

Constructivist Theory in Early Childhood Education: A Literature Review of Teacher Strategies and Active Learning

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ABSTRACT

Constructivist theory remains an important foundation in early childhood education as it positions children as active learners who construct knowledge through learning experiences. This study aims to analyze the implementation of constructivist theory in early childhood education by examining teacher strategies and active learning practices. A qualitative literature review approach was employed. Data were collected from Scopus, Google Scholar, and Garuda databases. A total of 15 articles met the inclusion criteria, consisting of 5 Scopus-indexed international articles and 10 national articles indexed at least in SINTA 3, published between 2022 and 2024. The findings indicate that constructivist learning is implemented through play-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, game-based learning, center-based learning, and the STEAM approach. Teachers act as facilitators who support children's exploration, social interaction, and meaningful learning

experiences. Constructivist learning contributes to the development of creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, social skills, and character. This review confirms the relevance of constructivism in early childhood education and proposes a conceptual synthesis linking teacher facilitation, active learning, knowledge construction, and child development.

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as an essential foundation for supporting children's cognitive, social, emotional, language, and motor development. Early childhood is recognized as a golden period because growth and development occur rapidly, requiring appropriate stimulation through meaningful learning experiences. The quality of learning experiences at this stage influences children's readiness to face subsequent levels of education, as well as the development of their thinking, communication, and social interaction skills. However, the reality in many early childhood education institutions indicates that learning processes are still dominated by teacher-centered activities, methods emphasizing memorization, and relatively limited child involvement in exploration and problem-solving activities. Such conditions may reduce children's opportunities to develop creativity, critical thinking, and independent learning skills, which are essential competencies in twenty-first-century learning (Rozikan & Adisti, 2025; Wijayanti *et al.*, 2023).

The need for learning approaches that optimize children's

participation has drawn attention to constructivist theory as one of the fundamental frameworks in early childhood education. This theory posits that knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed through experience, social interaction, and reflection on the learning environment. According to Piaget (1972), children are active individuals who construct knowledge through processes of assimilation and accommodation. This perspective is reinforced by Vygotsky (1978), who emphasized the role of social interaction, language, and adult support in helping children achieve higher levels of development through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The constructivist perspective positions teachers as facilitators who provide learning experiences that enable children to explore, ask questions, discover, and independently construct understanding.

Teacher strategies constitute an essential component in implementing constructivist theory in early childhood education. Teacher strategies can be understood as a series of pedagogical actions designed to create learning environments that allow children to construct knowledge through direct experiences, social interaction, and reflection on their activities (Apriyani, 2021). From a constructivist perspective, teachers act as facilitators who provide scaffolding, pose stimulating questions, offer diverse learning materials, and organize collaborative activities appropriate to children's developmental stages. These strategies include the use of educational games, simple problem-based learning, small-group discussions, environmental exploration

activities, and feedback that encourages children to express opinions and discover solutions independently. The strategic role of teachers in constructivist learning extends beyond delivering content; it also encompasses the ability to manage learning interactions so that children can actively participate, feel secure in exploring, and acquire meaningful learning experiences (Nurjamilah *et al.*, 2025).

The implementation of constructivist principles in early childhood education has attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years. Research conducted by Göncü & Main (2023), demonstrated that teachers who adopt constructivist approaches tend to create safe learning environments, respect children's interests, and encourage collaboration and exploration throughout the learning process. These findings suggest that child-centered learning can enhance the quality of children's engagement in educational activities. Konishi & Chesney (2024), found that teachers' beliefs in constructivist principles influence their instructional practices by providing children with greater opportunities to make decisions and develop self-regulation. Likewise, the systematic review conducted by Alotaibi (2024), revealed that game-based active learning significantly improves children's cognitive, social, and emotional development through direct involvement in various learning activities.

