

Optimizing Children's Early Literacy Through Contextual Implementation of The Phonics Method in Rural Early Childhood Institutions

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the Phonics method in improving early literacy in children aged 4-6 years. This study was designed using a qualitative approach with a case study method, conducted at Kober Peupado Malanua. Data collection techniques used included observation, interviews, and documentation. Activities in data analysis included data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study showed that consistent use of the Phonics method can improve children's ability to recognize letters, understand letter sounds, and read simple words. Based on observation data, there were 23.07% of children who could imitate the sounds (phoneme sounds) spoken by the teacher, 15.3% of children could pronounce sounds correctly, 46.15% of children could associate sounds with letters that correspond to the sounds heard, and 15.3% of children could combine letter sounds and then form words. The phonics method not only improves students' understanding of letters and letter sounds, but also helps them understand words and spell more accurately and effectively. The phonics method has also been shown to be effective in improving the reading skills of children with intellectual disabilities, dyslexia, and other students. Therefore, it can be an effective approach to improving reading skills (literacy) in early childhood.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literacy is a child's developmental task that must be stimulated from an early age. Literacy is simply defined as the ability to read and write. However, there is a misconception about the role of literacy and its relationship to early childhood development. Most parents demand that their children

learn to read and write as early as possible. The focus is not on introducing literacy, but rather on achieving literacy mastery at an early age. These parental demands create opportunities for forcing children to learn to read and write. Literacy is an indicator of a nation's progress. In his remarks at the National Literacy Movement program, Minister of Education Muhadjir Efendy stated that the history of human civilization shows that advanced nations are not built solely on abundant natural resources and large populations. A great nation is characterized by a literate society, a highly civilized society, and active participation in advancing global society (Irna, 2019).

One factor contributing to the low reading interest among Indonesians is the lack of instilling a reading habit from an early age. Parents are role models for children in the family. Children typically imitate their parents' habits. Parents who have a habit of reading books, and who observe this habit, are more likely to develop a reading habit themselves. Children tend to imitate their parents' behavior. This is especially true if this imitation, namely reading books, is valued and appreciated by parents, thus increasing their motivation to read. It is even more effective if parents also read aloud to their children. This will further engage their children in reading books. Therefore, the role of parents in teaching reading habits is crucial for improving children's literacy skills (Rokhmatulloh & Sudihartinih, 2022). A 2016 literacy survey conducted by Central Connecticut State University in New Britain, Connecticut, United States, ranked Indonesia in a concerning position, ranking 60th out of 61 countries (Muzakki et al., 2023).

Early literacy skills are the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of a young child related to reading and writing before mastering formal skills at school age. The components of early literacy include reading interest, language skills, phonological awareness, reading ability, and writing ability (Hapsari et al., 2017). Literacy is also an integral part of daily life and the learning process, which is indirectly included in children's activities, such as playing while learning and learning while playing (Meilasari, 2021). Currently, visual texts can take the form of images; posters; advertisements; illustrations; infographics; and charts; diagrams; graphs; maps; and moving objects, all of which play an important role. The ability to understand, critique, and articulate ideas through visual tests is called visual literacy. Visual literacy is the ability to understand visual language and use that understanding to interact and communicate with the surrounding environment. Mastery of visual literacy is characterized by a person's ability to understand and interpret visual messages and react appropriately to them. Visual messages, for example, can be contained in symbols used in public facilities such as instructions, prohibitions, and so on (Ngura et al., 2024).

However, in the Kober Peupado Malanua environment, the implementation of the phonics method has not been the primary approach in teaching and learning activities. Teachers tend to still use conventional methods that do not optimally accommodate children's phonological needs. Therefore, research is needed to analyze how the phonics method can be implemented effectively and what impacts it has on children's early literacy skills at the institution. This research is important and urgent to be conducted in order to make a real contribution to the development of more effective and contextual learning strategies at Kober Peupado Malanua. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to serve as a reference for other PAUD educators in selecting appropriate learning methods to improve early childhood literacy skills. Based on the results of an interview conducted with one of the teachers at Kober Peupado Malanua, the implementation of the phonics method is still less than optimal. Many teachers do not fully understand the implementation techniques of this method, and there is a lack of media and learning strategies that are appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood. Furthermore, the gap in teachers' understanding of phonics in the 3T area is also a problem in this study. This causes the development of early literacy in children to progress slowly, which can impact their reading and writing skills at the next level of education. Early literacy skills are a fundamental aspect of early childhood development, playing a crucial role in their readiness for formal

