Didaktika: Jurnal Kependidikan
P-issn 1978-0214; E-ISSN 2657-196X

Teachers' Understanding Of Block Play Activities For Early Childhood At TK Alam Yaa Bunayya

Nurul Firdausi[1], Ayunda Sayyidatul Ifadah[2] Rr. Agustien Lilawati[3]

[1] Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia; nurulfirdausi88@gmail.com
[2] Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia; ayundasi@umg.ac.id
[3] Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia; agustin@umg.ac.id

Keywords:
block play, early childhood teachers, child development, constructive learning, TK Alam Yaa Bunayya.

Abstract

This study aims to describe teachers' understanding of block play activities for early childhood at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya. Block play is a learning medium that develops children's cognitive, motor, socio-emotional, and creative abilities. Its implementation, however, is highly influenced by teachers' knowledge in designing, guiding, and evaluating play experiences. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach through observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that teachers demonstrate a good level of understanding, shown by their ability to apply principles of constructive play, provide appropriate scaffolding, and create safe yet challenging play environments. The study concludes that improving teacher competency is essential to optimize block play as a medium for stimulating children's holistic development.

Kata kunci:
bermain balok, pendidik PAUD, perkembangan anak, pembelajaran konstruktivistik, TK Alam Yaa Bunayya.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan pemahaman pendidik terhadap kegiatan bermain balok untuk anak usia dini di TK Alam Yaa Bunayya. Bermain balok merupakan media yang dapat mengembangkan aspek kognitif, motorik, sosial emosional, serta kreativitas anak. Namun, implementasinya sangat dipengaruhi oleh tingkat pemahaman pendidik dalam merancang, mendampingi, dan mengevaluasi kegiatan. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman pendidik berada pada kategori baik, ditandai dengan kemampuan menerapkan prinsip bermain konstruktif, memberi scaffolding sesuai kebutuhan, serta menciptakan lingkungan bermain yang aman dan menantang. Kesimpulan penelitian menegaskan pentingnya peningkatan kompetensi pendidik untuk mengoptimalkan pemanfaatan balok sebagai media stimulasi perkembangan anak.

Article history:
Received: 17-12-2025
Revised : 25-12-2025
Accepted : 29-12-2025

Corresponding Author:
Ayunda Sayyidatul Ifadah
Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia; ayundasi@umg.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Block play activities constitute an essential component in early childhood development. Through block play, children are able to explore their environment, solve problems, express imagination, and develop both motor and social skills. Numerous previous studies have demonstrated that block play effectively stimulates logical thinking, spatial abilities, and collaborative skills in young children. However, the effectiveness of block play activities is strongly influenced by teachers' understanding in designing meaningful activities that are developmentally oriented. According to Jean Piaget, play is a form of activity that supports children's motor and cognitive development through the processes of assimilation and accommodation (et al., 2021). Block play provides children with opportunities to experiment, explore various possibilities, and discover solutions to problems they encounter during play.

The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes that children are able to achieve higher levels of competence when they receive appropriate support from teachers or peers (Suryana, 2022). In block center activities, teachers act as facilitators who provide guidance, prompting questions, and support without excessive intervention. Teachers are responsible for creating a safe, adequate, and challenging play environment. However, in many early childhood education institutions, teachers still experience limitations in understanding optimal block play facilitation techniques, such as posing stimulating questions, guiding without dominating, and documenting children's development through authentic observation. Therefore, studies examining teachers' understanding of block play activities are highly necessary, particularly at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya, which consistently implements nature-based learning and free play approaches.

Block play is a form of constructive play that plays a crucial role in early childhood development. Through activities such as stacking, dismantling, classifying, and constructing structures using blocks, children gain essential learning experiences. Cognitive development is stimulated through exploratory interactions with concrete objects, enabling children to understand geometric concepts, balance, patterns, size, and cause-and-effect relationships. According to Maria Montessori, learning is most effective when children are given freedom to explore using concrete materials. As an educational play tool, blocks allow children to freely express ideas, imagination, and creativity by constructing various structures based on their experiences. In addition, both fine and gross motor skills develop significantly through the manipulation of blocks of different sizes (Mujiati, 2019).

