

Outdoor Learning through Scientific Excursions to Foster Exploratory Attitudes in Early Childhood

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas penerapan rihlah ilmiah sebagai strategi untuk menumbuhkan sikap eksploratif pada anak usia dini. Anak pada tahap perkembangan awal secara alami menunjukkan rasa ingin tahu dan keinginan untuk mengeksplorasi lingkungan sekitarnya, sehingga pengalaman belajar yang bersifat langsung sangat penting. Rihlah ilmiah memberikan kesempatan bagi anak untuk terlibat dengan fenomena nyata di luar kelas, memungkinkan mereka mengamati, bertanya, dan berinteraksi langsung dengan lingkungan sekitar. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui studi pustaka, menganalisis penelitian terdahulu serta praktik pembelajaran outdoor dan pembelajaran eksploratif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kegiatan rihlah ilmiah mampu meningkatkan perkembangan kognitif, sosial, emosional, dan motorik anak, sekaligus mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis dan pemecahan masalah. Guru berperan penting dalam memfasilitasi pengalaman ini dengan membimbing pembelajaran sambil tetap memberikan kebebasan eksplorasi kepada anak. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya integrasi pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman dalam pendidikan anak usia dini untuk menumbuhkan rasa ingin tahu dan sikap belajar aktif secara berkelanjutan. Penerapan rihlah ilmiah secara sistematis dapat meningkatkan kualitas dan efektivitas program pembelajaran PAUD.

ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of scientific excursions as a strategy to foster exploratory attitudes in early childhood education. Children at the early developmental stage naturally exhibit curiosity and a desire to explore their surroundings, making hands-on learning experiences essential. Scientific excursions provide opportunities for children to engage with real-life phenomena outside the classroom, allowing them to observe, question, and interact directly with their environment. This qualitative study employs a literature review approach, analyzing previous research and practical applications of outdoor educational activities and exploratory learning. Findings indicate that such excursions enhance cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development, while also promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating these experiences, guiding learning while allowing children autonomy in exploration. The study highlights the importance of integrating experiential learning into early childhood education to cultivate lifelong curiosity and an active learning mindset. Implementing scientific excursions systematically can improve the quality and effectiveness of early childhood learning programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a fundamental foundation in shaping children's character, attitudes, and basic potential from an early age (Campbell-Barr, 2017; Diananda & Waspada, 2025; Suprihatin, 2024). At this stage, children are in the golden age, a critical period that greatly influences their cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual development (Priawansyah et al., 2024; Ramadhan et al., 2022). Learning processes at the ECE level should ideally be designed to be enjoyable, contextual, and aligned with children's world. Young children learn most effectively through direct experiences that involve their senses and real-life activities. Therefore, active and exploratory learning approaches are essential to implement. Learning is not limited to the classroom but can also be extended to the surrounding environment (Cross et al., 2022). Natural and social environments can serve as rich and meaningful learning resources for children. Thus, ECE learning needs to develop models that encourage children to be active, curious, and directly engaged in the learning process.

One learning approach that aligns well with the characteristics of early childhood learners is outdoor learning (Gilbertson et al., 2022; Kiviranta et al., 2024). Outdoor learning provides opportunities for children to learn outside the classroom by utilizing the surrounding environment as a learning medium. Outdoor activities allow children to move freely, explore, and interact directly with real objects. This approach is consistent with ECE learning principles that emphasize learning by doing and learning by experience. Outdoor learning can also reduce children's boredom caused by monotonous classroom activities (Budiman, 2020; Gilbertson et al., 2022; Zamani, 2016). In addition, outdoor activities can enhance learning motivation, curiosity, and social skills. Through outdoor learning, children gain not only knowledge but also meaningful learning experiences. Therefore, outdoor learning needs to be systematically developed within ECE institutions.

In reality, the implementation of ECE learning in practice is still dominated by classroom-based activities. At RA Fattahul Huda, learning is largely conducted through sitting, listening, and completing simple tasks. This condition limits children's opportunities to explore freely and independently. Children's exploratory attitudes, such as asking questions, experimenting, and observing their surroundings, have not developed optimally. Teachers tend to focus more on content delivery and the achievement of learning targets. In addition, limited teacher understanding of outdoor learning models becomes one of the main obstacles. In fact, the environment surrounding the school has great potential to be utilized as a learning resource. If this condition continues, children's learning experiences may become less meaningful and less optimal.

