

Developing Children's Creativity Through Creative Dance Activities at PAUD Dharma Kumara, Mataram City, Indonesia

Siti Zaenab

IAHN Gde Pudja Mataram

Corresponding Author: Siti Zaenab, chilasita68@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and understand the importance of fostering children's creativity from an early age, noting the various methods parents and teachers can employ to develop creativity in preschool aged children. One such method involves engaging in activities that utilize enjoyable learning approaches tailored to the children's needs. The study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design. The informants consist of teachers and parents involved in fostering children's creativity through creative dance activities at the Dharma Kumara Early Childhood Education center in Mataram City. Data collection was conducted through interviews, observation, and documentation, while data analysis involved the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Research findings indicate that fostering children's creativity through creative dance activities at PAUD Dharma Kumara in Mataram City is an effective approach for early childhood dance creativity. This is because creative dance goes beyond merely transferring movements or prioritizing the final outcome; instead, it involves the transfer of knowledge and emphasizes the creative learning process. Teachers are no longer bound by rigid traditional dance movements but are able to design dance movements that are adaptive, communicative, and play based. Furthermore, parents gain new insights into using movement and song as a medium for playing with their children at home, thereby reducing reliance on gadgets. Parents also provide assistance when children encounter difficulties, without completely taking over the activity the child is engaged in.

INTRODUCTION

Parents and teachers have various ways to foster children's abilities and creativity, one of which is through play. However, given the busy work schedules of many teachers and parents today, little time remains for playing with children. To meet their children's developmental needs, parents often choose to enroll them in early childhood education (PAUD) programs. Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia No. 27 of 1990 concerning preschool education defines in Chapter I, article 1, Paragraph (2) a kindergarten (Taman Kanak-Kanak) as a form of preschool education providing early education programs for children aged four up to the point of entering primary education. Meanwhile, for children under the age of four, parents may enroll them in playgroups or childcare centers (TPA). The regulation further clarifies that playgroups and childcare centers are classified as forms of preschool education within the early childhood education (PAUD) system.

Unlike kindergartens, where the curriculum is regulated and established by the government, each playgroup and childcare center has its own distinct curriculum or program; nevertheless, these remain grounded in key aspects of preschooler development: physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio emotional. Beyond these areas, educators are also currently striving to foster children's creativity through the activities conducted at these playgroups and childcare centers. In Indonesia, attention toward creativity is growing rapidly, accompanied by an increasing recognition of the need for concrete measures to nurture this aspect from an early age.

In playgroups and childcare centers, teachers foster children's creativity through concrete play-based activities specifically those involving building or assembling, such as playing with blocks. Children can develop their creativity by arranging blocks into various shapes or by working with paper; using tools like scissors and glue, they can transform paper into whatever their imaginations envision. Another activity is sand play, which allows children to express their creativity by molding the sand into various structures.

Specifically, there is no single law dedicated solely to regulating creative dance for children. However, creative dance is legally accommodated as part of fulfilling children's rights to self-expression and cultural engagement, as well as addressing artistic and motor skill development within the official early childhood education (PAUD) curriculum. The overarching legal framework protecting this includes Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning child protection (covering the rights to expression and play) and Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system (regarding the development of talents and interests).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (Kemendikdasmen) has released a new set of regulations introducing a fresh paradigm for early childhood education (PAUD) in Indonesia specifically, Regulation of the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education No. 1 of 2026 concerning Process Standards. An Education Paradigm that Honors the Child: Early childhood learning processes must adhere to three core principles being mindful,

meaningful, and joyful in accordance with the latest regulations on early childhood education.

This regulation emphasizes the protection and fulfillment of children's rights through play, as well as the preservation of their psychological safety. Arts education, such as creative dance, is strongly encouraged because it embodies the principles of meaningful play. Teachers are now granted the autonomy to design learning experiences using more flexible plans comprising only objectives, steps for the learning experience, and simple assessment techniques.

Regulation of the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education No. 26 of 2025 concerning Management Standards. It governs the governance of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) based on the School Based Management (SBM) model. It establishes limits for learning groups (*rombel*); implementing regulations set maximum class sizes to ensure effectiveness and safety: a maximum of 10 children per class for ages 0-2 years, 12 children for ages over 2-4 years, and 15 children for ages over 4-6 years.

Regulation of the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education No. 13 of 2025 concerning Curriculum Policy an adjustment of the Kurikulum Merdeka (Emancipated Curriculum) outlines Learning Outcomes for Arts and Personal Identity, reaffirming the strengthening of the Foundational Phase in Early Childhood Education (PAUD). Creative dance is incorporated into the stimulation of the Personal Identity element (gross motor skills, emotional regulation) as well as the elements covering the fundamentals of Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Technology, Engineering, and the Arts.