Attention to active learning in early childhood education has also increased within the Indonesian context. Wijayanto *et al.* (2023), reported that the implementation of Problem-Based Learning enhances

children's creative thinking skills by allowing them to identify and solve problems based on their own experiences. Sari & Mahyuddin (2023), explained that integrative thematic learning supports the development of contextual learning experiences, enabling children to connect various concepts more meaningfully. Furthermore, Wijayanti *et al.* (2023), found that teacher strategies that provide opportunities for exploration, communication, and active participation contribute significantly to children's learning motivation. Rozikan & Adisti (2025) also emphasized that innovative learning practices grounded in constructivist principles support socio-emotional development while strengthening children's resilience.

The accumulation of these research findings demonstrates that constructivism has strong relevance in promoting active learning in early childhood education. Existing studies, however, have primarily focused on the implementation of specific learning models, such as Problem-Based Learning or play-based learning, as well as evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies within particular contexts. Previous studies have also tended to discuss teacher strategies in isolation, for example by focusing solely on opportunities for exploration, the use of instructional media, or classroom interaction management, without integrating their relationship with constructivist principles and the broader characteristics of active learning. These limitations have resulted in fragmented understandings of the relationships among constructivist principles, teacher strategies, and active learning across

separate studies (Kartikasari *et al.*, 2026). This situation creates opportunities for literature reviews capable of synthesizing empirical findings comprehensively in order to provide a more complete understanding of how teacher strategies support the implementation of constructivism and enhance children's engagement in early childhood learning. The novelty of this article lies in the development of a conceptual synthesis that integrates these three aspects—constructivist principles, teacher strategies, and active learning—thus offering a more systematic framework for understanding the implementation of constructivist learning in early childhood education.

This literature review aims to analyze and synthesize previous studies concerning the implementation of constructivist theory in early childhood education, with particular emphasis on teacher strategies and active learning. The primary contribution of this article lies in developing a conceptual synthesis that integrates recent empirical findings regarding the implementation of constructivism, the forms of teacher strategies that support children's engagement, and the characteristics of effective active learning within early childhood education contexts. The findings are expected to enrich the body of knowledge in early childhood education and serve as a reference for teachers, practitioners, and researchers in developing more participatory, meaningful, and child-centered learning practices.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature

review method to examine the implementation of constructivist theory in early childhood education, particularly in relation to teacher strategies and active learning. The review process was conducted by adapting the PRISMA framework, which includes the stages of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and the selection of articles for analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The literature search was conducted through the Scopus, ERIC, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, Garuda, and nationally accredited journal databases. The keywords used included constructivism, constructivist learning, teacher strategy, active learning, early childhood education, pembelajaran aktif, strategi guru, and pendidikan anak usia dini. The publication period covered studies published between 2021 and 2026 to represent the most recent developments in constructivism research in early childhood education.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Articles

Criteria	Inclusion	n	Exclusion	n
Research topic	Discusses constructivist theory, teacher strategies, active learning, or their implementation in early childhood education	48	Does not discuss constructivism or is unrelated to early childhood education	39
Educational level	Early Childhood Education (0–8 years old)	38	Elementary school, junior high school, senior high school, higher education	10

Publication type	Scientific journal articles	31	Conference proceedings, undergraduate theses, master's theses, dissertations, books, and book chapters	7
Journal indexing	Scopus-indexed journals or nationally accredited journals with a minimum SINTA 3 ranking	22	Non-indexed or non-accredited journals	9
Publication year	2021–2026	19	Published before 2021	3
Language	Indonesian and English	17	Languages other than Indonesian and English	2
Article accessibility	Full-text articles available	15	Abstract-only articles or inaccessible articles	2

The identification stage yielded 87 articles relevant to the research keywords. The screening process was conducted by removing duplicate articles and studies that did not align with the research focus. The eligibility assessment was carried out using the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 1. The final selection resulted in 15 articles that met all the criteria and were used as the primary sources of analysis, consisting of five Scopus-indexed international journal articles and ten nationally accredited journal articles with a minimum ranking of SINTA 3.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis techniques. In

the first stage, all selected articles were thoroughly examined to identify the research objectives, research methods, instructional strategies employed, teachers' roles, and the outcomes of constructivist implementation. In the second stage, coding procedures were performed to classify key findings related to the focus of the study (Ardyan & Boari, 2023).