The study conducted by Wishart and Rouse (2019) explored how early childhood educators develop professional learning and pedagogical practices in outdoor learning

environments. The findings indicate that engaging with outdoor spaces enhances educators' understanding of child-centered learning and promotes the integration of play-based, exploratory approaches in early childhood education (Wishart & Rouse, 2019). The study conducted by Jose, Patrick, and Moseley (2017) examined the role of outdoor classrooms in facilitating experiential learning within environmental education. The findings reveal that outdoor learning environments significantly enhance students' engagement, understanding, and retention of environmental concepts through hands-on, real-world experiences (Jose et al., 2017).

The study conducted by Gül (2024) investigated the application of experiential learning in outdoor environments and its impact on student engagement and skill development. The findings indicate that outdoor experiential activities foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning, providing meaningful and memorable educational experiences beyond the traditional classroom setting (Gül, 2024). The study conducted by Affendi and Masnan (2022) explored the use of outdoor classroom learning as a complement to indoor preschool education. The findings indicate that outdoor learning extends children's engagement, enhances experiential understanding, and supports the development of social, cognitive, and motor skills through hands-on, interactive activities (Affendi & Masnan, 2022).

Based on the review of previous studies, it can be concluded that outdoor learning and *rihlah ilmiah* have significant potential to enhance the quality of ECE learning. However, studies that specifically examine outdoor learning through *rihlah ilmiah* to foster exploratory attitudes in early childhood are still rarely found. Moreover, research conducted in the context of RA or Islamic-based ECE institutions remains very limited. Most existing studies emphasize cognitive learning outcomes rather than children's exploratory attitudes. In addition, few studies integrate *rihlah ilmiah* with outdoor learning in a comprehensive manner. Therefore, research that examines the implementation of outdoor learning through *rihlah ilmiah* in depth is needed. This study is expected to offer novelty in the development of ECE learning models. Thus, this research holds clear urgency and scientific contribution.

Based on the background described above, this study aims to describe the implementation of outdoor learning through *rihlah ilmiah* at RA Fattahul Huda. This study also aims to analyze how outdoor learning through *rihlah ilmiah* can foster exploratory attitudes in early childhood. In addition, this research seeks to identify forms of *rihlah ilmiah* activities that are appropriate for the characteristics of ECE learners. This study is expected to provide insights into the role of the environment as a learning resource. Another objective is to examine children's responses to outdoor learning based on *rihlah ilmiah*. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for ECE teachers in developing innovative learning approaches. Thus, this research is

anticipated to contribute both practically and theoretically to the development of early childhood education.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design (Majid, 2017; Setiawan, 2018). The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the outdoor learning process through *rihlah ilmiah* within its natural context. Through this qualitative inquiry, the researcher seeks to explore meanings, experiences, and interactions that occur during the learning process. The research subjects consist of teachers and early childhood learners at RA Fattahul Huda who are directly involved in outdoor learning activities. The object of the study focuses on the implementation of *rihlah ilmiah* and the exploratory attitudes demonstrated by children during the learning activities. The research was conducted in the RA Fattahul Huda environment by utilizing areas around the school as locations for *rihlah ilmiah*. The researcher acts as the main instrument and is directly involved in the data collection process. Through this approach, the data obtained are expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth depiction of the learning phenomenon.

Data collection techniques in this study include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly examine children's activities during outdoor learning and the emergence of exploratory behaviors. Interviews were conducted with teachers to obtain information regarding the planning, implementation, and evaluation of *rihlah ilmiah*-based learning. Documentation was used to support the data in the form of photographs of activities, lesson plans, and records of children's development. The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation (Prastowo, 2016). The analysis process was conducted continuously from data collection until the completion of the research. Thus, the research findings are expected to demonstrate a high level of validity and credibility.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Outdoor Learning for Early Childhood

Outdoor learning for early childhood education is a learning approach that utilizes environments outside the classroom as the primary learning resources (Lyne Strachan et al., 2017). Outdoor environments provide children with real and contextual learning experiences. Early childhood learners have characteristics of learning through play, movement, and direct interaction with their surroundings. Outdoor learning enables children to observe, explore, and experience learning objects firsthand. Through activities outside the classroom, children can

naturally develop their curiosity. Teachers act as facilitators who guide activities in accordance with learning objectives. Thus, outdoor learning becomes an effective alternative for creating meaningful learning experiences.