From a social-emotional perspective, block play provides opportunities for children to collaborate, communicate, negotiate, and resolve conflicts with peers. This aligns with Vygotsky's theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in the learning process. Teachers play a central role in optimizing this process through appropriate facilitation, scaffolding, and the creation of a play environment rich in stimulation (Fitriani & Rohita, 2019). Nevertheless, the successful implementation of block play activities depends heavily on teachers' understanding of the function of blocks and early childhood learning principles.

In the context of this study, it was found that two out of four teachers at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya still possessed limited understanding of the function of the block center. Some teachers perceived blocks merely as ordinary play tools that did not require specific planning. In fact,

block play is an activity that integratively supports multiple aspects of child development. This limited understanding affects the quality of implementation, including insufficient meaningful facilitation, unclear formulation of learning objectives, and inadequate evaluation of children's development. During lesson planning, teachers tended to prioritize activities that had not yet been implemented rather than focusing on how children's developmental needs could be addressed through block play. Furthermore, during block center activities, teacher facilitation was often not optimal or comprehensive, as teachers were more focused on documentation and tended to neglect interaction with children.

This study conducted at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya shares fundamental similarities with three previous studies entitled "*The Role of Teachers in Block Play Activities at Early Childhood Block Centers,*" "*The Utilization of Block Media in Developing Early Childhood Developmental Aspects,*" and "*Teachers' Understanding of Block Play Activities in Developing Early Childhood Cognitive Skills.*" All of these studies examine teachers' understanding of block play activities in early childhood education. The primary similarity lies in the focus on teachers' understanding of the function, objectives, and benefits of block play in supporting early childhood development. Moreover, both this study and the previous research view block play as a strategic learning activity rather than merely free play. All studies agree that block play contributes to cognitive, motor, social, and creative development and requires teacher involvement in planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Despite these similarities, this study also reveals several important differences. The first difference lies in the research context and setting. This study was conducted specifically at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya, a nature-based school, whereas previous studies were generally conducted in conventional kindergartens or formal early childhood education institutions with classical learning systems. The second difference concerns the main findings. This study identified that two out of four teachers had not yet optimally understood the function of the block center, particularly in learning planning, facilitation during play, and developmental evaluation. In contrast, previous studies generally reported that teachers had sufficient understanding, although some limitations remained in certain aspects such as media variation or facilitation strategies. Additionally, this study places greater emphasis on a detailed analysis of each stage of block play activities, including planning, implementation, and developmental evaluation. Unlike other studies that tend to focus on only one aspect, such as the teacher's role or the general benefits of block play, this research provides a more comprehensive portrayal of block center practices in the field.

Furthermore, this study highlights important practical implications. It not only describes teachers' levels of understanding but also emphasizes the need for improving teacher competence through training, mentoring, and continuous supervision, particularly in managing block centers to ensure that learning becomes more meaningful for children. Therefore, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of teachers' levels of understanding regarding block play activities, the challenges faced by teachers, and how such understanding influences the learning process within the block center.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions through narrative data. This approach was selected because it is appropriate for exploring teachers' perceptions, experiences, and daily practices related to block play activities. According to Lexy J. Moleong, qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words derived from observed individuals and behaviors. This approach emphasizes understanding meaning, context, and processes that occur naturally in the field.

In the context of early childhood education research, a qualitative descriptive approach is highly relevant because it allows researchers to explore teachers' understanding through narratives of experience, viewpoints, and instructional practices implemented in everyday learning activities. Thus, this approach is suitable for describing in detail the level of teachers' understanding of block play activities as they occur naturally, without manipulating or altering the learning environment.

