

# The Role Play Learning Center Model: Strategies for Enhancing Children's Self-Confidence

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## ABSTRACT

**Background of the study:** The Role-Play Center Learning Model is a child-centered educational approach conducted through Circle Time and thematic learning centers. In the role-play center, children are encouraged to explore their abilities according to their interests and talents, stimulating various aspects of multiple intelligences through guided play. This approach is designed to foster not only cognitive growth but also emotional and social development in early learners.

**Aims and scope of paper:** This study aims to investigate whether the implementation of the role-play center learning model at TK Darunnajah Kamal effectively supports the development of multiple intelligences and enhances children's self-confidence.

**Methods:** The study employed a qualitative field research design. Participants included the principal, the role-play center teacher, and students. Data collection techniques involved observation (focused on children's activities and the learning environment), in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data display and conclusion drawing.

**Results:** The findings indicate that the role-play center at TK Darunnajah Kamal allows children the freedom to choose their own activities under the guidance of teachers. Most of the children demonstrated increased self-confidence during learning activities. They were able to express their desires without fear of making mistakes, showing progress in both autonomy and communication skills.

**Contribution:** This study contributes to the field of early childhood education by providing evidence of the effectiveness of center-based learning in supporting multiple intelligences and self-confidence. It also offers practical implications for educators seeking to design more inclusive and empowering learning environments in early childhood settings.

## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is most effectively conducted through play. Play is a fundamental element in educational activities for young children, serving as both a medium for learning and a source of joy. When appropriate strategies, methods, materials, and media are used in an engaging way, play becomes an enjoyable and meaningful experience for children. Learning experiences at the kindergarten level should therefore be designed to be fun, inspiring, and motivating, encouraging active participation. It is through such engaging and socially interactive experiences that children's education truly takes place.

Learning is a personal and social journey, where children interact with peers to co-construct meaning and knowledge. One way to foster self-confidence in young children is through role-play centers, which provide structured play opportunities that stimulate multiple intelligences. In role-play, children are free to explore their identities, express themselves as different characters, and experiment with various social roles. This not only supports their emotional and cognitive development but also helps them grow into confident individuals.

The center-based learning model is one of the most popular pedagogical approaches in Indonesian early childhood education. It integrates learning across developmental domains and is tailored to children's needs and interests. As noted by Al-hasna and Hasanah (2020), the implementation of centers may vary between institutions due to differing developmental needs and contextual factors. Nonetheless, all aim to support holistic child development, including the promotion of self-confidence, which should begin as early as possible—even from birth.

Families and schools play equally critical roles in this developmental process. At home, parents can nurture a child's self-confidence by appreciating their uniqueness and providing them with meaningful experiences. At school, teachers offer support and encouragement that enable children to face challenges, solve problems, and explore their potential. Children who lack self-confidence may hesitate to speak, avoid performing in front of others, resist asking questions, and struggle to interact with their environment. By ages 5 to 6, children should ideally be able to complete tasks independently, express opinions, ask and answer questions, and perform confidently in front of others.

Role-play, also known as imaginative play, fantasy, make-believe, or symbolic play, is a recognized form of pretend play. According to Piaget's theory, role-play reflects children's cognitive development and social understanding. Through role-playing, children often reenact enjoyable roles and learn to process less pleasant experiences, using them as emotional learning opportunities (Bakri, Nasucha, & Indri M, 2021). Role-play thus becomes a means for children to understand themselves and others, including associated feelings, attitudes, and values.

Field observations at TK Darunnajah Kamal revealed that most children in Group B demonstrated self-confidence during role-play activities. They were unafraid to perform in front of peers, teachers, and even parents. Children voiced their needs and desires confidently, without fear of judgment or making mistakes. This environment fostered creativity, emotional expression, communication skills, resilience, and sustained motivation—critical attributes for lifelong learning and development.

## METHODS

### *Research Design*

This study employs a qualitative research methodology in the form of field research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), based on a constructivist paradigm that views knowledge as socially constructed (Emzir, 2013). The research approach is a case study, focusing specifically on the implementation of role-play methods within the role-play learning center to enhance children's self-confidence.

### *Research Subjects*

The primary data sources include both field data and supporting literature relevant to the study's focus. Field data were collected from the principal, staff, Group B facilitators, and students of Group B at TK Darunnajah Kamal, located in Madura. The supporting literature consists of previous studies in the form of academic journals, articles, books, and other relevant documents.

### *Data Collection Method*

Data were collected through passive participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. These methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the learning environment, teaching strategies, and student behaviors related to role-play activities.

### *Data Analysis Technique*

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the findings, source triangulation and technique triangulation were employed.

