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## IMPLEMENTATION OF MESSY PLAY TO IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD'S INTRAPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE

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### Abstract

Motor activity using coordinated movement of the body is one of the factors to improve cognitive development in children. However, children still need activities related to fine motor to balance the motor functions, one of them by playing. When children are playing, they often stop the game due to fear of dirty. Somehow, playing activities can stimulate the children motor development. This study aims to determine how the effect of *messy play* in improving children intrapersonal intelligence. This study used descriptive qualitative research method. The subjects of this study were 4 children aged 4 to 6 years old. The data collection techniques was observation. *Messy play* provided four activities to develop children intrapersonal intelligence such as moving water into the bottle with a sponge, seeking the appropriate object texture in a sandbox, moving objects according to the color into the box, and making finger painting. The results showed that two children were responsible to tidy up of their toys, three children were able to understand the rules of the game, two children did not finish the game because they did not want to be dirty, and all children were not able to control their playing time. It could be concluded that the activities of *messy play* could improve early childhood's intrapersonal intelligence, although it still needed the guidance of parents and educators. Through messy play, children were not afraid of dirty and used to playing their surrounding objects.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood, Fine Motor Development, Intra-personal intelligence, Messy Play.

### INTRODUCTION

Gross motor skills and potential of intelligence experience brings us back to ancient times where a healthy mind healthy body needs. The development of gross motor skills or cognitive development requires personal intervention through educational programs in developing gross motor or cognitive skills of children. It is also possible to evaluate individual progress and effectiveness of a program that aims to stimulate the motor skills of young children. Research shows that motor activity, in particular training coordinative capacity, could be one factor that contributes to increasing the potential and cognitive development in children (Galdi et al, 2015).

Although gross motor skills may affect a potential intelligence in children, but children also need activities related to fine motor to balance the motor functioning. The child is not enough to rely the gross motor skills in every single activities. Beside the question arises about, the game can stimulate fine motor development of children up to the intelligence of what can be developed through such games.

Fine motor skills can be developed through play activities children do. All children love to play, but the activities that do not play the same way. There are children who like to play more active and some love playing passive. Their motor skill will be good when the pick this activities. While playing less

passive involve motor skills and coordination. Thus children who have good motor skills more likely active and vice versa children who are less skilled motor tend to prefer to play a passive activity.

In active, children's arise their activities that involve movement of the senses and limbs. Among the types of active play is to play a functional play. Functional Play is an activity involving sensory and motor movement abilities in order to develop aspects of the child's motor.

Along with the process of perfecting the functions of the senses, body parts and organs, the child's ability to absorb information and learn it continues to increase its quality. Functional Play allows children sensorimotor organs work to identify, explore and discover knowledge or concepts related to the objects around him. Play activities often make children become dirty and messy. Motor play activities using the five senses that make limbs or children's clothing children become wet, dirty and messy called Messy play (Beckerleg, 2009: 18).

This study aims to determine how the effect of the application of messy play in improving child intrapersonal intelligence. For the purposes of this study were evaluated through field tests, the level of fine motor skills and intrapersonal intelligence assessment of the potential of children.

## Messy Play

Messy play is part of children's need for close contact with different substances, for creative experiments that involve learning through chaos (Szekely, 2015: 42). According to Duffy (2007), it involves:

- children using all their senses in the process of exploration, especially the sense of touch
- offering children plenty of opportunity to mould and manipulate materials
- not having a focus on making or producing something.

In the context of this article, messy play includes specific resources provided for children in a therapeutic environment, including sand, water, paint, playdough, gloop, 'gellybaff', clay, shredded paper and shaving foam (Case and Dalley 1990; Hastings 2013). *Messy Play* is the kind of game using objects that make children become dirty and messy in stimulate sensor fine motor and gross motor skills of children. In addition, children will also learn to coordinate the senses through touch, smell, taste, hearing, and vision. Known as the game Messy Play makes children become dirty and messy.

Messy play is defined with the word "messy" which gives a meaning of untidy and dirty. It is a kind of play that has no structure, no planning and involves a kind of material or various materials that will cause dirtiness and untidiness at the play area, on the child's body, or even outside the play area. According to Duffy (2007), messy play is to dirty and make a mess of a play area, and it is the process of playing with some particular playing material and, as a consequence, children learn and develop. Messy play requires children to use all their senses in the process of exploration, outstandingly the touch senses (L.C Yin, 2017: 60).