The research subjects consisted of four teachers at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya. Two teachers demonstrated a relatively good understanding of block play activities, while the other two experienced difficulties in understanding the function of the block center. The object of this study was teachers' understanding of block play activities, which included:

a. Planning block play activities
b. Facilitating children during block play
c. Evaluating children's developmental progress

Data Collection Techniques:

1. Observation was conducted to directly observe the block play process, teacher–child interactions, how teachers provided scaffolding, and the quality of the play environment. Observation allowed researchers to obtain factual data regarding behaviors, interactions, and learning processes occurring in the classroom. In early childhood education research, observation is essential because children and teachers often express understanding and practice through concrete actions rather than verbal statements alone (Narsi et al., 2015).
2. In-depth interviews were conducted with all teachers to explore challenges faced in implementing block play activities. These challenges included limited conceptual understanding of block centers, lack of training, limited learning media, and classroom management difficulties. Interviews enabled teachers to freely express their perceptions regarding the goals, benefits, and roles of teachers in block play activities.
3. Documentation included photographs of activities, observation notes, and lesson plans prepared by teachers. Documentation served as physical evidence to support data obtained through observation and interviews and helped provide a more concrete and accurate description of learning processes.

Data analysis in this study followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which comprises three interrelated stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Rohma & Hikmah, 2023). During the data reduction stage, the researcher systematically selected, focused, and organized field data by filtering interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation that were relevant to teachers' understanding of block play activities. The reduced data were then categorized into thematic areas, including the

planning of block play activities, teacher facilitation during children's play, and the evaluation of children's developmental outcomes.

In the data display stage, the analyzed data were presented in the form of thematic descriptive narratives. These narratives illustrated how teachers planned, implemented, and evaluated block play activities in classroom practice. Presenting the data in this manner enabled the researcher to identify patterns, tendencies, similarities, and differences in teachers' levels of understanding across participants.

The final stage of analysis involved conclusion drawing and verification. At this stage, the researcher interpreted the meaning of the displayed data and formulated the research findings to obtain a comprehensive understanding of teachers' levels of understanding of block play activities. This process also included identifying supporting factors and challenges encountered by teachers in implementing block play in real classroom settings. Through iterative interpretation and verification, the conclusions were grounded in the empirical data and reflected the actual conditions observed in the field.

RESULT OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Result

The research findings indicate that teachers' understanding of planning block play activities varies considerably. Some teachers have been able to design block play plans that align with early childhood development principles, such as adjusting activities to children's age, abilities, and interests. Teachers who understand the importance of planning typically include learning objectives, materials and tools, and descriptions of block play activities in their daily lesson plans. However, two teachers still demonstrate limitations in systematically designing block play activities. The difficulties experienced include defining clear learning objectives, structuring play activity steps, and planning evaluations of children's play outcomes. These teachers perceive block play as a free activity that does not require specific planning, resulting in spontaneous implementation without structured learning direction.

This perception leads to block play activities being underutilized as meaningful learning experiences. Without clear planning, teachers tend to merely provide blocks and allow children to play freely without directed facilitation. Consequently, the potential of block play to develop children's cognitive, social, language, and motor skills has not been optimally maximized. In addition, limited understanding of the importance of structured planning prevents teachers from linking block play activities to developmental achievement indicators. Planning, which should serve as a guideline for implementation and evaluation, has not been fully utilized. This condition indicates that teachers still require guidance and reinforcement of their understanding of block play planning so that activities can be implemented in a purposeful, meaningful manner and aligned with early childhood learning objectives.

In the preparation of daily lesson plans (RPPH) over a one-month period, no significant technical difficulties were identified; however, the objectives and direction of block play lesson planning were not fully understood. Based on observations and interview results with one teacher (N) regarding the purpose of geometric shape classification activities, the teacher stated that the objective was for children to be able to group geometric shapes. When asked whether the activity was related to children's motor or cognitive development, the teacher responded

that it was related to both. However, no further in-depth explanation was provided regarding the developmental purpose of the geometric shape classification activity.