education. Early literacy encompasses not only reading and writing skills but also the ability to understand and interpret information from an early age. However, many children face difficulties in developing literacy skills due to a lack of appropriate learning methods. However, the implementation of the phonics method in early childhood education institutions in Indonesia, particularly in certain regions, remains uneven. Many educators do not fully understand the concepts and teaching techniques of this method, necessitating an analysis of the effectiveness and implementation of the phonics method in early childhood literacy activities. Remember that every child develops at a different pace. Be patient and provide positive support in developing children's literacy. Also, involve children in fun and entertaining activities to increase their motivation to learn language and reading. This underscores the importance of introducing literacy to children from an early age (Parapat et al., 2023). Literacy is closely related to a person's ability to read, write, speak, and process the information obtained to solve problems faced in everyday life (Oktariani & Ekadiansyah, 2020).

Based on these conditions, this research is crucial and urgent to provide a concrete picture of how the phonics method can contribute to children's literacy development from an early age. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for educators, parents, and policymakers in selecting the right approach to improving children's literacy skills. One way to develop language skills is through reading. Studies show that young children can learn to read as early as four years old. Siqueira, Cortez, Kelly, Sobrinho & Rocha (Retnomurti et al., 2019) stated that one of the most important skills children develop when starting school is learning to read. Kindergarten-aged children already have the foundational skills to learn to read and write. Children begin to realize that words are expressions of graphic symbols that convey meaning. Furthermore, they begin to focus their attention on one or two aspects of a word, such as the first letter of a word and its image. It also suggests that children who are ready to read in kindergarten will be more confident and joyful. Attwell (Retnomurti et al., 2019) stated that early reading and writing skills for early childhood and kindergarten children are important and provide a strong start for literacy skills and achievement in school. Investigating the relationship between literacy skills emerging in the preschool period and reading skills at school age, he identified alphabet skills as a strong predictor that early reading instruction will influence the strategies they use to recognize words.

One method that has been proven effective in improving early literacy is the phonics method. This method focuses on the relationship between letters and sounds, helping children recognize, sound out, and combine letters to form words. Several studies have shown that the phonics method can improve children's reading skills more quickly and effectively than traditional methods that rely solely on word memorization.

Based on the above problems, the research to be conducted by the researcher is entitled "Optimizing Children's Early Literacy Through Contextual Implementation of the Phonics Method in Rural Early Childhood Education Institutions." From the research title, there will be a formulation of the problem to be studied: how is early literacy in children using the Phonics method? The purpose of this research is to determine the use of the phonics method on the development of children's early literacy.

2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative study. The subjects in this study were 13 children aged 4-6 years and the class teacher. Data collection methods consisted of observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were carried out directly by the researcher, who was also directly involved in the activities carried out by the data source using observation guidelines. The interviews conducted in this study were unstructured interviews. Interviews were conducted with parties who were able to provide data according to the problem being studied, in this case, the class teacher. Meanwhile, documentation

was the collection of documents about the children and documentation of children carrying out daily activities. The qualitative research stage with a case study approach uses the model and research process according to Campbell:

- a. Time-series design: looking at literacy skills before and after the method is applied.
- b. Source triangulation: observation of teacher teaching methods, parent interviews, analysis of children's learning outcome documents.
- c. Pattern matching: matching children's learning outcomes with phonics theory and early literacy development.

Campbell's matching analysis technique aims to achieve conceptual understanding in the concept mapping of field results. First, data and informants produce a series of statements, information obtained from informants describes the concept. Second, the information obtained is connected to similar statements so that the grouping of statements is related to the research focus depicted through the concept map. Third, creating this concept map helps researchers combine and build conceptual material. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman analysis technique. Data are examined using the Miles and Huberman method, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The Phonics Method teaches children to read by connecting sounds with letters. Graham Bell's father, Melvin Bell, created this phonics method—meaning the symbols of sounds produced by the speech organs. Many methods have been developed to help children read and write, and the one I will discuss in this article is the Phonics Method. Besides helping children read, this method is very helpful for children to practice speaking, because the phonics method focuses on the pronunciation of each letter's sound, so that children will unconsciously practice pronouncing letters with various sounds. At SPS Tabata Islamic Preschool, the phonics reading method has been implemented since the school was founded. To introduce letters, this school uses two ABC song rhymes: the first is a general ABC song and the second is singing the sound of each letter, for example, the sound of the letter "B" to be "Well". While singing, the teacher shows the shape of each letter using cards or images they see from the PowerPoint media the teacher has prepared. Then, to familiarize the children with the sound of each letter, the teacher will invite the children to name or guess the names of objects that have the initials of the letter being studied (Husna Muthiah Tsabitah & Arifin, 2023). The phonics method, also known as phonics, focuses more on the alphabet, learning to connect sounds with letters, and teaching children to read by connecting letter sounds. The goal of this method is to improve children's reading skills in a fun way and make a positive contribution to their language development.

