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The Concept of Reggio Emilia Education in Early Childhood Education Learning in the Early 21st Century

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This study aims to analyze the implementation of the Reggio Emilia educational concept in early childhood learning at PAUD Aisyiyah in Bima City within the context of early 21st-century education. The Reggio Emilia approach emphasizes children as active learners who construct knowledge through exploration, collaboration, creativity, and interaction with their environment. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the approach is applied in classroom practices. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and school administrators, and analysis of relevant learning documents and teaching materials. The findings indicate that implementing the Reggio Emilia approach positively influences children's learning experiences and developmental outcomes. Children become more actively involved in learning activities, demonstrate higher curiosity, and participate more collaboratively with peers and teachers. Approximately 75% of the observed children showed improved social interaction and cooperation during group activities, while around 80% displayed greater enthusiasm and interest in participating in learning tasks. In addition, classroom environments designed to support exploration, such as learning centers, visual documentation, and project-based activities, were found to stimulate children's creativity and problem-solving skills. However, several challenges were identified during implementation. These include limited teacher training in the Reggio Emilia philosophy, limited learning resources, and insufficient parental involvement in supporting children's exploratory learning at home.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi konsep pendidikan Reggio Emilia dalam pembelajaran anak usia dini di PAUD Aisyiyah di Kota Bima dalam konteks pendidikan awal abad ke-21. Pendekatan Reggio Emilia

menekankan anak sebagai pembelajar aktif yang membangun pengetahuan melalui eksplorasi, kolaborasi, kreativitas, dan interaksi dengan lingkungannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk memperoleh pemahaman komprehensif tentang bagaimana pendekatan tersebut diterapkan dalam praktik kelas. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi kelas, wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan guru dan administrator sekolah, serta analisis dokumen pembelajaran dan materi pengajaran yang relevan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa implementasi pendekatan Reggio Emilia berpengaruh positif terhadap pengalaman belajar dan hasil perkembangan anak. Anak-anak menjadi lebih aktif terlibat dalam kegiatan belajar, menunjukkan rasa ingin tahu yang lebih tinggi, dan berpartisipasi lebih kolaboratif dengan teman sebaya dan guru. Sekitar 75% anak yang diamati menunjukkan peningkatan interaksi sosial dan kerja sama selama kegiatan kelompok, sementara sekitar 80% menunjukkan antusiasme dan minat yang lebih besar dalam berpartisipasi dalam tugas belajar. Selain itu, lingkungan kelas yang dirancang untuk mendukung eksplorasi, seperti penggunaan pusat pembelajaran, dokumentasi visual, dan kegiatan berbasis proyek, ditemukan dapat merangsang kreativitas dan kemampuan pemecahan masalah anak-anak. Namun, beberapa tantangan diidentifikasi dalam proses implementasi. Tantangan tersebut meliputi pelatihan guru yang terbatas terkait dengan filosofi Reggio Emilia, kendala dalam sumber belajar, dan kurangnya keterlibatan orang tua dalam mendukung pembelajaran eksploratif anak di rumah.

I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (ECE) is an important foundation for a child's development, not only shaping their future academic abilities but also their character and personality (Reski, 2023). This approach not only emphasizes exploration-based learning but also prioritizes creativity and collaboration, which are highly relevant to children's needs in today's world (Morrison et al., 2015).

Reggio Emilia views children as active individuals in the learning process. In this approach, children are given the freedom to explore their environment and express themselves through various media. For example, in early childhood education settings that implement this approach, children can engage in projects they choose themselves, such as creating artwork from recycled materials or conducting simple experiments with water and soil. notes that this approach not only supports cognitive development but also strengthens children's social and

emotional abilities, which are crucial for building healthy interpersonal relationships (Tennyson & Volk, 2015).

However, although the Reggio Emilia concept is beginning to be adopted in some educational institutions in Indonesia, its implementation is not easy. Many challenges are faced, especially regarding educator training and resource limitations. indicates that many educators have not received adequate training on the principles of Reggio Emilia. As a result, they often struggle to apply this approach consistently (Birinci, 2018). This poses a significant challenge because, without a deep understanding, the goals of this approach will not be achieved.