The 13-Year Compulsory Education Program and the enjoyable transition from Early Childhood Education (PAUD) to Primary School. The government is accelerating the 13-Year Compulsory Education program, which integrates one year of pre-school Kindergarten with twelve years of primary and secondary education. Regulation of the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education No. 3 of 2025 reinforces the ban on reading, writing, and arithmetic tests for entry. Beyond fostering creativity, play is what young children enjoy most, as it represents a fundamental need for every child. Relying solely on play activities to foster creativity may yield suboptimal results; therefore, the author proposes an alternative activity to develop creativity in preschoolers: creative dance. This approach can be implemented within early childhood education settings, such as playgroups and childcare centers. The creative dance learning process prioritizes the child's fundamental need play by utilizing it as both a teaching method and the foundational concept for creating dance material. This activity fosters the development of various aspects beyond creativity and physical health; it also cultivates a child's imagination through the storytelling methods incorporated into the learning process.

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed by the researcher is classified as qualitative and descriptive research. Descriptive research is research in which the data collected generally take the form of words and images, and mostly not numbers; if there are numbers, they serve only as supporting data (Danim, 2002; 61).

The Descriptive Method means organizing data systematically using certain techniques so that general conclusions can be obtained. In drawing conclusions, certain reasons will be provided, along with data processing procedures that will ultimately result in a comprehensive conclusion.

According to Ryanto (2007), the Descriptive Method is research directed at presenting symptoms, facts, or events systematically and accurately regarding the characteristics of a population or a particular area.

The research conducted by the researcher is located in Mandalika, Mataram City. The researcher will visit the homes of residents who have children aged 5-6 years to obtain more accurate data. The researcher is present without participating and does not carry out any intervention whatsoever regarding the phenomenon to be revealed. Interviews are conducted in an informal setting. Thus, the phenomenon that occurs is genuine (natural). The researcher acts as the main research instrument (key instrument) by using supporting instruments, namely writing tools and an MP4 (voice recorder).

The researcher's presence at the research site with sufficient intensity to interact with informants is intended to obtain more valid and reliable information about the research focus. For this reason, the researcher is expected to build a closer and more natural relationship and foster trust that the researcher will not use the research findings for improper purposes that could harm other people or the institution being studied (Muhajir, 2000). In order for the relationship between the researcher and the sources of information at the research site to proceed naturally, the researcher employs strategies or tactics, namely being diligent, flexible and creative.

Researchers must be fully aware that they are the planners, implementers of data collection, data analysts, and at the same time the reporters of the research results. Therefore, researchers must be able to adapt to the situations and conditions in the field. A good relationship between the researcher and the research subjects, both before, during, and after entering the field, is the main key to the success of data collection. A good relationship can build trust and mutual understanding. A high level of trust will help facilitate the research process, so that the desired data can be obtained easily and completely. Researchers must avoid creating impressions that could be detrimental to informants. The presence and involvement of the researcher in the field must be openly known by the research subjects and also by the research participants as informants (key instrument).

Observation is an activity carried out intentionally and systematically to examine social phenomena and psychological symptoms, which are then recorded (Subagya, 1997). Meanwhile, Suharsini (2002) emphasizes that observation is also referred to as the activity of focusing attention on an object using all the senses. (Zaenab Siti, 2025).

According to Nasir (1988), an interview is a process of obtaining information for research purposes through question and answer sessions conducted face to face between the interviewer and the respondent using a tool called an interview guide (Subama dan Sudrajat, 2005).

According to Zaenab Siti (2025), documentation study is the process of searching for data in the form of notes, transcriptions, books, newspapers, magazines, inscriptions, agendas, and so forth. Thus, documentation study is a method for finding written data concerning a matter being studied, where such data can be used to test, interpret, and predict or draw conclusions.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Efforts to build synergy within the educational ecosystem aimed at optimally stimulating aspects of child growth and development can begin with:

Creativity

In developed nations like the United States, research on creativity began as early as Galton (1869); although he did not establish a definitive concept or definition, his study of geniuses made significant contributions to subsequent research. Eventually, Guilford (1950) introduced a model of creativity that incorporated the concepts of convergent and divergent thinking. Research on creativity has continued to evolve including in Indonesia, where it began with the work of Utami Munandar (1977), who emphasized the importance of fostering creativity within formal education. Her research included the use of verbal creativity tests and a creative attitude scale tools introduced in Indonesia for the first time.

To further clarify the concept of creativity, the following definitions were synthesized from various experts by Utami Munandar (1977): (a) creativity is the ability to create new combinations based on existing data, information, or elements. (b) creativity understood as creative or divergent thinking is the ability to discover multiple possible answers to a problem based on available data or information, with an emphasis on the quantity, utility, and diversity of the answers. (c) operationally, creativity can be defined as the ability to demonstrate fluency, flexibility, and originality in thinking, as well as the capacity to elaborate upon that is, to develop, enrich, and detail an idea (Munandar, 1977).