Teachers who understand the function of blocks are able to provide scaffolding in the form of probing questions, opportunities for exploration, and encouragement when children encounter difficulties. In contrast, the other two teachers tend to supervise from a distance without actively engaging in learning support. As a result, children do not receive optimal stimulation from the activity. These teachers merely observe without providing language or cognitive guidance, which limits children's opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

The findings reveal clear differences in how teachers facilitate children during block play. Teachers with a strong understanding of the purpose and function of block play tend to be actively involved in children's play processes. Forms of facilitation include posing stimulating questions that encourage children to think, such as asking about the structure being built, the reasons for choosing a particular arrangement, or possible solutions when a structure becomes unstable. Teachers also provide opportunities for children to explore independently with minimal intervention, while remaining available to offer support when difficulties arise.

Appropriate facilitation supports the development of children's critical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and language skills through interactions that occur during play. Teachers also play a role in helping children collaborate with peers, guiding positive communication, and fostering children's confidence in expressing ideas. With appropriate scaffolding, block play becomes not merely a play activity but a meaningful learning process. Nevertheless, two teachers have not yet implemented facilitation optimally. These teachers tend to supervise block play activities from a distance without providing educational guidance. In practice, they focus primarily on ensuring children's safety without offering stimulation through questions, direction, or cognitive and language support. As a result, learning interactions that should emerge during block play are very limited.

During block center activities involving the construction of buildings using blocks, some teachers did not interact with children at all. Teachers allowed children to play freely while focusing on documentation activities. The lack of active facilitation resulted in low levels of stimulation for children, particularly in developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Children who experienced difficulties in constructing block structures were often left to find solutions independently without supportive guidance, causing some children to quickly give up or lose interest. This finding indicates that teachers' understanding of the importance of facilitation in block play still needs to be improved so that play activities can genuinely support children's development optimally.

Evaluation of children's development was conducted through direct observation; however, only half of the teachers were able to perform authentic documentation. Teachers with limited understanding of the function of block play tended to provide general assessments without linking observations to developmental aspects such as spatial ability, fine motor skills, or problem-solving ability. These teachers recorded general notes without connecting them to motor, social, or cognitive development. This condition highlights the need to improve teachers' competence in using developmental assessment instruments.

The findings indicate that the evaluation of children's development through block play activities has not been optimally implemented by all teachers. Evaluation was generally conducted through direct observation during play, but only some teachers were able to record observations systematically and authentically (Dwi et al., 2025). Teachers who understood the function and purpose of block play typically observed children's behavior and documented their observations in the form of anecdotal records or simple assessment sheets that linked play activities to developmental aspects.

Conversely, teachers with limited understanding of the function of block play tended to provide general and descriptive assessments without clear developmental indicators. Evaluation notes often consisted of brief statements such as "the child played well" or "the child appeared happy," without linking these observations to the development of fine motor skills, spatial thinking, social skills, or problem-solving abilities. As a result, evaluation outcomes could not be maximally utilized to comprehensively understand children's development.

Limited understanding of evaluation practices also affected the effectiveness of instructional follow-up. Without targeted documentation, teachers experienced difficulties in planning subsequent activities that aligned with children's needs and abilities. Evaluation, which should serve as the basis for instructional decision-making, was not optimally utilized as a tool for reflection and improvement of block play activities. These findings indicate the need to enhance teachers' competence in using early childhood developmental assessment instruments. Teachers need to be equipped with an understanding of how to formulate assessment indicators, conduct authentic documentation, and link evaluation results to developmental domains. With well-planned and systematic evaluation, block play activities can become an effective means of monitoring and supporting children's development on an ongoing basis.

