

## **STIMULATING CHILDREN'S INDEPENDENCE FROM AN EARLY AGE THROUGH SEMADA ACTIVITIES**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines the effectiveness of the SEMADA (One Day Night at RA Asy-Syuhada' program in stimulating early childhood independence. The type of research uses a classroom action research method, data were collected through systematic observation, structured interviews and comprehensive documentation of 72 students divided into four groups. The SEMADA program is a overnight activity at school with teacher assistance without the presence of parents which is carried out in a structured manner with a series of activities that have been designed. The implementation of the program includes the preparation, implementation, and evaluation phases with a focus on developing aspects of independence in daily activities. The results of the study showed a significant increase in indicators of child independence, including the ability to carry out personal activities, simple decision making, and emotional management. These findings indicate that the SEMADA program is effective as a strategy for stimulating early childhood independence in the context of formal education, especially in early childhood education.

Keywords: Independence, SEMADA.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood is a stage where individuals exhibit unique characteristics in terms of personality and a tendency to engage in activities through play. This period is optimal for fostering creativity through various activities appropriate to their capabilities and developmental stage (Anwar & Azizah, 2020). During the age range of 0-6 years, known as the golden age, children can absorb and store information in their memory and experience high stimulation levels across all aspects of development (Yusuf et al., 2023). This golden period is irreversible; therefore, holistic development encompassing health, education, and protection aspects needs to be implemented from an early age (Nurlaila et al., 2022).

At this stage, children also begin to develop positive social skills, including interacting with classmates and understanding the basics of teamwork.

The ability to make simple decisions, such as choosing clothing or suggesting recreational activities, also begins to emerge, indicating that they are not only capable of completing tasks independently but can also analyze and express opinions critically (Mthethwa, 2024; Wellsch, 2024). Each child has a unique path of developing independence, depending on various factors such as their social environment, physical condition, and the guidance and experiences they encounter. Some children may be more capable of performing tasks independently, such as managing personal needs or completing assignments without assistance, while others may require more time and support to achieve similar goals. This phenomenon is broad and does not necessarily reflect a child's strengths or weaknesses. Society must understand that each child develops uniquely and provide an environment that meets each child's needs while encouraging them to explore new things and develop according to their potential (Huang, 2024; Liu, 2024).

The ability of a child's independence refers to performing various daily activities on their own with little or no assistance from others, particularly parents. This definition is still adjusted according to the child's developmental stage and capabilities (Nurfitriani et al., 2023). Every child must have confidence in their abilities and potential and be brave in making mature decisions. Therefore, children must learn independence from an early age, and parents, teachers, and the surrounding environment must be committed to instilling the value of independence (Wulandari et al., 2022). Independence is an essential form of education that must be taught to young children. Indonesian Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2017 establishes strengthening early childhood character education as part of the national mental revolution movement. Article 1 of the regulation states that educational institutions are responsible for enhancing students' character through the harmonization of the heart, feelings, mind, and body, involving cooperation between educational institutions, families, and the community (Imani et al., 2023).

The role of parents is crucial during a child's growth and development stages (Qiu, 2024; Richmond, 2024). Children will feel more confident and

capable when given opportunities to try new things, praised for their efforts, and provided guidance when necessary. The independence they gain at this age will shape their self-confidence and personal development in the future (Gandini, 2024; Masduki, 2024). Meanwhile, the role of teachers is that of trainers, responsible for equipping students with basic skills suited to their potential. Teachers are also responsible for providing skills that will be useful for students' future lives. Based on the above, it is clear that teachers play a vital role in assisting children, especially those aged five to six years, in becoming more independent. At this age, children need to be fully independent to prepare themselves for continuing their education. The development of a child's independence will be greatly influenced by the optimal role of teachers, engaging learning activities that capture the child's interest, and the way teachers deliver lessons (Usia and Tahun, 2024).

In learning activities, teachers play a crucial role as they are individuals who shape children's character and guide them in acquiring knowledge to help them become intelligent (Lase, 2022). In addition, teachers must facilitate the formation of children's character and provide motivation and support for practicing religious routines, such as completing tasks and engaging in daily activities (Sarina, 2022). The habits instilled by teachers will produce children who are creative and able to think positively about what they have done (Melinda & Suwardi, 2021).