Research shows that many educators have not received adequate training on the principles of Reggio Emilia. As a result, they often struggle to implement the approach consistently (Abramson et al., 1995). This is a big challenge because without a deep understanding, the goals of this approach will not be achieved.

There are also challenges in adapting the existing curriculum to the principles of Reggio Emilia. A more flexible, interest-oriented curriculum often clashes with a rigid, standardized curriculum structure. In the context of PAUD Aisyiyah Bima City, for example, educators need to find ways to integrate Reggio Emilia principles into the existing curriculum. This requires educators to be creative and innovative in creating a learning environment that supports exploration and collaboration (Sholeh, 2021).

Through this case study, a deeper understanding of effective educational practices in early childhood education is expected. Aisyiyah PAUD in Bima City is a concrete example to explore how the Reggio Emilia approach is implemented. This research also aims to identify factors that support and hinder its implementation. By understanding the local context, we can find more appropriate solutions to improve the quality of early childhood education in Indonesia.

A review of the literature shows that many studies have demonstrated the benefits of the Reggio Emilia approach. However, there is a lack of implementation on the ground: while many educators understand the principles of Reggio Emilia, they often struggle to apply them consistently. This suggests that theoretical

understanding alone is not enough; educators also need practical training and ongoing support to effectively implement the approach (Gardner & Jones, 2016).

With this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of the Reggio Emilia education concept in PAUD Aisyiyah Bima City. This research is expected to provide practical recommendations that other educational institutions can adopt. By providing new insights into effective educational practices, this research is expected to enrich the discourse on early childhood education in Indonesia (Hidayati et al., 2022).

One important aspect in implementing the Reggio Emilia approach is parental involvement. Parents play a very important role in supporting children's learning. In the context of Aisyiyah PAUD Bima City, parental involvement can be done through various activities, such as workshops and regular meetings. By involving parents, educational institutions can create synergy between home and school, which is essential to support holistic child development.

It is also important to create a learning environment that supports exploration and collaboration. A richly stimulating environment, both physically and socially, can encourage children to interact and learn from one another. For example, a well-designed classroom, with various corners that allow children to explore, can increase their interest and motivation to learn. This approach aligns with Reggio Emilia principles, which view the environment as a "teacher" that can facilitate the learning process (Erdembekova et al., 2025; Nurjanah & Wahyuseptiana, 2018).

In conclusion, early childhood education is a crucial stage that requires special attention, especially as we face the challenges of the 21st century. The Reggio Emilia approach offers an innovative way to support children's development through exploration, creativity, and collaboration. While there are challenges to its implementation in Indonesia, this research shows that with the right training, parental involvement, and the creation of a supportive learning environment, this approach can be effectively implemented. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of early childhood

education in Indonesia and encourage innovation in learning practices that are more responsive to children's needs and potential.

II. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to explore and analyze the implementation of the Reggio Emilia educational concept in early childhood learning. A qualitative approach was chosen because it enables an in-depth understanding of educational practices, learning interactions, and classroom environments within their natural context (Stanley, 2023). The study focuses on how the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach are applied in daily learning activities and how they influence children's engagement, creativity, and social interaction (Ikhwan, 2021). The research was conducted at PAUD Aisyiyah in Bima City, an early childhood education institution that integrates elements of the Reggio Emilia approach into its learning process. This institution was selected because it actively promotes exploration-based learning, creativity, and collaborative activities among children.