There is no age limit in this game, because the bottom line is simple, safe, and creative. So use only materials and tools that already exist in the home, such as trays or baking molds, dried pasta shapes, flour, food coloring, cooking oil, beads or sequins, and so on.

## Type of Messy Play

Some types of Messy Play are suitable to be applied for early childhood are:

1. Paint, The medium can be paper or rags. Create a cat from a mixture of flour or corn, water and food coloring. Use fingers, palms and soles, or stamp of potato cut off, even dishwashing sponge as a painting tool
2. Playdough, Mix flour, food coloring, a little oil, a little salt, and water. Use cookie cutters to dry or plastic spoon to create a variety

of shapes. While playing, Mom encourage children to recognize colors or forms that he created

3. Rainbow in a bottle, Mix decorative sand or rice with food coloring. Create 4-6 colors. Provide a small bottle of clear. Encourage the child to enter the sand or colored rice was to form layers of contrasting color
4. Buy ready-made clay. Prepare beads, sequins, or dried pasta shapes. Bentuk clay as desired, and garnish with beads or sequins earlier. Allow to dry.

Basically, this play has its own benefits for the development of intrapersonal intelligence. One intelligence that can be developed with messy play is intrapersonal intelligence.

## Intrapersonal Intelligence

Intrapersonal intelligence (understanding of self) is one of the two personal intelligences identified by Gardner, the other being interpersonal intelligence (understanding of others). Whilst these two intelligences are regarded by Gardner as being distinct from each other, he claims that the development of each is dependent upon the other (Gardner, 1993:241). Gardner (1993:240) describes intrapersonal intelligence as "access to one's own feeling life" – to be able to discriminate amongst one's feeling states and to "draw upon them as a means of understanding and guiding one's behavior". He describes it, at its most complex level, as being the capacity to "detect and symbolise complex and highly differentiated sets of feelings". In a subsequent text, he describes the intelligence as being:

... the capacity to understand oneself, to have an effective working model of oneself—including one's own desires, fears, and capacities – and to use such information effectively in regulating one's own life. (Gardner, 1999: 43).

It is an intelligence which "allows one to understand and work with oneself" (Gardner, 1999: 20). In a more recent text, Gardner describes intrapersonal intelligence as "knowledge of the internal aspects of a person" (Gardner, 2006:18). Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to understand themselves including emotions, desires, strengths, vulnerabilities and use information effectively in regulating one's life (Turleri, 2009).

Intrapersonal intelligence associated with sensitivity or awareness to conduct self-evaluation, in which, the person imposing their strengths and weaknesses to others. Type of multiple intelligences involves several aspects, as follows: (1) awareness

of the sense of self, (2) awareness of the strengths and weaknesses, (3) concern ourselves, (4) self-motivation, (5) temperament self, and (6) the ability to perform self-discipline, (7) an understanding of self and (8) trust themselves (Gardner, 1993: 237-249, Pohl, 2000: 49, Fogarty, 1991: 67).

Intrapersonal intelligence of children aged 4-6 years long developed their progress in understanding themselves. Santrock (1996: 378) states that intrapersonal intelligence related to the self-understanding shown as a concept of self. The concept of self involve identity, differences with others. Furthermore, Woolfolk & Mc Cune-Nicolich (1984: 84) and Martini Jamaris (2011: 42-43) states that children aged 4-6 years in development stage phykosocial. Therefore, the vocals are self initiative. This means that children can perform various activities based on their initiative.

Intrapersonal intelligence of children aged 4-6 years can be identified by their overt behavior, as follows: (1) demonstrate the ability to concentrate during some activities, (2) shows the behavior of liberty or without pressure, especially on the activities based on their initiative (3 ) has a strong self-motivation, (4) demonstrate the ability to learn and perform some of his own activities, (5) expresses the thoughts and feelings appropriately, (6) demonstrate the ability to direct yourself towards a goal and (7) has several hobbies.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study was carried out through qualitative methodology that is defined as a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning (Ospina 2004). Participants consisted of 4 children aged 4-6 years chosen from two selected preschools in Sleman Regency, Yogyakarta. Researchers have identified four children which include two girls and two boys of different social economic backgrounds, among the group of children in each preschool. In the context of this messy play study, creative ability support as the particular of the study. Messy play activities conducted in two different sites. Thus, the multi-sites case study method was used in check with the qualitative epistemology where multiple realities do exist in multiple contexts and it is to be compared in terms of similarities and differences through comprehend a phenomenon.