Independence can be stimulated through Montessori education, which allows children to develop and mature according to their abilities by giving them the freedom to choose what they want to play. Montessori education emphasizes freedom, such as the freedom to choose the games they want to play. Practical Life Exercises, also known as Practical Life Activities, are one of the programs in Montessori education. Practical skills refer to daily activities that children can perform to enhance various aspects of their development, such as fine motor skills, discipline, self-control, and independence. The connection between the Montessori approach and child development, when applied, will help individuals become more independent (Damayanti, 2020). One characteristic of independence

in early childhood is their ability to do things on their own, even though they are still supervised by adults; they can socialize with others without needing their parents to accompany them; They can make decisions and choices based on their views of the behavior or actions of those around them; they can control their emotions and even show empathy toward others (Hayati & Fitriani, 2021).

Based on previous research, it has been shown that a child's independence begins at home with the parents. Once children start school, the teacher's role as an educator is to further enhance their independence. The results of data processing using SPSS and the Paired Simple T-Test show a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore,  $H_A$  is accepted, and  $H_0$  is rejected. This means there is a significant difference in the use of the token economy to improve independence in children aged 5 to 6 years in the experimental classes (TK DW Karang Sono 1, TK DW Karang Sono 2, and TK DW Karang Sono 3) compared to the control classes (TK Dharma Wanita Mojomanis, TK Dharma Wanita Banget, and TK Dharma Wanita Budug). This situation indicates that children who received assistance through the token economy became more independent (Anista, Anwar, and Afifah, 2023). About the previously explained research, the similarity with the study to be conducted is that both discuss training children's independence. The difference between this research and previous studies lies in the research variable, which is to improve children's independence through SEMADA, with a different location and target, namely in Pamekasan city with two locations. This is significantly different from previous studies that tended to focus on just one research location. Therefore, to improve the independence of school children, it is necessary to implement regulations. Because independence is not merely children's play, as Montessori said. An important part of a child's character development, including their social skills, is building independence. Independent children will have authority over their own lives. As a result, they are less vulnerable to external threats (Irawati et al., 2023). Furthermore, other previous research results also state that the method of habituation, Drama activities, or completing tasks can enhance children's independence (Ilvina, 2021).

The efforts undertaken involve two cycles: the first cycle occurs before the SEMADA activity, while the second cycle takes place during and after the SEMADA activity. The term SEMADA stands for *Sehari seMAlam di asy-syuhada* (A Day and Night at Asy-Syuhada). SEMADA is an activity designed to train children's independence by having them stay overnight at school for a day and night. This activity is carried out with Group B students at RA Asy-Syuhada'. The importance of developing children's independence from an early age is to achieve early childhood education goals as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 (Ambarwati, 2024). The SEMADA activity aims to train children's independence and help them discover their identity so they can live independently and become accustomed to managing life without parental assistance. The concept of self-identity can be introduced early through various activities, one of which is scouting activities. The first step that must be taken is to build a strong foundation for character development and scouting values. The scouting movement officially recognizes the *prasiaga* level, which is implemented for children aged 4-6 years. This activity is one of the initial steps in forming that foundation.

The implementation of *prasiaga* scouting activities in the Pamekasan area, especially in kindergarten-level institutions or equivalent, has not yet been carried out comprehensively or evenly. It is still considered suboptimal. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to provide good practices and broader insights to the general public regarding *prasiaga* activities and children's self-identity.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study uses Classroom Action Research (CAR) to improve the independence of Class B students at RA Asy-Syuhada' through SEMADA activities. The author acts as the action implementer, Meanwhile, 72 students served as the action recipients. This study uses the Kemmis & McTaggart method, which consists of three stages in each cycle: planning, action combined with observation, and reflection. In the planning stage, the steps are carried out simultaneously with the actions. Afterward, data is collected and analyzed to conduct the reflection stage. The results of the reflection in Cycle I serve as a

reference for implementing Cycle II. This classroom action research is conducted over 2 cycles, with each cycle taking place weekly. Cycle I was carried out from September 30 to October 5, while Cycle II took place from October 6 to October 13, 2024.

The data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to monitor the implementation of SEMADA activities. Interviews were carried out to complement the results of the observations, while documentation served as evidence of the interviews conducted.