Discussion

These findings are consistent with the constructivist theories proposed by Piaget and Vygotsky, which emphasize the importance of interaction and facilitation in the process of play (Suryana, 2022). Children learn through direct experiences and through support provided by adults. When teachers lack an adequate understanding of the function of blocks, developmental stimulation becomes suboptimal. Conversely, strong understanding enables teachers to design challenging activities, facilitate social interaction, and promote children's cognitive development through free exploration. The results of this study also indicate that teachers' understanding has a direct influence on the quality of block play activities. Teachers who understand constructivist learning theory are able to create rich and meaningful play experiences, whereas those who lack understanding of the function of blocks tend to overlook the learning potential that children can gain from block play. This finding aligns with Piaget's view, which emphasizes the importance of direct experience in building cognitive structures, as well as with Vygotsky's theory, which underscores the role of teachers as guides within children's zones of proximal development (Ramdana, 2025).

Limited teacher understanding of the function of block play needs to be addressed through continuous professional development, academic supervision, and collaboration among educators so that play activities can provide optimal benefits across all domains of children's

development. This discussion further reinforces that teachers' understanding plays a key role in determining the quality of block play activities in early childhood education settings. Based on field findings, teachers who possess a strong understanding of constructivist theory as articulated by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky tend to position block play as a meaningful learning activity rather than merely a form of play (Muhammad Yeyen Hendrianto, 2024). These teachers not only provide play materials but also design challenging play situations, stimulate children's thinking through guiding questions, and encourage children to interact with their surrounding environment.

In practice, teachers who understand the function of block play are able to link play activities to children's developmental goals. For example, when children build towers or other structures, teachers guide them to pay attention to balance, shape, and size, thereby fostering the development of logical and spatial thinking skills. In addition, teachers facilitate social interactions among children, such as cooperating, taking turns in using blocks, and discussing construction outcomes, which indirectly supports the development of children's social and language abilities.

In contrast, teachers who do not yet understand the function and objectives of block play tend to view such activities merely as time-filling tasks. Play activities are conducted without clear planning, minimal facilitation, and without targeted developmental evaluation. As a result, children receive insufficient stimulation, and the potential of block play as an instructional medium is not maximally utilized. This condition demonstrates that limited teacher understanding can hinder the achievement of early childhood learning objectives. The findings of this study also reinforce Vygotsky's perspective on the importance of adult involvement within children's zones of proximal development (Septianingtiyas & Khasanah, 2023) . Without appropriate facilitation and scaffolding from teachers, children may struggle to optimally develop new skills. Therefore, teachers must possess adequate understanding to provide support that is aligned with children's developmental needs and stages.

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that improving teachers' understanding of block play activities is an urgent necessity. Efforts to enhance teacher competence can be carried out through continuous professional development, targeted academic supervision, and collaboration among educators in planning and evaluating play activities. Consequently, block play activities can function not merely as play but as a meaningful learning medium that effectively supports children's cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers at TK Alam Yaa Bunayya generally demonstrate an adequate level of understanding of block play activities as a medium for stimulating early childhood development. Teachers who possess a solid understanding are able to design block play activities that are developmentally appropriate, provide effective scaffolding during play, and utilize block play as a meaningful learning process that supports children's cognitive, motor, social-emotional, creative, and problem-solving abilities. However, the study also reveals that some teachers continue to face limitations in systematically planning block play activities, delivering consistent and purposeful

facilitation, and conducting comprehensive and authentic assessments of children's developmental progress.

The findings affirm that block play is not merely a recreational activity but a powerful instructional medium when implemented within a constructivist learning framework. Teachers' levels of understanding directly influence the quality of block play implementation and, consequently, the extent to which children benefit from these activities. Without adequate planning, facilitation, and evaluation, the potential of block play to support holistic child development cannot be fully realized.