The phonics method is more specifically for early childhood, emphasizing the early stages of early literacy development that focus on reading, speaking, listening and speaking (Wahjusaputri et al., 2023). In learning with the phonics method, the word patterns used as reading practice are tiered, starting from the simplest word patterns to complex word patterns. In the phonics method, the material is divided into two parts: reading part one, using simple word patterns with the CV CV pattern and reading part two, which uses simple and complex word patterns, both basic words and affixed words. With the word pattern V CV. CV-CV, V-CV, CV-VC, CV-CVC, CV-CVC, CVK-CVC, CV-CVC. With this method, early childhood can recognize letters and letter sounds through reading activities that are introduced by sounding the letter sounds on letter cards and picture cards according to teacher instructions. The phonics method emphasizes word recognition through the process of hearing sounds. Students are encouraged to learn letter sounds, then connect the letters to form syllables and then

words. To introduce the sounds of various letters, the first letter is usually associated with the name of an object already known to the child. Understanding this relationship will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and be able to spell new words. The phonics method can use letter cards, combining letter cards while pronouncing them, is a method that can be used in this method (Saragih & Widayat, 2020). In short, the phonics method not only helps students recognize letters and their sounds, but also helps them understand and spell words more accurately and purposefully. Furthermore, the use of letter cards is an effective way to combine inner sounds and letters.

Some indicators that became the subject of observation in this study include 1) children actively answer/imitate phoneme sounds, 2) children pronounce phonic sounds correctly, 3) children can associate letters with the appropriate sounds and 4) children can combine sounds to form words. Based on the observation data, there are 3 children who can imitate the sounds (phoneme sounds) spoken by the teacher, 2 children can pronounce sounds correctly, 6 children can associate sounds with letters that correspond to the sounds heard, and 2 children can combine letter sounds to form words. The results of the analysis using the phonics method, it can be concluded that the phonics method helps children to recognize, synthesize, and connect letters into syllables and words systematically. The use of letter cards in this method is also a technique that introduces the effective combination of sounds in and letters. Thus, the phonics method not only helps children recognize letters and letter sounds, but also makes it easier for them to understand and spell words more accurately and directed, as well as introducing the concept of literacy as a whole at the elementary education level. In addition to observations, interviews were also conducted with the class teacher, namely Mrs. TW. From the interview results obtained. The results of the interview with Mrs. TW as one of the class teachers were analyzed as follows:

- a. Understanding Early Literacy: Early literacy is understood as a child's initial ability to recognize letters, sounds, and words, not just being able to read.
- b. Implementation of the Phonics Method: Teachers implement the phonics method by introducing letter sounds first, then associating them with words that are familiar to the child.
- c. Learning Media: Teachers use media such as songs, picture letter cards, and sound games to support the learning process.
- d. Children's Response: Children show high enthusiasm and interest in learning, recognize sounds and letters more quickly, and begin to try to name simple syllables based on the sounds they hear.
- e. Challenges: Time constraints, differences in children's learning speeds, and lack of aids such as phonics books or videos.

Discussion

The results of the study indicate that classroom teachers at Kober Peupado Malanuza have implemented the phonics method in early literacy learning. Teachers introduce letters through sounds, not just letter names. For example, the letter "M" is introduced with the sound /m/ accompanied by example words such as "mama" or "mobil". This strategy is complemented by supporting media such as picture letter cards. To improve reading skills, especially basic letter recognition skills, this can be done by naming pictures, touching letters, and saying the letters in the picture. A suitable method for learning to read is the phonics method. The phonics method is a method whose process begins with identifying words by hearing the sounds of the letters, then the letters are then transformed into syllables until the words become sentences (Jarniah, 2023). This effect was demonstrated during the test, children who had difficulty reading and were careless during the pretest, became more fluent in reading during the posttest (Puspitasari et al., 2018). A previous study on phonics examined how phonics-based reading instruction impacted identified French-speaking students. Most participants had a nonverbal IQ three standard deviations below the mean (IQ between 55 and 50). At the beginning

of the study, every student involved was unable to decode syllables or simple words. Compared with students in the control group, students in the treatment group did not make greater progress in phonological awareness and letter-sound knowledge (Sermier Dessemontet et al., 2021). It is better to ensure that students become good readers early in the grades than to wait for their last opportunity to read and then try to offer curative reading instruction that may be ineffective. One of the teachers' responsibilities is to teach learners and young children to read. Knowledge of effective teaching methods and the readiness to implement them are necessary to carry out this responsibility successfully. Those teaching reading in the early grades must have a good understanding of the five components of early reading. They must also use methods and materials that support successful instruction. Good instructional packages and materials emphasize five important components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Yisihak Ukumo & Damtew Berlie, 2024)