The indicator of this study's success is observing an increase in the percentage of children's independence in Class B at RA Asy-Syuhada' through SEMADA activities. Success is defined as approximately 75% of the children showing improved independence, categorized as "good" or above 60%.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Independence can be defined as the ability to take care of oneself without assistance from others and by the child's age. This can be observed through their ability to run, walk, dress themselves, go up and down stairs, eat, bathe, and express themselves properly without help from those around them. The SEMADA activity provides appropriate activities and challenges for children aged 5-6 years. The activities referred to here are not academically demanding tasks but rather daily activities that help children become more independent, such as activities such as brushing their teeth, dressing themselves, eating independently, and sleeping without being accompanied by their parents. The challenges mentioned here align with the children's interests and are neither too difficult nor too easy, such as campfire activities and exploration.

The teachers at RA Asy-Syuhada give children the freedom to engage in activities according to their preferences. This approach ensures that children do not lose their love for work or become easily bored. Teachers must also refrain

from constantly helping the children, as they need to be allowed to face their obstacles and difficulties. In addition to independence, discipline in early childhood must also be nurtured. Discipline is a series of processes that children must go through to completion. There are five stages of discipline related to instilling discipline: first, discipline is the process of giving guidance; second, discipline involves observing, not assuming; third, discipline is about being proactive, not reactive; fourth, discipline is the process of building connections; and fifth, discipline is a process aimed at achieving independence in children.

This study was conducted at RA Asy-Syuhada' and involved Group B, which was divided into two classes, B1 and B2, with 72 children as the subjects of the action. The activity was supported by 14 teachers (ustadz and ustadzah), 3 student teachers from IAIN, and 10 student teachers from UIM, who served as assistants and mentors during the activities. The author conducted the research using the classroom action research method, which was held from September 30 to October 13. The activities were carried out in two cycles, where both Cycle I and Cycle II followed four stages: planning and implementation combined with observation and reflection. The independence skills of Group B children at RA Asy-Syuhada' in Cycle I were categorized as low. Based on the problems observed in Cycle I, corrective actions were needed to improve the children's independence. Therefore, it was necessary to implement the SEMADA (A Day and A Night At RA Asy-Syuhada') activity to enhance the children's independence.

### Cycle I

#### Semada Event Rundown

Time	Activities	Place
08.00-08.30	Check in participants	Each room
08.30-09.30	Opening	School yard
09.30-11.00	Ecoprint work activity	School yard
11.00-12.00	Isoma (student delivery time)	Each room
12.00-14.30	Rest	Each room
14.30-16.00	Shower + asr prayer	Each room
16.00-17.00	Watch	Each room
17.00-19.00	Prayer + Quran recitation (sending students)	Each room
19.00-20.00	Campfire activity	School yard

20.00-04.30	Rest	Each room
04.00-05.00	Morning shower	
05.30-06.00	Roaming preparation (sending students)	School yard
06.00-07.00	Explore activity	conditional
07.00-08.00	Closing + pick-up	School yard

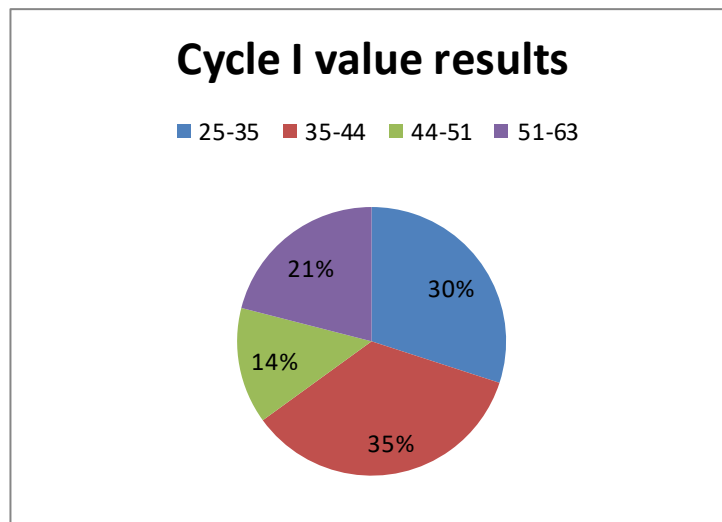
The results of Cycle I show that the activities of both teachers and students during the school activities were not fully achieved. This can be observed from the actions taken; in Cycle I, Action I showed a score of 60%, indicating that the development observed through the observation method, measuring the children's independence, was not fully achieved. Some examples include being able to wash hands, eat independently, wear shoes, and fold prayer mats. Independence instilled from an early age can teach children daily activities without depending on others, allowing them to carry out tasks, manage emotions, make decisions, and interact socially. Making decisions and interacting socially. This action focuses on helping children complete tasks independently to enhance their independence without the assistance of parents, through the implementation of the SEMADA activity. This activity requires thorough preparation, including a meeting attended by the parents of Group B children and the teachers (ustadz/ustadzah) to plan the execution of SEMADA.