Part of the messy play activities was planned to be carried out in a classroom and part occurred outside the classroom in both research sites for the reason that messy play activity might involve untidiness and disorganization. In both Preschool A and Preschool B, four observations were carried out in the first observation involved observing the

interactions between teachers and children during lessons. It was aimed to familiarise the environment and children as well as to generate affinity between the researchers and participants (Kawulich 2005). For the second to fourth observation, the activities take in different messy play stages and materials were conducted by the researchers with less instruction to reassure the liberty in messy play. Apart from that, researchers also held half-structured interviews that include a number of questions which define aspects covered in the study, yet this type of interview enables researchers to interpret an idea or take responses that are extending (Gill et al. 2008).

Futhermore, individual focused observation on each participant was also done by researchers as the observation is a process that enables researchers to learn about participants' activities in a natural context (Kawulich 2005). Researchers were also able to record the entire process of each messy activity held to ensure comprehensive observation can be done as video footage will supplement the information noted by hand. Comprehensive observations needed to get the real picture and indirect data are also important and affect the intrapersonal intelligence of children (Merriam 2009). Participants' behaviors, conversation, actions, and all activities in the messy play were observed by researchers. Observations enable researchers to collect verbal data such as interactions between children, conversation, responses, and nonverbal data such as movements, gesture, and feelings as well as body language during the time children wallowed in messy play activities (Merriam 2009). This study measured by intrapersonal intelligence children indicators for children aged 4-6 years.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

Based on research that has been done on the application of messy play against intrapersonal intelligence with 4 children aged 4-6 years in the subject, the obtained results are:

1. Demonstrated ability to concentrate during some activities. Researchers set up a bucket of water and then incorporate some toys into it. Ask the children to move one by one toy to another container by using a ladle. This activity seen that children's ability to concentrate during the activity has been good enough. Even children appear to ignore calls to eat when moving toys. This is seen in child A, B and C. However, child D is less able to focus on an activity for a long time.
2. Shows freedom or without pressure behavior, especially activities based on their initiative.

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This is evident from the initiative of the child to move water from a large container into a small container by using a ladle. However, not all children have the initiative to move water from a large container into a small container without instructions from the researcher. Initiatives are already quite well seen in children B and C.

3. Has a strong self-motivation. The activities are asking the child to move one by one toy range in size from a container of water into an empty container by using a ladle. Kids easily move the toy size is large enough. But there are children who look difficulty moving the small-sized toy. In this activity, self-motivated children A and D are strong enough. This was seen when children keep trying and not give up easily move a small toy even with a long time. Whereas children B and C look impatient and immediately move a small toy using his hands.
4. Demonstrated ability to learn and perform some of the activities themselves. The activities are asking the children to move the water from the bucket into an empty container using a sponge. Researchers pointed out first and then ask the child to do so independently. Kids C and D show a good learning ability. Seen from a high enthusiastic child to move the water with a sponge, especially since children rarely played using a sponge. Yet another case that occurred in children A and B. Child looks disgusted holding sponge made of foam and textured due to soft. Finally the child didn't do the activities despite stimulated by invitation and reward.
5. Expressing thoughts and feelings appropriately. All children are capable of expression while playing according to the play activities are being carried out. Ekspresi that appears on the child is happy, fearful, disgusted, and annoyed.
6. Demonstrated ability to direct yourself towards a goal. The activities are asking children to find a toy in a container of flour by hand, and then move the toy into an empty container. In this activity, the child's ability to direct yourself toward a goal is good enough. This can be seen from a child who easily look for a toy in the flour in accordance with the instructions given by researchers.
7. Had some hobbies. Each child has their own hobbies and interests at a game. This can be seen from a child who still ask did the same game even though it was already done more than 10 times a day. A child like to play air-pesawatan. Child B prefers to play shooting.

