation. Consistent implementation of ice-breaking not only impacts short-term learning readiness but also contributes to the establishment of a more positive learning climate overall.

This study recommends that PAUD teachers need to develop a variety of ice-breaking activities that are more inclusive and creative, improve competence in designing activities that are in accordance with children's developmental stages, and integrate them systematically in the daily curriculum.

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