**Table 1 results of children's independence cycle I**

<b>Variation in magnitude of values</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
25-35	22
35-44	25
44-51	10
51-63	15



**Figure I graph of the results of children's independence cycle I**



The results of the independence assessment shown in the table above indicate that 22 children scored between 25-35, 25 children scored between 35-44, 10 children scored between 44-51, and 15 children scored between 51-63. This shows that the level of children's independence is still considered low. Therefore, the school implemented activities to stimulate children's independence through the SEMADA activity.

Children aged 3 to 7 years old undergo crucial holistic development, motor skills, and sensory experiences through each independence activity that appeals to their instincts and developmental needs to sharpen their interests and talents. This enables every child to develop their potential. Montessori's concept introduces the "Children's House," a special environment designed for children to engage in independent activities. This highlights the importance of independence and direct experiences in learning (Maria Montessori, 2020). An environment that supports children's freedom to engage in activities and develop skills explains a learning environment specifically designed for young children, where they grow and learn freely within structured boundaries. The teacher is not the main instructor but serves as an observer and facilitator, providing appropriate support for the child and facilitating independent learning. Recognizing the individual needs and

interests of each child is also part of the teacher's role. The SEMADA activity serves as an exploration of the environment, helping children understand the world around them. It is an activity designed to stimulate the child's senses and coordination, which is important for sensory and motor skills development, as well as cognitive and physical abilities.

Before the SEMADA activity is implemented, one of the most important aspects that needs to be developed is a sense of responsibility, self-confidence, social interaction, and overcoming challenges. Learning to control oneself and take responsibility for their actions becomes part of the learning process in carrying out daily activities. One way to achieve this is by creating a supportive environment, establishing consistent routines, and having teachers and parents set an example by demonstrating independence, which children then observe and apply. Providing praise and rewards motivates children to continue trying and teaches them through daily activities. The role of parents is also crucial in supporting children's independence through activities at home, involving children in everyday tasks. Teamwork between parents and children can help children learn to cooperate and take responsibility for their respective roles..

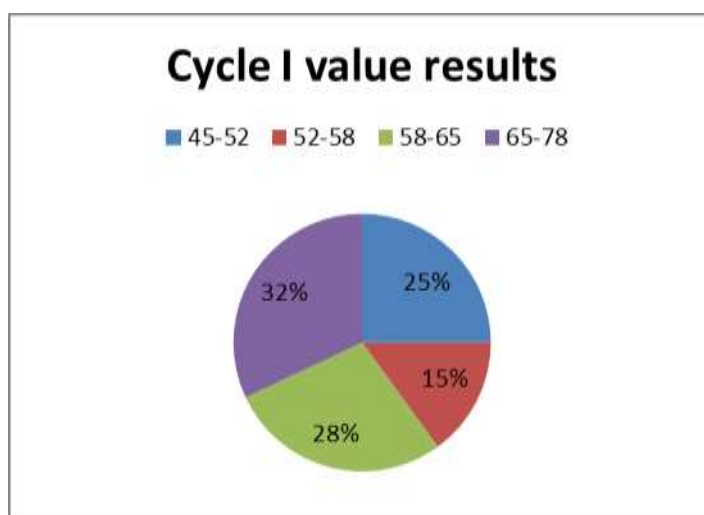
## **Cycle II**

The results of Cycle II show that the SEMADA activity on early childhood independence has improved compared to Cycle I, with a percentage increase of 75%. This activity has been running for two years and is held once a year. However, before the SEMADA activity was implemented at RA Asy-Syuhada', there was a previous activity called TASU'AH (TAdabbur SabtU AHad), which was later replaced with SEMADA because the program became more varied by incorporating early childhood preparedness activities, such as campfires and exploration. The researcher observed the children's independence in carrying out various activities independently, without relying on parental assistance, such as eating alone, worship activities, dressing, sleeping, and going to the bathroom on their own.

**Table II results of children's independence cycle II**

Variation in magnitude of values	Number of children
45-52	21
52-58	12
58-65	23
65-78	26

**Figure II graph of the results of children's independence cycle II**



The results from the table above show that in Cycle II, the SEMADA activity showed progress, with children receiving the following scores: 21 children scored between 45-52, 12 children scored between 52-58, 23 children scored between 58-65, and 26 children scored between 65-78.