The research themes were developed inductively based on recurring patterns identified across the analyzed articles. The analysis resulted in four major themes: the role of teachers as learning facilitators, exploration- and play-based learning strategies, the implementation of project-based and problem-based learning, and the impact of constructivist learning on children's engagement and development.

The comparative analysis of the articles was conducted by identifying similarities and differences in research findings based on research objectives, participant characteristics, instructional strategies, and the outcomes of constructivist implementation (Agusniatih & R, 2022). The comparison results were then used to identify research trends, supporting factors for the successful implementation of constructivism, and variations in teacher strategies applied in different early childhood education contexts.

The synthesis stage was carried out by integrating findings that shared conceptual relationships, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of constructivist theory in early childhood education. The synthesis process not only summarized

previous findings but also identified general patterns, research gaps, and practical implications that can serve as a foundation for developing active learning in early childhood education.

Result and Discussions

Table 2. Summary Matrix of the Literature Review

No	Author(s) and Year	Method	Main Findings
1	Göncü & Main (2023)	Qualitative	Teachers perceive constructivism as an approach that positions children as constructors of knowledge through learning experiences.
2	Konishi & Chesney (2024)	Quantitative	Constructivism influences teachers' beliefs in implementing child-centered learning and supports children's self-regulation.
3	Hong & Han (2024)	Qualitative Case Study	Constructivist pedagogy enhances teachers' ability to understand children's thinking and metacognitive processes.
4	Chen et al. (2024)	Literature Review	Play-based learning encourages children's active participation in decision-making during the learning process.
5	Alotaibi (2024)	Systematic Review & Meta-Analysis	Game-based learning has been proven to improve motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes in early childhood education.

6	Walyani et al. (2023)	Qualitative	Teachers act as facilitators who support children's learning needs holistically.
7	Saputri & Katoningsih (2023)	Qualitative	Teacher strategies that provide opportunities for discussion and exploration enhance children's critical-thinking skills.
8	Saugi et al. (2023)	Qualitative	BCCT Learning improves children's creativity and problem-solving abilities.
9	Wijayanto et al. (2023)	Qualitative Literature Review	Problem-Based Learning improves children's creativity and problem-solving abilities.
10	Putri & Taqiudin (2022)	Mixed Method	STEAM-based Problem-Based Learning supports active learning through exploration and contextual problem-solving.
11	Agusniatih et al. (2023)	Descriptive Qualitative	Project-Based Learning provides meaningful learning experiences and increases children's participation.
12	Hartanti & Afandi (2024)	Qualitative	Constructivist-based drawing activities foster children's creativity through direct experiences.
13	Nurani et al. (2024)	Research and Development (R&D) based on Borg and Gall	Local wisdom- and play center-based learning models support active character development in children.
14	Trihantoyo et al. (2023)	Research and Development	Co-construction learning strengthens the learning

		Approach with The ADDIE Model	process through collaboration and social interaction.
15	Wulan & Jamaris (2023)	Qualitative	Game-based learning promotes character development and active participation among children.

Based on Table 2, the fifteen articles that met the inclusion criteria consisted of five Scopus-indexed international articles and ten SINTA-indexed national articles. These articles were published between 2022 and 2024 and focused on the implementation of constructivist theory in early childhood education through various active learning strategies.

The findings indicate that constructivism in early childhood education is implemented through various approaches, including play-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, game-based learning, center-based learning, and the STEAM approach (Chen *et al.*, 2024; Putri & Taqiudin, 2021; Wijayanto *et al.*, 2023). Most studies also position teachers as facilitators who play a role in creating learning environments that support children’s exploration, interaction, and learning experiences (Saputri & Katoningsih, 2023; Saugi *et al.*, 2023; Walyani *et al.*, 2023).