This finding aligns with research by Puspitasari et al., 2018, which showed that the use of the phonics method can significantly improve phonological abilities and letter awareness in early childhood. Their research demonstrated that children recognize initial syllables more quickly and are able to construct simple words after participating in phonics learning. This also aligns with research conducted by (Rahwati & Windarsih, 2021), which states that students fully understand the use of the phonics method because they have generally mastered learning. The implementation of the phonics method is very effective in introducing English and beginning reading to early childhood at the Starbright Learning Center. Furthermore, research on the phonics method was also conducted by (Lubis et al., 2023), which concluded that students' reading ability before using the phonics method was still low, with only 4 students having good reading ability. Students' reading ability after using the phonics method began to improve. In cycle I, it was seen that when the teacher pointed out a letter and made a sound, students began to be able to understand, write, and read it. Students also begin to recognize consonants and vowels, students begin to recognize letter shapes, students also begin to be able to read simple pictures and point to letters or take letters, match words with pictures. Then in cycle II there were 2 students who had reading abilities in the very good category, 13 students who had reading abilities in the good category and 2 students who had reading abilities in the poor category. In addition to children, previous research also discussed teacher training related to the PGTK Teacher Competency Development strategy to Improve Students' Reading Ability with the Jolly Phonics Method conducted by (Indrijati et al., 2023) The results showed that there was a significant difference in scores ($p = 0.000$) between before and after participants received training. The results of this study will be an additional reference in the process of implementing the jolly phonic method to improve students' reading abilities in schools and become a reference for holding similar training dissemination in the future by participants to a wider sample. Many well-known children's English language education institutions use phonics. In some places, phonics has passed its first century. As shown by research conducted on junior high and elementary school students, phonics contributes to improved phoneme awareness and decoding, as well as spelling skills in a second or foreign language (Xiaojing et al., 2016). The phonics method can also be used in English word recognition, and Jolly Phonics is effective in helping preschoolers improve their reading and writing skills on English topics. Studies also found that the method of teaching English using Jolly Phonics is practical and appropriate for the age and development of preschoolers. The use of Jolly Phonics is beneficial for students, teachers, parents, and guardians (Nafgerin & Bakar, 2023).

The following research related to literacy conducted by (Zulkipli & Aziz, 2019) showed that the independent t-test conducted on post-test scores showed that the digital game-based group performed significantly better than the traditional flashcard group, indicating that learning through digital game-based activities is more effective than the traditional flashcard method in improving students' learning

on early literacy tasks. The current findings provide empirical evidence of the effectiveness of DGBL in facilitating English literacy tasks among non-native speakers. Other studies also show that participants experienced improvements in word recognition and reading aloud abilities. To improve the reading skills of students who have difficulty reading, it is recommended to create an appropriate reading environment and implement a reading enrichment program (Akyol et al., 2014). Research conducted by (Wyse & Goswami, 2008), found an approach based on systematic instruction in phonics. There is also evidence that contextualized systematic phonics instruction is effective. However, further research is needed, especially with typically developing readers, to determine whether contextualized systematic phonics is more effective than discrete systematic phonics.