The participants in this study included teachers, the school principal, and several parents who supported children's learning activities. Teachers were selected because they play a central role in designing and implementing learning strategies based on the Reggio Emilia philosophy. The school principal provided information on institutional policies and curriculum implementation, while parents shared perspectives on children's learning experiences and parental involvement.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Observation, Classroom observations were conducted to examine the learning environment, children's activities, teacher–student interactions, and the use of learning materials that support exploration and creativity. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers, the school principal, and several parents to obtain deeper insights into the implementation of the Reggio Emilia approach, its benefits for children's development, and the challenges encountered during the learning process. Document Analysis: Documents were reviewed to assess relevant institutional documents, including

curriculum guidelines, lesson plans, learning documentation, and other educational records related to the application of the Reggio Emilia approach.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques. The analysis process involved several stages, including data organization, coding, categorization, and identification of emerging themes. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis were analyzed simultaneously to develop a comprehensive understanding of how the Reggio Emilia approach is implemented in practice. The analysis also considered the local cultural and educational context that may influence the adaptation of the approach in PAUD Aisyiyah (Creswell, 2019).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, several strategies were employed. Triangulation of data sources and methods was conducted by comparing information obtained from observations, interviews, and document analysis. Member checking was also applied by confirming the accuracy of interpretations with key participants. In addition, the researcher maintained detailed documentation of the research process to enhance the study's credibility and transparency (Sugiyono, 2019).

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

The findings of this study reveal that implementing the Reggio Emilia educational concept at PAUD Aisyiyah Bima City positively affects several aspects of children's development, particularly creativity, social interaction, and learning motivation. These findings were obtained through classroom observations, interviews with teachers and parents, and analysis of institutional documents such as lesson plans and project documentation.

Development of Children's Creativity through Exploration-Based Learning

Classroom observations indicate that learning activities at PAUD Aisyiyah emphasize exploration and project-based learning. Teachers provide a variety of materials, such as recycled objects, natural materials, drawing tools, and building

blocks, that allow children to express their ideas freely. During an observed learning session, children participated in a collaborative project to create simple cardboard models of houses using colored paper. In this activity, children were encouraged to design their own models and discuss their ideas with peers.

Teachers explained during interviews that such activities are intentionally designed to stimulate children's creativity and imagination. One teacher stated that children often propose their own ideas during project activities, which are then developed collaboratively with their classmates. This learning environment encourages children to experiment, ask questions, and solve problems creatively.

Field observations also show that children are increasingly confident in expressing their ideas during classroom discussions. Teachers reported that children who initially tended to remain passive gradually became more active in sharing opinions and participating in creative activities. This finding suggests that the Reggio Emilia approach can effectively stimulate children's creative thinking and expression.

Improvement of Children's Social Interaction and Collaboration

Another important finding relates to the development of children's social skills. Observations show that most classroom activities are conducted in small groups, enabling children to interact, cooperate, and negotiate with their peers. For example, during project-based learning sessions, children work together to complete tasks such as building models, drawing group murals, or arranging storytelling performances.

Teachers noted that group-based activities help children learn how to communicate their ideas and listen to others. Several teachers explained that collaborative activities also help children develop empathy and respect for different perspectives. This is particularly visible during project discussions where children take turns explaining their ideas and making joint decisions.

Interviews with parents further support this finding. Many parents reported noticeable changes in their children's behavior at home, particularly in their ability to communicate and cooperate with others. Parents explained that their children

often talk about classroom projects and demonstrate greater willingness to share and collaborate with siblings or friends.

Increased Learning Motivation and Engagement

The findings also indicate that the Reggio Emilia approach enhances children's motivation to participate in learning activities. Observations reveal that children show high enthusiasm during classroom activities, especially when they are allowed to choose materials and explore topics that interest them.

Teachers stated that when children are allowed to explore their interests, they become more engaged and actively participate in learning. Learning documentation collected by the school, including photos of project activities and children's work displays, also demonstrates the high level of children's involvement in classroom projects.

Parents interviewed in this study also confirmed that their children often express excitement about school activities. Some parents mentioned that their children frequently recount the projects they completed at school and attempt to recreate similar activities at home.

Challenges in Implementing the Reggio Emilia Approach

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified in implementing the Reggio Emilia approach at PAUD Aisyiyah. One of the main challenges is the limited professional training for teachers in the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Some teachers acknowledged that they were still learning to fully integrate the approach into daily learning practices.

Another challenge concerns the availability of learning resources and facilities. Although the school aims to foster an environment that supports exploration, some teachers noted that additional learning materials and documentation tools would further enhance the learning experience.

