

Building Self-Confidence in Shy Children through Group Activities in Class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya (A Case Study)

Amaliah Syafitri¹, Ilun Muallifah²

^{*1,2} Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, Surabaya, Indonesia

e-mail: ^{*1}amaliahsyafitri197@gmail.com, ²ilunmuallifah@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Low self-confidence in early childhood is reflected in doubts about personal abilities, lack of optimism, and difficulties in social interaction. This condition affects children's ability to adapt and actively participate in learning activities. To help children overcome these challenges, role-playing activities and group activities were implemented and designed to foster children's courage and independence. Teachers play a role as facilitators who guide and provide supporting facilities so that activities run in an enjoyable and meaningful manner. The strategies applied include the provision of play media, the arrangement of implementation time, and the provision of appreciation in each learning session. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the implementation of group activities is able to increase the self-

confidence of shy children, as children are given opportunities to interact, cooperate, and confidently express themselves within a safe and supportive social environment.

Introduction

Self-confidence is one of the important aspects in personality development, functioning as a driving force that encourages learners to achieve success. This attitude is formed through learning processes as well as interactions with the surrounding environment (Arianti, 2019). Individuals who lack self-confidence tend to possess a negative self-concept and doubt their own abilities, which often leads them to withdraw from social environments (Tanjung, 2017). Self-concept refers to an individual's perception of themselves that is shaped through experience and interaction with the environment. This understanding includes physical aspects, social roles, emotional conditions, moral values, as well as expectations and achievements (Fadillah, 2017a).

An individual's understanding of themselves encompasses various aspects such as physical condition, personal identity, roles within the family, social life, moral and ethical values, emotional states, as well as expectations and achievements attained. Self-confidence is the ability to believe in one's own capabilities or the ability to develop positive self-assessments, both toward oneself and the surrounding environment. There are many factors that can influence a person's self-confidence, including both external and internal factors. The benefits of self-confidence include better emotional health, ease in decision-making, the

development of resilience, and the improvement of interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, self-confidence also helps individuals manage feelings of anxiety that often interfere with daily activities.

One way to address students who lack self-confidence is by providing appreciation. Every student needs recognition and attention. Teachers should not hesitate to give appreciation, even for the smallest achievements made by students. Sensitivity is also required when providing feedback or criticism regarding students' shortcomings; such input must be conveyed using appropriate language and emphasis on the object being discussed so that students can understand and accept the feedback given (Muarifah, n.d.). In addition, consultation with parents is equally important so that children's development is not limited to the school environment alone but is also supported at home. This collaboration makes it easier for children to express themselves confidently and develop their abilities without feeling restricted (Ginting, 2023).

Self-confidence is a crucial aspect of early childhood personality development. It plays an important role in encouraging children to dare to try new things, actively participate in learning activities, and establish healthy social relationships. Self-confidence does not develop instantly; rather, it grows through continuous learning processes and positive interactions with the surrounding environment (Arianti, 2019). Children who possess self-confidence demonstrate belief in their abilities, are able to express themselves, and adapt more easily to new

social situations.

Conversely, children who lack self-confidence tend to have a negative self-concept. They often doubt their abilities, feel anxious easily, and tend to withdraw from social environments. In the long term, this condition can hinder children's social and emotional development. Early childhood, however, is a golden period of development, during which various potentials grow rapidly and require appropriate stimulation (Fadillah, 2017b).

One of the real challenges frequently encountered in early childhood education institutions is the presence of children who exhibit shy behavior. Shy children are generally reluctant to interact with peers, lack the courage to express opinions, and prefer to remain silent or avoid situations involving many people. This condition not only hampers their social-emotional development but also affects the overall learning process. Such children tend to show low enthusiasm for participating in learning activities and often display a high dependence on their parents' presence within the school environment (Rifa, n.d.).

Various studies indicate that shyness in children can be addressed through appropriate approaches, one of which is the implementation of collaborative and participatory learning strategies, such as group play activities and role-playing. Teachers play a vital role in designing and implementing learning activities that support the development of children's self-confidence, as well as in creating a safe and comfortable environment for children to express themselves and engage in social

interactions (Putri, 2021). Permata Sholihah et al. (2023) state that group activities help reduce shyness and enhance children's social interactions. Purnomo (2022) shows that group-based games assist shy children in adapting to social environments with greater confidence. Novela (n.d.) also explains that group-based educational games are capable of stimulating self-confidence in early childhood. These findings are reinforced by Andine Amelya and Yulianti Fitriani (n.d.), who emphasize that a supportive learning environment and the teacher's role as a facilitator greatly influence the development of self-confidence in shy children.