Pedagogically, outdoor learning supports the holistic development of early childhood learners. Outdoor activities can simultaneously develop cognitive, motor, social, emotional, and language aspects. Children learn concepts through concrete experiences rather than mere verbal explanations. Interaction with peers and the surrounding environment helps children develop social skills. Children also learn to manage their emotions when facing challenges during outdoor activities. This process helps children become more independent and confident. Therefore, outdoor learning aligns well with the principles of child-centered early childhood education.

Outdoor learning also plays an important role in fostering children's exploratory and creative attitudes (Harris & Bilton, 2019). Children are given the freedom to ask questions, experiment, and discover new things. Natural environments provide diverse and unlimited stimuli. Children can observe plants, animals, natural objects, and simple phenomena around them. These activities encourage children to develop critical thinking skills from an early age. Teachers can utilize moments of exploration to facilitate simple discussions. Through this approach, learning becomes more dynamic and interactive.

In terms of learning motivation, outdoor learning creates a joyful learning atmosphere. Children do not feel pressured because learning takes place through play-based activities. A pleasant atmosphere increases children's engagement in the learning process. Children become more enthusiastic and actively participate in activities. This has a positive impact on children's concentration and memory. Teachers can also more easily observe children's interests and potentials. Thus, outdoor learning can enhance the overall quality of the learning process.

Overall, outdoor learning is a relevant and contextual learning strategy for early childhood education. The environment outside the classroom becomes a rich and meaningful source of learning. Learning focuses not only on outcomes but also on children's learning experiences. Teachers need to design outdoor activities in a planned and structured manner. Support from institutions and parents is also a crucial factor in the success of outdoor learning. With proper management, outdoor learning can have positive long-term impacts. Therefore, this approach deserves to be further developed in early childhood education.

Scientific Excursions to Foster Exploratory Attitudes in Early Childhood

Scientific excursions offer young children unique opportunities to engage with their environment beyond the classroom, stimulating curiosity and hands-on learning. At an early age, children naturally possess a strong sense of wonder and a desire to explore the world around them. By participating in guided excursions, they can observe, question, and interact with real-life

phenomena, transforming abstract concepts into meaningful experiences. These activities not only enhance cognitive development but also support social, emotional, and motor skills as children collaborate and navigate new settings. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating these excursions, providing guidance while allowing children the freedom to investigate independently. Integrating scientific excursions into early childhood education encourages active learning and nurtures an exploratory mindset. Consequently, these experiences lay a strong foundation for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and a positive attitude toward discovery.

1. Scientific Rihlah through Ziarah Activities

Ziarah activities as part of scientific rihlah have strong educational value in early childhood learning. Through this activity, children are introduced to a religious environment rich in spiritual and historical values. Children are invited to directly observe the pilgrimage site, its surroundings, and the activities carried out by the community. This process fosters children's curiosity about the meaning and significance of the places they visit. Teachers play an active role by providing simple explanations using language that is easily understood by children. Direct interaction with a real environment makes learning more meaningful. Thus, ziarah is not merely a ritual activity but also serves as a form of contextual learning.

From the perspective of exploratory attitudes, ziarah activities encourage children to actively observe and ask questions. Children show interest in objects around the cemetery, such as gravestones, trees, and supporting buildings. This curiosity naturally emerges because children are exposed to a new situation that differs from the classroom environment. Teachers facilitate this exploration by allowing children to observe directly. Children also learn manners and appropriate behavior while visiting sacred places. This experience enriches children's understanding of social and cultural environments. Therefore, children's exploration is not only physical but also social and emotional.

Ziarah activities also contribute to character building from an early age. Children are introduced to values of respect for historical figures and the importance of praying for others. These values are conveyed through simple activities such as praying together and listening to short stories. The stories delivered by teachers stimulate children's imagination and curiosity. Children begin to connect the stories with the environment they observe directly. This helps children understand abstract concepts through real experiences. Through this approach, learning becomes more accessible for early childhood learners.