## RESULT

### *The Role-Play Center Learning Model: Enhancing Children's Self-Confidence*

As stated by Dina Khairiah and Dinta Ismayana Kurinci (2022), the role-play center learning model is a teaching approach that uses various learning centers to make play a vehicle for learning. A distinctive feature of this model is its emphasis on providing scaffolding to help children develop concepts, rules, ideas, and knowledge. This definition aligns with the role-play learning center design implemented in Group B at TK Darunnajah, as observed in the field and illustrated in Figure 1.

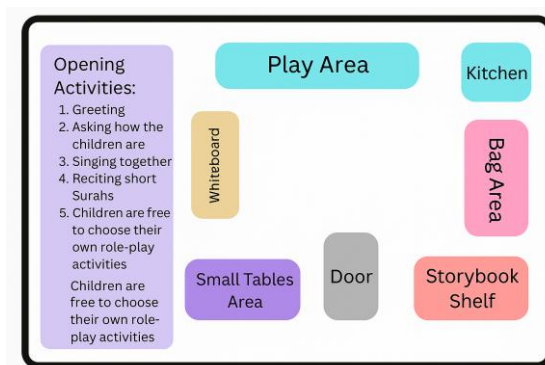


Figure 1. Classroom and Learning Design

Figure 1 shows that the role-play center at TK Darunnajah Kamal is organized around the theme "My Needs" with a single room divided into several activity areas. The green area serves as a designated circle time zone where children gather before starting the role-play learning activities. The kitchen area includes miniature cooking tools, fruits, vegetables, utensils, and tableware. The storybook shelf contains various children's books for learning. While the setup facilitates thematic activities, the space is relatively narrow, limiting children's opportunities for free play, creativity, and imagination.

The role-play center serves as a structured learning environment using play-based methods designed to foster children's multiple intelligences. Each center targets developmental goals tailored to specific age groups, such as 2-3, 3-4, and 4-5 years. These age groups often engage in imaginative play that mimics real-life experiences. Role-play promotes social skills, procedural understanding, experimentation, and language development.

Children are encouraged to engage in active and creative play according to their interests and potential. The center is equipped with items like cooking sets, doctor kits, and pretend fruits and vegetables. This allows children to act as shopkeepers, customers, doctors, and more. These scenarios involve real-world tasks such as serving customers, counting goods, negotiating, and selecting appropriate materials based on the lesson's theme (Alif & Wulantika, 2020).

Role-play activities support sorting, categorizing, and various experiential learning outcomes. Thus, the role-play center activities at TK Darunnajah Kamal are organized into four key segments: morning activities (welcoming/circle time), core activities, snack time (break), and closing activities (recalling).

#### *Morning Activities*

Morning activities run from 07:00 to 07:30 AM. Before they begin, the teacher arranges the classroom according to the day's theme. One setup example is presented in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Classroom Setup for Kitchen Role-Play

Children sit in a circle, sing, clap, recite Surah Al-Fatihah, and say a prayer. From 07:30 to 07:40 AM, circle time begins. The facilitator takes attendance, checks in with the children, and leads them in memorizing short surahs, Asmaul Husna, and daily prayers. Morning activities are illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Memorization Activity of Short Surahs

#### *Core Activities*

Core activities are divided into two parts: the first from 07:40 to 08:20 AM and the second from 08:20 to 09:05 AM. The four stages include: Play Environment Preparation: Teachers prepare the environment and materials, create literacy experiences, and set play rules. Pre-Play Orientation: The facilitator introduces the theme, outlines the day's role-play activity, and discusses rules with the children. Children choose and explore their play activities freely. Play Time: Children engage in their chosen role-play activities simultaneously. For example, children may play as shoppers using toy strollers or read storybooks together. This stage typically lasts 60 minutes, during which teachers observe and record developmental progress. Post-Play Reflection: Children gather in a

circle for a group reflection before snack time. They tidy up the play area, share their experiences, recite hamdalah, and say the prayer before eating.

#### *Break and Closing Activities*

After core activities, children have a snack break. If a child doesn't bring food, others may share. Upon finishing, children say the prayer after eating, as shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Children Having a Snack Break

Closing activities include singing, clapping, reciting prayers for parents and ending lessons. Facilitators offer advice, express gratitude, apologize, and close with a farewell greeting.

#### *Factors Influencing the Role-Play Center as a Stimulus for Self-Confidence*

The successful implementation of the role-play center learning approach for children aged 5–6 years at TK Darunnajah Kamal is influenced by several key factors. These include the availability of adequate facilities and resources, teachers' understanding of the specific characteristics of role-play learning, and the creativity of educators in designing engaging and varied activities. An adequate budget to procure necessary materials, teachers' physical and mental preparedness, support from the wider school community, and access to sufficient reference materials on role-play-based learning also contribute significantly to the effectiveness of this approach. However, several challenges hinder its optimal application. These challenges include difficulties in providing appropriate play materials, limited teacher creativity that can result in monotonous classroom experiences, and a lack of understanding regarding the pedagogical foundations of role-play learning. Budgetary constraints further complicate implementation, as does the time-consuming and complex nature of preparing and managing the learning environment. Additionally, morning extracurricular activities often interfere with the scheduled learning sessions, and the unpredictable behavior of young children, such as crying or arriving late, can further disrupt the learning process.