From a practical perspective, this study highlights the urgent need for continuous professional development for early childhood educators, particularly in the areas of block play pedagogy, scaffolding strategies, and authentic assessment practices. Teachers should be provided with structured training and workshops that focus on designing developmentally appropriate block play activities, formulating clear learning objectives, and integrating play-based assessment into daily practice. In addition, collaborative planning and reflective discussions among teachers can strengthen shared understanding and improve the consistency of block play implementation across classrooms.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Aziz, M. B., & Amir, A. N. (2025). Evaluating Value-Based Vocational Education Using Logic Model: A Qualitative Inquiry in Islamic Higher Education. *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education*, *6*(3), 700–715.

Dwi, R., Salim, S., Hidayat, D., & Santika, T. (2025). Implementasi Model Pembelajaran Sentra Balok Dalam Melatih Stimulasi Motorik Halus Anak Usia Dini Di PAUD Plamboyan 3 Kabupaten Karawang. *INNOVATIVE: Journal Of Social Science Research Volume 5 Nomor 4 Tahun 2025 Page 7785-7794*, *5*, 7785–7794.

Fitriani, R., & Rohita, R. (2019). Penanaman Kemandirian Anak Melalui Pembelajaran Di Sentra Balok. *JURNAL Al-AZHAR INDONESIA SERI HUMANIORA*, *5*(1), 1. https://doi.org/10.36722/sh.v5i1.324

Muhammad Yeyen Hendrianto, A. A. (2024). Analisis Berpikir Konstruktif Ditinjau dari Penerapan Sentra Balok Anak Usia 4-5 Tahun di KB Cendekia Bapangan. *Ceria: Jurnal Program Studi Pendidikan Anak USia Dini*, *13*(3), 281–299.

Mujiati, S. (2019). Implementasi Efikasi Diri Melalui Pijakan Guru Pada Sentra Balok Untuk Anak Usia 56 Tahun di TKIT Zaid Bin Tsabit Magelang. *PAUDIA : Jurnal Penelitian Dalam Bidang Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini*, *8*(2), 57–64. https://doi.org/10.26877/paudia.v8i2.4725

Narsi, Syukri, M., & Ali, M. (2015). Penerapan Pembelajaran Model Sentra Balok Pada Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun Di Tk Mujahidin 1. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran Khatulistiwa (JPPK)*, *3*(9), 1–13. https://jurnal.untan.ac.id/index.php/jpdpb/article/view/6477

Ode-alumu, S., Samad, F., & Samad, R. (2021). Analisis Pel Aksanaan Pembelajaran Sentra Balok Pada Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun. *Jurnal Ilmiah Cahaya Paud*, *3*(1), 36–47.

https://doi.org/10.33387/cp.v3i1.2131

Ramdana. (2025). Penerapan Model Sentra Balok untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Kognitif Anak dalam Mengenal Bentuk dan Ukuran di RA Al-Ikhlas. *Jurnal Studi Tindakan Edukatif*, *1*(1), 11.

Rohma, M., & Hikmah, F. (2023). Peran Guru Dalam Menumbuhkan Kemampuan Kognitif Melalui Model Pembelajaran Beyond Center and Circle Time (Bcct) Pada Sentra Balok Di Ra Raudlatul Ulum Ganjaran-Malang. *JURALIANSI: Jurnal Lingkup Anak Usia Dini*, *4*(2), 27–36. https://doi.org/10.35897/juraliansipiaud.v4i2.1101

Septianingtiyas, D., & Khasanah, I. (2023). Penerapan Penggunaan Media Permainan Balok Untuk Meningkatkan Kreativitas Anak Usia Dini. *Prosiding Seminar Nasioanl Program Studi Pendidikan Guru Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini "Transisi PAUD Ke SD Yang Menyenangkan."*

Suryana, D. (2022). Implementasi Pembelajaran Sentra Balok Sebagai Stimulasi Kemampuan Berbahasa Anak di Taman Kanak-Kanak Pembina Kandis. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, *6*, 10922–10928.