The review findings demonstrate that constructivist learning has positive effects on early childhood development. These effects include improvements in creativity, critical-thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, social skills, and character development (Hartanti & Afandi,

2024; Hong & Han, 2024; Nurani *et al.*, 2024; Wulan & Jamaris, 2023). These findings suggest that child-centered learning, which provides opportunities for children to construct knowledge through direct experience, remains a dominant approach in contemporary early childhood education research.

The review also reveals consistency between national and international studies regarding the importance of implementing constructivist theory in early childhood education. All the studies analyzed position children as active participants who construct knowledge through experience, exploration, social interaction, and reflection on their activities. These findings are consistent with the constructivist perspective, which argues that learning does not occur through the direct transfer of knowledge from teachers to children but through children's active involvement in constructing their own understanding (Göncü & Main, 2023; Hong & Han, 2024; Konishi & Chesney, 2024). Another similarity lies in the changing role of teachers, who shift from being the center of instruction to becoming facilitators who provide learning environments that support exploration and discovery. Teachers are responsible for designing activities, providing appropriate stimulation, and assisting children throughout the learning process (Saputri & Katoningsih, 2023; Saugi *et al.*, 2023; Walyani *et al.*, 2023).

Despite sharing the same theoretical foundation, the studies reviewed demonstrate variations in the strategies used to implement

constructivism. Some studies emphasize play-based learning as the primary means through which children acquire meaningful learning experiences and develop social skills through interaction with their environment and peers (Chen *et al.*, 2024; Wulan & Jamaris, 2023). Other studies indicate that problem-based learning, project-based learning, and STEAM approaches are more effective in fostering children's creativity, critical-thinking skills, and problem-solving abilities (Agusniatih *et al.*, 2023; Putri & Taqiudin, 2021; Wijayanto *et al.*, 2023). These differences indicate that constructivist principles can be implemented through various instructional strategies tailored to learning objectives, children's characteristics, and the context of early childhood education institutions.

Research trends during the period from 2022 to 2024 indicate increasing attention to child-centered active learning. Approaches that provide opportunities for children to play, experiment, discuss, and solve problems are increasingly being used as forms of constructivist implementation in early childhood education (Alotaibi, 2024; Chen *et al.*, 2024; Saugi *et al.*, 2023). This trend reflects a paradigm shift from content-oriented instruction to learning that emphasizes children's experiences and active participation. It also aligns with the demands of twenty-first-century competencies, which emphasize creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration from an early age.

The review findings further demonstrate that constructivist learning contributes not only to cognitive development but also to

children's social development and character formation. Learning activities that allow children to collaborate, discuss, and solve problems collectively enhance communication skills, social interaction, and self-confidence (Nurani *et al.*, 2024; Trihantoyo *et al.*, 2024). Purposefully designed play activities also contribute to the development of character traits such as responsibility, independence, and decision-making skills (Wulan & Jamaris, 2023). These findings reinforce the notion that early childhood education should promote children's holistic development rather than focus solely on academic achievement.

The implications of the findings indicate that the successful implementation of constructivism largely depends on teachers' ability to create learning environments that support children's active participation. Teachers need to provide contextual learning experiences, offer opportunities for children to explore their surroundings, and facilitate interactions that encourage higher-order thinking processes. The implementation of strategies such as play-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, and center-based learning can serve as effective alternatives for improving the quality of early childhood education. These findings also highlight the importance of developing teachers' competencies in designing child-centered learning activities so that constructivist principles can be optimally implemented in everyday educational practices (Adhe *et al.*, 2026).