Based on this phenomenon, the present study focuses on efforts to build the self-confidence of shy children through group activities in class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach, aiming to describe how group activities can serve as an effective strategy for enhancing the self-confidence of shy children and supporting their social-emotional development optimally.

In cases encountered by the researchers at early childhood education institutions, several children were found to have low levels of self-confidence. For example, some children were still hesitant and shy when asked to answer questions. There was limited communication among children, and some were afraid to engage in social interactions with others. Certain children showed low interest in attending school; some refused to separate from their parents upon arrival at school,

repeatedly asking to go home. During learning activities, these children often asked teachers how many hours remained before going home. Additionally, some children cried every morning, refused to enter the classroom, and were unwilling to participate in learning activities. This situation significantly disrupted the teaching and learning process, as teachers were unable to freely explain the learning material to students (Oktariana, 2021).

Based on initial observations conducted by the researchers at RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya in Group A, it was found that the total number of children in the group was 24. The observations revealed issues related to low self-confidence among the children, particularly when teachers posed questions related to learning themes. Five children were identified as having low self-confidence and exhibiting shy behavior. One of them, identified by the initial Z, showed a high level of shyness. When called by the teacher, Z required a long time to approach due to extreme shyness, causing the teacher to repeatedly call the child's name. This child demonstrated a significant lack of self-confidence. Another child, identified as H, frequently cried upon arriving at school and was reluctant to separate from their parents. H also often asked the teacher how much time remained before going home, expressing a desire to reunite with their parents. A child identified as R also showed low self-confidence, appearing shy when asked to come forward by the teacher and even feeling embarrassed when speaking with peers. Furthermore, a child identified as N

displayed similar low self-confidence; although willing to come forward when requested by the teacher, their responses were relatively slow, and they repeatedly sought confirmation that their name had been called. Another child, identified as K, also exhibited shyness, particularly when completing tasks. K was reluctant to ask the teacher for clarification when tasks were not understood, resulting in delays in task completion. Based on direct observations at RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya, it was evident that the self-confidence of children in Group A tended to be low, with many exhibiting shy behavior. Only 19 out of the 24 children demonstrated high levels of self-confidence.

Methods

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the process of developing self-confidence in shy children through group activities in class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya. The study aimed to explore efforts to build the self-confidence of shy children through the implementation of group-based activities. The research subjects included early childhood education teachers, students identified as having shy characteristics, as well as related parties involved in the implementation of the activities. The primary research setting was class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya (Auliani et al., 2024).

The research subjects consisted of five children identified as having shy characteristics out of a total of 24 children in class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya, along with one classroom teacher who served as the

main informant. The criteria for identifying shy children were determined based on initial observations that indicated behaviors such as social withdrawal, reluctance to interact, and lack of courage to participate in classroom activities.

Data were collected through direct observation of activity implementation, in-depth interviews to explore the perspectives, experiences, and perceptions of students and school personnel, and field notes as supporting documentation. Data analysis was conducted through several stages, including data reduction, data presentation in the form of narratives, matrices, and descriptive themes, and conclusion drawing to determine the development of group activities in building the self-confidence of shy children (Fitriani & Rokhman, 2023).

Result and Discussions

The results of the research conducted at RA Masjid Al Akbar through observation techniques revealed the presence of a child who exhibited characteristics of shyness. The child appeared quiet and reluctant to interact with peers. The child lacked the courage to express opinions or desires and seemed less enthusiastic about learning activities. These shy behaviors were observed consistently on a daily basis. Some children cried every time they arrived at school, asking to go home and refusing to be separated from their parents. At times, during the middle of learning activities, shy children asked the teacher what time the lesson would end and when they would go home, as they wanted the learning activities to finish quickly so they could reunite

with their parents. There were also shy children who did not cry upon arriving at school but moved slowly when called by the teacher, appearing confused, hesitant, and embarrassed. As a result, teachers often had to call these children repeatedly before they approached. This condition, however, hindered the development of children's independence. Meanwhile, observations at school showed that these children were very active when being picked up by their parents after school. This situation indicates that the children only felt comfortable and willing to interact within their family environment, as it was the environment they were most familiar with. This condition reflects typical characteristics of shy children.