Kids C preoccupied with her dolls and children D hobby of playing the ball.

8. Having a sense of responsibility. When completed do some of play activities not all children want to clean up and restore the original position plaything. Son of A, B, and C already have a high sense of responsibility. This is evident from the behavior of children who want to return the game even though they were instructed by the researcher. But do not occur in children D that looks straight away when finished playing activities.

### **Discussion**

Finding of this study shows the four stages of messy play do ease preschool children to develop their intrapersonal intelligence. It is manifested through the outcomes of messy play by the children. Children's intrapersonal intelligence was indicated by their products. Throughout every single session of messy play accomplished, it was noticeable that children were capable to create objects they have in mind by utilizing the materials provided, the children innovatively and via their own technique create products with incompatible characteristics and affiliate these with tremendous description.

The theories of intrapersonal intelligence by Gardner (1993) reinforce the findings of the study that accredited messy play does ameliorate children's intrapersonal intelligence. In the opinion of Gardner, amid the most important aspects in educational and child psychology is the issue of children's intrapersonal intelligence, the development of intrapersonal intelligence and its importance in the development and maturity of children. By dint of play, we can construct the motoric process in children at a very initial stage. Play is often what they hear and see from an adult. Indirectly, elements of early experiences are not solely produced in the play but are how it happens in reality. Play is not just a reapplication of what they experienced, but it is also the outcome of their intrapersonal intelligence and imagination. Children merge the elements and adopt them to form their own new facts of existence to fulfil their wishes and requirements. Children's drawings and stories are basically their wish represented by motoric skill during the play.

Furthermore, children apply their intrapersonal intelligence to take on different roles as they create pretend situations involving the use of fantasy and symbolism (Lindqvist 2001). The outcome of the study upholds the findings of Russ's (2003) research in regard to issues of development in play and intrapersonal intelligence; Russ found that play does help in intrapersonal intelligence. It is understandable

that the effect of messy play was significant in the capability of the children to know and the ability to understand herself. On top of that, findings by Howard-Jones et al. (2002) are also supportive of this study. Howard-Jones et al. found a short period of free play can influence the intrapersonal intelligence shown by children in typical activities. Somehow the activities have no relationship to the medium or earlier topic of free play. The critical element in play that holds continuous intrapersonal intelligence is the transformation set of thinking that loves playing and exploration. Discoveries from this case study intelligibly show messy play activities including general play, play with soft materials, and play with soft and wet materials rouses the creative ability of preschool children. It is obvious that they are competent to use several types of materials in producing messy play products in their unique ways by their own abstraction. They correspondingly work with their creative ability to allow divergent thinking in generating description surrounding their products.

The findings of this study concerning messy play and children's creative behavior are supported by the intrapersonal intelligence theory of Gardner (1993) asserting that any human behavior that results in something new is regarded as creative behavior, whether what is created is a physical object or an emotional or mental construct found in the individual and known only to the individual. Reproductive is closely linked with memory; it extends to the individual repeating patterns of behavior developed and mastered in the initial response.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

*Messy Play* is the kind of play using objects that make children become dirty and messy to stimulate sensor fine motor and gross motor skills of children. So, in addition to her active, children will also learn to coordinate the senses through touch, smell, taste, hearing, and vision. Basically, this game has its own benefits for the development of intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. One intelligence that can be developed with messy play is intrapersonal intelligence.

Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to understand themselves including emotions, desires, strengths, and vulnerabilities and use information effectively in regulating one's life (Turleri, 2009).

Based on research that has been done, it was concluded that Messy Play can affect children intrapersonal intelligence. Through Messy Play there are some children's behavior that develops in the form demonstrated the ability to concentrate during play activities, free activities to play with their own

initiative without any pressure, self-motivated strong, demonstrated the ability to learn and perform some of the activities themselves, express their thoughts and feelings appropriately, demonstrating the ability to direct yourself towards a goal, has several hobbies and have a sense of responsibility.

### Suggestion

For those readers who will conduct similar research, expected that the activities carried out and can be added again, so that the observations made to the child got better results and can analyze more behavioral.

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