The synthesis of the reviewed articles resulted in a conceptual model illustrating the relationship among teachers' roles, active

learning strategies, the process of knowledge construction, and children's developmental outcomes. Teachers, as facilitators, serve as the initial factor determining the quality of children's learning experiences by providing stimulating learning environments and opportunities for exploration. These environments are then manifested through various active learning strategies, such as play-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, STEAM, game-based learning, and sentra learning. These strategies enable children to construct knowledge through direct experiences, social interaction, reflection, and problem-solving activities (Alfina & Juwita, 2026). The process of active knowledge construction ultimately contributes to children's cognitive, social, and character development in an integrated manner. This synthesis demonstrates that the implementation of constructivism in early childhood education is an interconnected process in which teachers' roles, children's learning activities, and developmental outcomes cannot be separated.

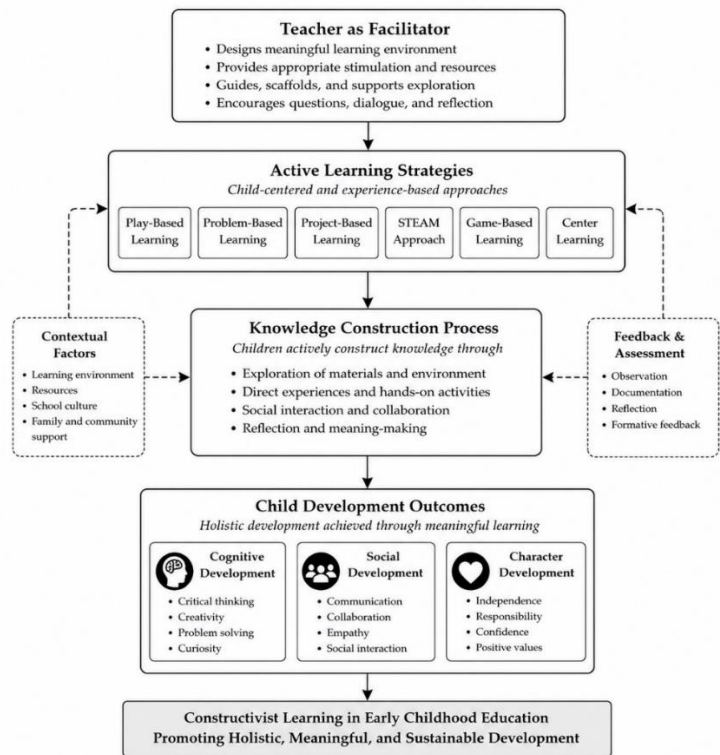


Figure 1. Conceptual Synthesis of Constructivist Learning Implementation in Early Childhood Education According to Authors's Synthesis.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that constructivist theory remains a relevant foundation for child-centered learning in early childhood education. Constructivist principles are implemented through various active learning strategies, including play-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, game-based learning, center-based learning, and the STEAM approach. These strategies provide children with opportunities to construct knowledge through direct experiences,

exploration, social interaction, and reflection, thereby supporting their cognitive, social, and character development. The successful implementation of constructivism is strongly influenced by teachers' roles as facilitators who create learning environments that encourage children's active engagement.

The findings also reveal an increasing trend in the use of active learning practices in early childhood education as an effort to support the development of twenty-first-century competencies. Children's active involvement in the learning process has been proven to contribute to the enhancement of creativity, critical-thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, communication, and collaboration. These findings confirm that experiential and child-centered learning remains a dominant and relevant approach in early childhood education.

The theoretical contribution of this review lies in reinforcing constructivism as a conceptual framework for understanding early childhood learning processes. The synthesis of various studies has resulted in a conceptual model that illustrates the interrelationships among teachers' roles as facilitators, active learning strategies, the process of knowledge construction, and children's development. The practical contribution of this study emphasizes the importance of enhancing teachers' competencies in designing activities that promote exploration, collaboration, problem-solving, and meaningful learning experiences. Future research is recommended to examine the proposed conceptual model in various early childhood education contexts to

broaden the understanding of the effectiveness of constructivist implementation in supporting children's development.

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