In addition to research, several community service activities related to child literacy mentoring through the phonics method were carried out by (Alisa Hildayanti et al., 2023), Mentoring children's literacy skills through phonics learning is a valuable approach in helping children develop reading, writing, and understanding text skills. By focusing on understanding the relationship between language sounds and written letters, this method opens the door to achieving significant results in literacy development Based on the previous discussion. Not only is it effective in teaching children literacy in Indonesian, the phonics method is also effective in teaching English for early childhood, for example, the results of research conducted by (Munggaraning Westhisi, 2019), stating that the learning stages are adjusted to the needs of children. Then, the obstacles felt by teachers are limited time and differences in children's abilities. In addition, teachers believe that the implementation of the phonics method in learning to read early in English for early childhood is appropriate because the learning stages start from recognizing letter sounds, recognizing letter symbols, to combining letter sounds. Learning through the phonics method can be collaborated with playing and storytelling to make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable for children. The conclusion of this study is that the implementation of the phonics method helps teachers a lot to introduce the concept of letter sounds which are the initial foundation in learning to read early in English. The effectiveness of the phonics method has also been proven through research conducted by (Rohma, 2024), The study concluded that the phonics method, despite challenges, can effectively stimulate early reading skills if implemented with the right strategies and resources. Research by (Hamid & Hajerah, 2024), The results showed an increase in reading ability by 25% in the first cycle and 40% in the second cycle. Image media is effective in increasing learning motivation and student participation. In conclusion, the phonics method with image media is effective in improving early reading skills, and it is recommended to be used consistently in early grades to improve basic literacy. Several studies have also shown differences between learning lottery using the phonics method and those that do not use it, such as research conducted by (Tiani et al., 2023). The results of the study showed differences and differences in reading ability improvement in experimental class students who used the phonics method and those who did not use the phonics method. This is indicated by the results of the t-test which shows that H1 is accepted because $t_{count} > t_{table}$. Meanwhile, the results of the n-gain test show that the experimental class has a medium category and the control class has a low category. According to (Indriani et al., 2025), Shows that the phonics method significantly improves children's reading and spelling skills by teaching the systematic relationship between letters and sounds. Local research supports these results, for example the "CBI FONIK" method and audiovisual-based media are effective in improving early childhood literacy skills. Collaboration between teachers and parents plays an important role in creating a supportive literacy environment both at school and at home, accelerating children's learning progress.

There are theories about phonology related to reading and writing methods. According to (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2015), understanding how speech sounds are produced and heard is crucial for developing children's phonological awareness, which is the foundation for early reading and writing skills. Their phonetic principles are crucial for children's phonological learning, such as teaching them

to distinguish sounds (such as "cat" and "button"), learning to match letters to sounds, and offering models of correct pronunciation (since incorrect pronunciation can disrupt children's phonological processes). Phonology/phonemes help teachers understand the importance of practicing sounds, syllables, and rhymes in early reading. It also forms the basis of the phonics method, which teaches reading by connecting sounds and letters. The most well-known nativist theory was proposed by Roman Jakobson. This theory, based on theoretical considerations drawn from adult language and then based on reports of children's existing words, was considered of little importance. However, his work is significant because it aroused interest in child phonology, specifically his claim that sounds acquired in a particular language do not exist in any other language in the world. Jakobson's theory (Liu, 2014), somewhat limited in scope, deals only with the sequence of phonemic contrasts developed by children, and indeed seems to outline this in broad terms. The idea is that all children exhibit essentially the same sequence in the acquisition of phonemic contrasts, and that the earliest contrasts developed by individuals are the most common in the world's languages. Therefore, children first learn to produce consonant-vowel contrasts, since they are found in all languages. Syllables like "pa" and "ma," which, of course, many children do, do. He proposed that children then continue to segment both vowels and consonants, making finer distinctions until they achieve the full range of contrasts demanded by their surrounding language. Consonant segmentation is expected to begin with either distinguishing nasals from non-nasal stops, or labials from non-labial stops. Once labials and non-labials have been acquired, children can learn to further differentiate (usually velar) consonants from dentals or alveolars.

As stated by Gleason (Holes, 2004) "children have the ability to pronounce individual phonemes in a cluster but cannot pronounce them sequentially, some clusters at the beginning of words cannot be mastered by children before the age of 7 or 8 years. Phonological development Phonological development goes through a long process of language decoding. Much of a child's morphological development will depend on their ability to receive and produce phonological units. During preschool age, children not only receive a phonetic inventory and phonological system but also develop the ability to determine which sounds are used to distinguish meaning. Phonological acquisition is related to the process of constructing syllables consisting of a combination of vowels and consonants. Even in humming, children use consonant-vowel (CV) or consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC). Other processes are related to assimilation and substitution to the perception and production of sounds (Solihin, 2021).