In the SEMADA activity, children brought the necessary items, such as extra clothes, toiletries, and other essentials. During this activity, children learned to be brave and interact with their peers throughout the event. One of the goals of this activity is to teach children daily life skills that enable them to manage their needs, take care of themselves, and take responsibility for their tasks. Children's independence includes essential basic abilities for daily life, such as maintaining cleanliness and managing time. SEMADA has 4 rooms named after the 4 caliphs: Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, Umar, Uthman, and Ali bin Abi Talib. The mandatory

program for Group B children includes activities such as reciting the Quran together, praying, watching, exploring, having a campfire, and games in each group. The improvement in children's independence in reading the Quran is crucial to help them become more disciplined, responsible, and passionate about the learning process. The results from SEMADA provided various positive outcomes in both personal and social development aspects. Increased self-confidence and the independence instilled in the children allowed them to handle various situations and challenges on their own without parental assistance.

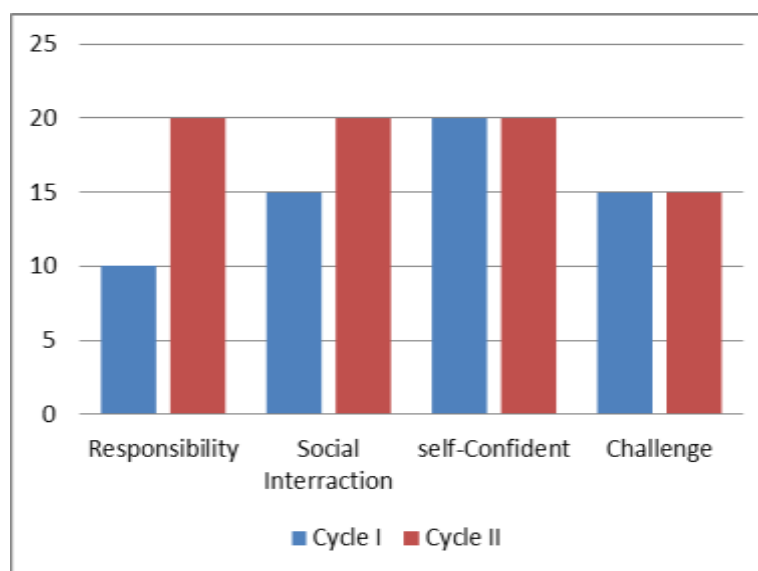
The lessons learned in this activity made the children braver when away from their parents, enabling them to face challenges during games at each checkpoint. There were 3 checkpoints in the exploration activity: the first involved searching for stones of a specific color in a predetermined quantity, the second was assembling verses from a surah, and the third was arranging letters with bottle caps. Discipline was applied in SEMADA through worship activities such as prayer, Quran reading, maintaining personal hygiene by tidying up their sleeping areas, and taking care of their clothes to avoid neglecting the tasks set by the school.

The SEMADA activity also trained social-emotional skills, such as sharing food and drinks and showing affection for friends. One important step in forming the character of early childhood and survival skills was through the scout activities held during SEMADA. The campfire activity, which included singing the scout anthem, "Indonesia Raya," and "Yahlal Wathon," took place in the evening, with each group performing their own cheers.

The independence lessons learned in SEMADA will significantly impact their future lives, helping children develop character through scout activities. Traits instilled include bravery, honesty, and hard work. During the overnight activity, the children also learned time management, such as when to eat, play, watch, study, pray, and so on.

After the SEMADA activity, parents shared with the teachers that their children, who were previously used to wearing diapers, drinking from bottles, and sucking their thumbs while sleeping, had started to stop these habits. This shows that the SEMADA activity had a significant positive impact on instilling good habits and promoting the children's independence. Stimulating independence with increased self-confidence, the ability to solve problems, learning responsibility, trying new things or challenges, and making decisions became valuable benefits from this activity.

**Figure III Comparison chart of cycle I and cycle II scores**



Based on the results in the table above, it shows that from Cycle I to Cycle II, there was an improvement, with the average score increasing from 60% to 75%.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the research above, the author concludes that the implementation of the SEMADA activity through two cycles resulted in an improvement in children's independence. This is evident from the achievement of scores during each cycle. Initially, children's scores reached 60%, which fell into the "good" category, and then the score increased to 75% in the second cycle. The SEMADA

activity can be applied to enhance children's independence in Group B at RA Asy-Syuhada'.

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