## **DISCUSSION**

The role-play center model is one of the most widely implemented and popular learning models in early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia. This popularity is supported by a variety of scientific journal sources that consistently highlight its effectiveness in enhancing multiple aspects of child development. The model emphasizes learning through play, allowing children to explore, discover, and construct knowledge based on their experiences and interactions. In this model, play is not merely a leisure activity, but a purposeful and structured method to support holistic growth in cognitive, social-emotional, language, motor, and spiritual development.

Each center, or sentra, is developed based on the specific needs and developmental stages of the children within a particular institution. As noted by Al-Hasna and Hasanah (2020), the configuration of learning centers may vary across institutions, reflecting the uniqueness of each school's context, including student demographics, available resources, and teacher creativity. This

flexible design ensures that each center responds to the interests and needs of its learners, allowing for more personalized and relevant learning experiences.

The role-play center, in particular, plays a significant role in fostering what Howard Gardner termed multiple intelligences. Through role-play, children are given the opportunity to express themselves through language, movement, music, interpersonal interaction, and intrapersonal reflection. They can act out real-life scenarios, such as becoming doctors, cooks, or shopkeepers, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of the world around them while also building social, emotional, and problem-solving skills.

In the context of TK Darunnajah Kamal, this study was conducted to determine the extent to which the role-play center model contributes to the development of children's multiple intelligences. Observations and interviews indicated that when children are given the freedom to choose roles and engage in imaginative play, they demonstrate increased confidence, enhanced language use, and improved cooperation with peers. These are key indicators of growth across several domains of intelligence, including linguistic, interpersonal, and kinesthetic intelligences.

Furthermore, the structured nature of the learning environment — including clearly defined learning areas, teacher scaffolding, and consistent routines — supports children's ability to make sense of their learning experiences. Teachers act not just as facilitators, but also as observers and documenters of children's progress, ensuring that the activities are developmentally appropriate and aligned with learning goals.

In conclusion, the findings of this study support previous research that affirms the effectiveness of the role-play center model in stimulating multiple intelligences in early childhood. With the right implementation, supportive environment, and committed educators, the role-play center can serve as a powerful platform for nurturing children's potential holistically.

#### *Implications*

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of role-play-based learning environments in early childhood education. For educators, this model offers a practical approach to nurture children's development in a holistic and engaging way. It also implies the need for school leaders and policymakers to allocate adequate space, materials, and teacher training to ensure optimal implementation of role-play centers.

#### *Research Contribution*

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the effectiveness of thematic learning centers in early childhood education in Indonesia. It provides empirical evidence that supports the role of role-play centers in stimulating children's multiple intelligences, especially in rural or semi-urban educational contexts like Madura. It also serves as a reference for future curriculum design and teacher professional development programs.

#### *Limitations*

However, this study has several limitations. It was conducted in a single institution with a relatively small sample, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the research was primarily qualitative, relying on observation and interviews without standardized assessment tools for measuring multiple intelligences.

#### *Suggestions*

Future studies should consider a mixed-methods approach with larger and more diverse samples to validate and expand upon these findings. Further, it is recommended to explore longitudinal impacts of the role-play center model and to investigate the effectiveness of different types of role-play scenarios on specific intelligence domains. Finally, enhancing teacher training in scaffolding techniques could further enrich children's learning experiences within the center.

## CONCLUSION

The Sentra Learning Model is a child-centered approach where learning takes place in circles (Circle Time) and centers. In role-play centers, children explore their abilities based on their interests and talents, stimulating multiple intelligences through guided play. A lack of self-confidence can negatively affect a child's development, making them feel inferior to their peers, hesitant to speak, fearful of presenting in front of the class, unwilling to ask questions, and having difficulty interacting with their surroundings. By ages 5-6, children should be able to complete tasks independently, express opinions, ask and answer questions, and present in front of the class without fear. Through role play, children recall both fun and sad experiences, often repeating the enjoyable ones, which helps them learn from their emotions. In the case of the B-group children at TK Darunnajah Kamal, most have developed confidence in role-play activities, daring to perform in front of others and voice their desires without fear of being wrong. This fosters creativity, emotional regulation, communication skills, friendship, resilience, and problem-solving abilities. Future research should build on these findings, exploring more appropriate learning models and media to address areas that need improvement, involving a larger sample and different research methods to achieve more comprehensive results.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

NDIA and LFB, conceived the idea and conducted data collection. RAS and ZA contributed to the literature review. ENS contributed to the data analysis. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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