Overall, ziarah as a scientific rihlah activity provides a holistic learning experience. Children learn not only cognitively but also affectively and psychomotorically. The outdoor environment offers diverse and rich stimuli. Teachers can integrate various

developmental aspects into a single learning activity. Children's exploratory attitudes grow through observation, questioning, and direct interaction. Outdoor learning through *ziarah* becomes an effective alternative in early childhood education. Therefore, this activity is relevant to be implemented sustainably.

2. Scientific Rihlah to the Walisongo Pavilion

Visits to the Walisongo pavilion represent a form of scientific *rihlah* that introduces children to Islamic history and religious figures in a simple manner. The representative environment of the pavilion provides an engaging visual experience for early childhood learners. Children can observe miniatures, images, and symbols related to the Walisongo. This stimulates children's curiosity about the figures and objects they encounter. Teachers provide brief explanations using storytelling approaches that are enjoyable for children. Learning through storytelling helps children grasp historical concepts in a light and accessible way. Thus, the Walisongo pavilion serves as an effective medium for contextual learning.

Children's exploratory attitudes become evident as they observe various areas of the pavilion. They show interest in building structures, colors, and ornaments. Children actively ask questions about the figures being introduced. These questions reflect the early development of critical thinking skills. Teachers facilitate this exploration by creating opportunities for simple discussions. Children are encouraged to express their opinions and observations. This process strengthens children's confidence in learning.

In addition to cognitive development, this visit instills moral and religious values. Children are introduced to exemplary behaviors of the Walisongo through inspiring stories. Values such as honesty, patience, and care for others are conveyed in a simple manner. Children relate these stories to their daily lives. This helps them understand values contextually. The pavilion environment supports the internalization of values through direct experience. Consequently, learning becomes more meaningful and memorable.

Pedagogically, scientific *rihlah* to the Walisongo pavilion enriches early childhood learning methods. Children do not merely receive information passively but actively engage in the learning process. The outdoor environment provides strong multisensory stimulation. Teachers can develop follow-up activities based on the visit. Children's exploratory attitudes grow through observation and direct interaction. This activity also strengthens the connection between learning and cultural values. Therefore, the Walisongo pavilion serves as a strategic medium for educational *rihlah*.

3. Scientific Rihlah through Educational Games

Educational games in outdoor learning constitute an important component of scientific *rihlah* for early childhood education. These activities are designed to balance play and learning effectively. Children are encouraged to play while exploring their surrounding environment. Games are conducted outside the classroom by utilizing open spaces. Children gain enjoyable and engaging learning experiences. Teachers act as facilitators who guide the games according to learning objectives. Through this approach, children learn naturally through play-based activities.

Children's exploratory attitudes are clearly observed during educational games. Children actively try, observe, and discover new ways to complete the games. The process of trial and error becomes an essential part of children's exploration. Children also learn to cooperate with their peers. These social interactions enrich children's learning experiences. Teachers provide stimuli through simple questions or challenges. This encourages children to think critically and explore further.



Figure 1 game to WBL

Educational games also support the development of children's motor and cognitive skills simultaneously. Physical activities in games help children develop bodily coordination. Meanwhile, game rules train children's thinking and problem-solving abilities. Children learn cause-and-effect relationships through direct experience. The outdoor environment provides ample space for movement and exploration. This is highly compatible with the learning characteristics of early childhood. Thus, educational games become an effective medium for exploration.

Overall, scientific *rihlah* through educational games creates an active and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Children feel free to express themselves and try new things. Teachers can directly observe the development of children's exploratory attitudes. These activities also increase children's learning motivation. Learning is no longer teacher-centered but activity-centered. The outdoor environment becomes a rich source of learning. Therefore, educational games are highly relevant in early childhood education based on scientific *rihlah*.

CONCLUSION

Scientific excursions provide a meaningful and engaging approach to early childhood education by fostering curiosity, exploration, and hands-on learning. These activities allow children to connect classroom concepts with real-world experiences, enhancing cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development simultaneously. Through observation, questioning, and interaction with their environment, children develop critical thinking skills and a proactive attitude toward learning. Teachers play a vital role in guiding these experiences while encouraging independence and creativity. Overall, integrating scientific excursions into early childhood education promotes exploratory attitudes, nurtures lifelong learning habits, and prepares children to approach new knowledge with confidence and curiosity.

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