The research findings indicate positive changes in children after the implementation of group activity programs. Children who were previously quiet and reluctant to interact began to show the courage to speak in front of their peers. They demonstrated enthusiasm in group activities, became more confident when appearing in front of the class, and began to show initiative without always relying on teacher direction. Group activities were proven to be effective in helping children adapt socially, increase self-confidence, and strengthen peer relationships.

Teachers played a crucial role in the success of these activities. In addition to acting as facilitators, teachers also served as motivators who fostered children's learning enthusiasm and courage. Through warm, patient, and supportive approaches, teachers were able to create a

classroom atmosphere that was safe and comfortable for children to express themselves. Providing appreciation for every small effort made by children was shown to have a significant impact on fostering their self-confidence.

The implementation of group activities in class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya demonstrates that participatory-based learning strategies can help shy children gradually build self-confidence. Through positive social interactions and a supportive learning environment, children learn to understand themselves, respect others, and confidently demonstrate their potential. Thus, self-confidence grows not only as a learning outcome but also as part of character development formed through positive school experiences. Shyness is a character trait that originates from within the child and has specific causal factors, requiring appropriate solution-oriented approaches. Shyness can hinder the development of children's potential, particularly in social and emotional aspects. However, when children's social and emotional abilities develop well, other potentials can be more easily developed.

Development in early childhood education refers to gradual and adaptive changes, both physically and mentally, in accordance with children's stages of growth and levels of maturity (Suryana, 2014). Early childhood education is intended for children from birth up to the age of eight years. This age range is a critical phase, as children experience significant development in physical, cognitive, emotional, and social

domains. Therefore, stimulation of these developmental aspects needs to be provided from an early age, whether at home, in childcare centers, or through various educational services.

Therefore, children need to be accustomed to interacting with peers and frequently taken to crowded places so that they become more familiar with social environments. A positive environment can help shy children become braver. Interaction with individuals who display positive behavior is also important, as children tend to imitate what they see and hear from their surroundings. The development of shyness in children is strongly influenced by the surrounding environment, including parenting styles—whether parents are overly protective or provide encouragement that enables children to face the outside world and build self-confidence.

Children possess unique characteristics that distinguish them from adults. According to Nurasyiah and Atikah (2023), early childhood is a golden period of development, during which physical and psychological functions mature and are ready to be stimulated. They emphasize the importance of understanding early childhood developmental characteristics in order to design learning activities appropriate to children's ages. According to Pebriana (2017), the characteristics of early childhood include egocentrism, high curiosity, social nature, individuality, rich imagination, short attention span, and being in the most potential phase for learning.

Shy children tend to exhibit negative responses to new stimuli and

withdraw from such situations (Hasiana, 2020). Khoerunnisa (2021) explains that in shy children, new stimuli quickly activate the amygdala—a structure in the brain responsible for avoidance responses—which is connected to the cerebral cortex and the sympathetic nervous system. This activation prepares the body to respond to perceived threats (Mu'awwanah, 2017). The term “shy” originates from the word “malu,” which, according to the Indonesian General Dictionary, refers to feelings of discomfort, inferiority, or humiliation resulting from actions perceived as improper or embarrassing. However, shyness differs from feelings of embarrassment; shyness is a more stable trait and becomes part of one’s personality, while embarrassment typically arises in specific situations. From this explanation, it can be concluded that shyness in children may result in several impacts, including: (a) children’s potential not developing optimally; (b) obstacles in individual development; (c) lack of social skills and difficulty adapting to the environment; (d) limited access to information and social relationships; and (e) minimal experiences that may disrupt the learning process, especially for school-aged children.

Shy children generally display several observable characteristics in their daily behavior. According to Khoirunnisa (2020), shy children tend to avoid social relationships with others and their environment, exhibit hesitation and uncertainty, and are less inclined to engage in social interactions. Furthermore, Purnomo (2022) states that the characteristics

of shy children include being overly sensitive, hesitant, isolated, gloomy, and experiencing difficulties in socializing.

At RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya, several children were found to experience difficulties in socializing and faced developmental barriers. These children tended to remain quiet in the classroom, rarely interacted with peers, and engaged minimally in communication with teachers. This situation led teachers to recognize that some students across several groups were experiencing developmental challenges.