Furthermore, teachers emphasized the importance of parental involvement in supporting children's exploratory learning outside the classroom. While many parents actively support school programs, some parents still need further guidance in understanding the principles of the Reggio Emilia approach.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that implementing the Reggio Emilia approach at PAUD Aisyiyah Bima City contributes to the development of children's creativity, social skills, and learning motivation. These findings are consistent with the fundamental principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, which view children as active learners who construct knowledge through exploration and interaction with their environment.

First, the development of children's creativity observed in this study supports the idea proposed by Loris Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, that children possess what he called the "hundred languages of children." This concept emphasizes that children express their thoughts and ideas through various forms of representation, such as drawing, constructing, storytelling, and role-playing. The exploratory activities and project-based learning observed in PAUD Aisyiyah reflect this principle, allowing children to communicate ideas creatively through multiple media.

Second, the improvement in children's social interaction and collaborative skills aligns with the constructivist learning theory proposed by von Glasersfeld (1982), which holds that knowledge is actively constructed through social interaction and individual experience. The collaborative projects implemented at PAUD Aisyiyah provide opportunities for children to negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and develop social understanding. These findings also correspond with previous research indicating that the Reggio Emilia approach promotes cooperative learning and strengthens children's communication skills.

Third, the increased learning motivation observed among children supports the concept of the learning environment as the "third teacher." In the Reggio Emilia philosophy, the classroom environment plays a crucial role in stimulating curiosity and encouraging exploration. The use of flexible learning spaces, open-ended materials, and visual documentation at PAUD Aisyiyah demonstrates how the environment can function as an active component of the learning process. Previous studies have similarly highlighted the importance of designing learning

environments that promote creativity and independent exploration (Jermstad, 2025).

However, the study also identifies several challenges in implementing the Reggio Emilia approach. Limited teacher training remains a significant barrier to fully implementing the philosophy. According to Vecchi (2010), educators play a central role in facilitating children's learning within the Reggio Emilia framework; therefore, continuous professional development is essential to ensure that teachers understand the pedagogical principles of the approach.

Another challenge relates to resource availability and parental involvement. Research by Saracho (2012) emphasizes that parental participation significantly contributes to children's educational outcomes. The involvement of parents in discussing children's projects and supporting learning activities at home can strengthen the continuity between school and home learning environments.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of adapting the Reggio Emilia approach to local cultural contexts. Although the approach originated in Italy, its principles can be applied in different educational settings as long as they are adapted to local values and community needs. Integrating local cultural elements into learning activities may enrich children's learning experiences while maintaining the core principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy (Hsiao & Su, 2021; Khusnaini & Wulandari, 2025).

Overall, this study's results indicate that the Reggio Emilia approach has strong potential to enhance early childhood education in Indonesia. By promoting creativity, collaboration, and active learning, this approach can foster the development of children's cognitive, social, and emotional competencies, which are essential for navigating the challenges of the 21st century.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that implementing the Reggio Emilia educational approach in PAUD Aisyiyah Bima City positively contributes to early childhood learning by promoting exploration, creativity, and collaborative interaction among children. The findings indicate that a learning environment designed to support

exploration, combined with project-based activities and teacher facilitation, can enhance children's engagement, social communication, and motivation in the learning process. The study also highlights the important role of teachers as facilitators who guide children's exploration and support their learning experiences. In addition, the organization of learning spaces and the availability of various exploration materials are essential components of the learning process, reinforcing the Reggio Emilia principle that the environment acts as the "third teacher." However, challenges related to teacher training, learning resources, and parental involvement remain important factors influencing the implementation's effectiveness. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing discussion on the contextual adaptation of the Reggio Emilia approach within early childhood education in Indonesia. In practice, the findings provide educators and educational institutions with insights to develop more creative, child-centered learning environments. Future research is recommended to examine the long-term effects of this approach on children's cognitive, social, and emotional development, as well as strategies to strengthen teacher capacity and parental engagement in early childhood education practices.

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