Phonology is a branch of linguistics that studies the sounds of language, the process of their formation, and their changes. Phonology studies the sounds of language in general and functionally. The term phoneme can be defined as the smallest functional unit of language, meaning that a phoneme unit has a function to distinguish meaning. Phoneme variants are based on position in a word, for example, the first phoneme in the word "makan" and "meaning" are phonetically different. Variations of a phoneme that do not distinguish meaning are called allophones. The study of phonetics is divided into sound classification, most of which are egressive sounds in Indonesian. And secondly, the formation of vowels, consonants, diphthongs, and clusters. In terms of phonetic studies, phonemization is necessary to find sounds that function in the framework of distinguishing meaning. Thus, phonemization aims to determine the phonemic structure of a language and create a practical orthography or spelling of a language. Phonological phenomena in Indonesian include phoneme additions, phoneme deletions, phoneme changes, contractions, analogies, and suprasegmental phonemes. At the word level, stress, duration, and tone in Indonesian do not differentiate meaning. However, pronunciations that deviate in terms of stress and tone can feel awkward (Lafamane, 2020). At the beginning reading level, readers do not yet have the actual reading skill, but still in the learning stage to acquire reading skills/abilities. Reading at this level is a learning activity to recognize written language. Through writing, students are required to be able to pronounce the sound symbols of the language. To acquire reading skills, three conditions are required: the ability to pronounce written

symbols, the ability to master vocabulary to give meaning and the ability to include meaning in language skills (Syahputra, 2017)

The phonics method was chosen because it is suitable for Indonesian language learning. Furthermore, the phonics method itself has several advantages, including: 1) It can be taught with language structures that are adapted to the linguistic rules and language development of children. 2) It can be done at home and at school. 3) It is implemented according to the child's brain function, without being forced, meaningful and contextual. 4) Children understand Indonesian beyond just being able to read. 5) It teaches how to write proportionally in a fun way. Thus, understanding symbols greatly supports children's ability to read. The ability to recognize parents' voices, the faces of people around them, and objects in the child's environment is the ability to interpret a symbol. If a child can interpret symbols, it is easier for him to represent the sounds of a letter into alphabetical forms. So to ensure that children will be able to read correctly, prepare as early as possible with a variety of sounds (JASMINE, 2014). The phonics method can be applied through two types of procedures in teaching reading: synthetic procedures and analytical procedures. The synthetic procedure involves first introducing letters and then arranging them into words, while the analytical procedure involves building words into letters. The use of the phonics method in learning emphasizes synthesizing letters, syllables, and words into words. The repetition method is very supportive in learning, due to the characteristics of children who require repetition to better understand the learning material (Tammardia Siregar et al., 2024).

The advantages of the phonics method are also taught in English for early childhood. English is not only a foreign language or international language studied in schools from early childhood education level to the next level. The public's tendency to master foreign languages has made various educational institutions compete to create programs that include English as one of the skills developed, especially for early childhood. For this reason, several early childhood education institutions or kindergartens are competing to include English in their curriculum. The problem is that English lessons for early childhood education require special handling that is different from lessons for other age groups. The phonics method is a language learning model offered for early childhood and is developed by optimizing all language skills, listening, speaking, writing and reading. This method emphasizes alphabet lessons that are given first to children, learning the names of letters and their sounds. After they learn the sounds of the letters, they will begin to summarize certain letters to form words (Khayatul Virdyna, 20 C.E.). In addition to English, the phonics method has proven effective in improving reading skills in children with dyslexia in special education. Every aspect of reading ability—from letters, syllables, words, to sentences—showed significant improvement after the intervention, although it required a period of adaptation. These results underscore the importance of consistency and support in implementing phonics methods to achieve optimal results. Implementing phonics methods in special education can help children with dyslexia significantly develop their reading skills, thereby improving the quality of their education and lives (Rahman, 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, this research shows that phonics techniques are crucial for improving elementary school students' reading skills. This method not only improves students' understanding of letters and letter sounds, but also helps them understand words and spell more accurately and effectively. The phonics method has also been shown to be effective in improving the reading skills of students with intellectual disabilities, dyslexics, and other students. Therefore, it can be an effective approach to improving early childhood reading (literacy) skills.

Based on the research results and conclusions that have been described, the researcher provides several suggestions, especially for PAUD teachers, namely teachers are advised to continue developing

the phonics method in early literacy learning. This method has been proven to improve children's abilities in recognizing letters and sounds systematically and enjoyably. Teachers are also expected to enrich phonics learning media such as songs, games, and letter cards to attract children's interest to the maximum. In addition, for PAUD institutions (KOBER Peupado Malanusa), the institution should support the implementation of the phonics method on an ongoing basis by providing supporting facilities and infrastructure, such as phonics-based story books, educational videos, and teacher training. With good support, the learning process can run more effectively and evenly for all students. In the PAUD curriculum, especially in language learning, often includes the phonics method as an approach to introduce children to the world of reading.

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