Shy children often avoid interaction with others and frequently feel fearful, suspicious, cautious, and hesitant in their actions. They usually withdraw from social relationships. In social situations, they rarely initiate conversations, speak softly, and tend to avoid eye contact. Such children are often perceived as easily bored and may eventually be avoided by peers, which further reinforces their shyness. Because they rarely cause problems, their presence is often overlooked, particularly in school environments. When faced with difficult situations, shy children tend to withdraw or leave the setting. Preschool- and school-aged children who exhibit shy traits often experience difficulties interacting with others. Generally, a normal phase of shyness first appears around the age of five or six months and reappears around the age of two years (Mu'awwanah, 2017).

This article aims to describe various aspects related to shyness in early childhood. Therefore, this article falls under the category of descriptive qualitative research. In accordance with the qualitative

approach, the research design is flexible and can be adjusted to field conditions and findings that emerge throughout the research process.

The role of the teacher is reflected in their teaching competence, autonomy in carrying out educational processes, and creativity in developing innovative ideas. Teachers must also be capable of designing appropriate learning strategies for early childhood, particularly in shaping students' mental and emotional development. In addition, teachers are required to optimize all their potential in classroom instruction and character development. In teaching and learning activities, teachers play various important roles, including educator, trainer, information source, facilitator, guide, demonstrator, classroom manager, consultant, innovator, motivator, skills trainer, and director of student development (Ati et al., 2022).

Teachers have the responsibility to understand the unique characteristics of each student and apply appropriate strategies to build their self-confidence. Based on interviews with the class A2 teacher, group activities resulted in positive changes in the self-confidence of shy children. Children who were previously passive and reluctant to interact began to show the courage to participate in classroom activities. As stated by the class A2 teacher:

“Initially, the shy children would remain silent when called, and some even cried. After frequently being involved in group activities, they gradually began to participate. Now they are brave enough to speak and no longer constantly cling to their parents.”

(Class A2 Teacher)

Figure 1. Children try to interact with others



Improvements were also observed in children's ability to interact with peers:

"Previously, they preferred to sit alone, but now they are willing to sit together with their friends during group work. Shy children become more confident because they are with their peers."

Group activities create a sense of security for shy children to express themselves:

"Shy children are braver when they are in small groups. They feel they are not alone, so they become more confident."

(Class A2 Teacher)

These findings indicate that group activities function as effective social stimuli for shy children. Interaction within small groups helps children feel safe and reduces anxiety, thereby increasing their willingness to participate. These findings align with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's development.

Figure 2. Children trying to perform in front of the classroom



Efforts undertaken include creating a clean, comfortable, and well-organized classroom environment, providing opportunities for all students to express their opinions, and offering rewards such as gifts or applause for students who dare to come forward to sing or answer teachers' questions. In addition, teachers implement group-based learning to help enhance self-confidence, particularly among shy students. Teachers must be able to adapt to each student's needs and identify the most effective approaches to support their learning processes. Children with high levels of shyness generally have low self-confidence and experience anxiety during social interactions. Therefore, teachers play a vital role in designing strategies to enhance self-confidence, such as providing rewards, implementing group activities, and maintaining effective communication between schools and parents. Moreover, teachers are required to understand individual differences among students and create diverse learning experiences to optimally develop their abilities (Hanifah et al., 2024).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory

emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's learning processes. In the context of shy children, the ZPD approach can be used to provide appropriate support to help them develop language and social skills. Insani (2024) states that shy children who receive guidance based on the ZPD framework show significant improvements in language abilities, self-confidence, and reductions in the social barriers they previously experienced. The research findings indicate that group activities provide a safe social space for shy children to interact gradually. Interaction in small groups helps reduce anxiety and increase a sense of security, enabling children to participate more confidently in classroom activities. This condition demonstrates that social support through group activities plays an important role in building children's self-confidence, in line with the ZPD concept that highlights the role of social interaction in child development.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that group activities play an effective role in increasing the self-confidence of shy children in class A2 of RA Masjid Al Akbar Surabaya. Children who were previously passive, hesitant, and reluctant to interact began to show the courage to speak, participate, and interact with their peers. Group activities provide a safe and supportive social space, allowing children to gradually express themselves and reduce social anxiety. These findings imply that early childhood education teachers need to consistently implement group activity-based learning strategies to support children's social-emotional

development, particularly for shy children. The teacher's role as a facilitator and provider of positive reinforcement is crucial in creating a safe and inclusive learning environment. In addition, collaboration between teachers and parents is necessary to ensure that the strengthening of children's self-confidence can be sustained both at school and at home.

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