Based on the foregoing, the researcher defines the concept of creativity as an imaginative activity requiring fluency in generating ideas and originality to ultimately produce a new composition, product, or concept. This perspective draws upon efforts to foster creativity through creative dance, a learning process that cultivates a child's fluency in expressing ideas and their capacity for originality qualities that can subsequently be manifested in compositions or products taking the form of movement.

The Concept of Creative Dance

The foundation of creative dance is the use of dance as a tool to foster children's creativity. Consequently, the priority is not the final dance product or the child's technical dancing ability, but rather the learning process itself. Achieving the goals of creative dance is therefore closely linked to the teaching methods employed by the instructor. Technically, the concept of creative dance is clarified by M. Joyce (1973), who notes that there is no right or wrong in creative dance; there are no set dance patterns to memorize and no specific dance

styles to adhere to. The essential aspect of creative dance is that students can express their inner feelings clearly, using rhythmic and beautiful body movements as their medium of expression. Mary Joyce (1983) is a renowned figure in the global early childhood education community, having emphasized that creative dance for children is not about memorizing rigid movements, but rather a process of developing body awareness. According to Joyce, the core concept of creative dance rests on the belief that it is crucial for children to recognize their own growth and transformation. Body movement, as a form of creative expression, plays a significant role in shaping a child's self image, self awareness, and capacity for self direction.

Based on the explanation of the creative dance concept above, it is clear that the goal of creative dance is not merely to enable children to dance, but rather to allow them to express themselves through the medium of movement. In these activities, the teacher acts as a motivator or facilitator rather than a mere instructor delivering content; this approach fosters the development of creative talent in preschool or early childhood-aged children aligning with the previously discussed perspective on creativity viewed through the lens of motivating factors. Consequently, a teacher's ability to motivate children and their choice of methods play a crucial role in creative dance activities.

The Teacher's Role in Creative Dance

It has previously been explained that the teacher plays a crucial role in fostering creativity during this activity. The teacher's role here differs from that of a typical dance instructor at a studio, who compels children to mimic and execute dance movements exactly as the teacher does.

In creative dance, the teacher acts as a motivator and guide, encouraging students to use their imaginations and helping to build the self confidence needed to express those imaginative ideas through movement. Essentially, the children are actively involved in the process of imagining and expressing themselves physically; the teacher's role is to provide direction, observe, and select movements born from the children's creativity, ultimately resulting in a dance piece derived from that creative expression.

According to Joyce, the teacher acts as a guide for exploration. Rather than providing ready made movements for imitation, the teacher offers stimuli such as stories, concepts of space high, low, narrowing, widening, or movement challenges that the child must solve using their own body. The teacher's role is to guide the child through three main stages: introduction of the concept, free exploration by the child, and formation structuring movements into a dance.

The various roles of the teacher as described by several experts can be summarized into four specific roles within creative dance activities: (1) acting as a guide by introducing objects and encouraging children to explore them through seeing, hearing, touching, and other sensory experiences relevant to the theme; this approach helps train the senses and stimulate the child's imagination. (2) guiding children to translate their imagination into physical movements that align with the perceptions, interpretations, and motor capabilities of 4 to 6 year olds. (3) introducing the range of movements possible for different body parts,

thereby helping to develop both fine and gross motor skills. (4) encouraging the children's creative output to foster their inventiveness and providing them with the freedom to express their feelings and emotions.

The Role of Parents in Creative Dance

In the context of fostering early childhood creativity including through creative dance parental involvement is recognized as a key pillar alongside the role of teachers. The home environment serves as the primary setting where children explore their bodies and movements.

Loris Malaguzzi (2021) formulated the Reggio Emilia Approach, an early childhood education philosophy from Italy. Within this framework, parents are positioned as active partners and co-educators. The concept emphasizes that a child's creativity is expressed through "the hundred languages of children," one of which is the expression of movement and dance. Parents play a role by actively engaging in documenting, understanding, and validating the ways in which children explore movement, both at home and at school.

Teresa Amabile (1996), a psychologist specializing in creativity at Harvard Business School, formulated the componential model of creativity. Parents play a role in fostering a climate of intrinsic motivation. In artistic activities such as creative dance, Amabile emphasizes that parents should grant children controlled freedom allowing them to move without fear of judgment. Parents should avoid overly dictating or rigidly evaluating a child's movements, as doing so can stifle the child's natural creative drive. Baumrind is renowned for her theory of parenting styles; modern researchers studying creativity in early childhood education frequently utilize her theory to analyze parental involvement in the arts.

The theory and role of authoritative parents are key to fostering children's movement creativity. These parents provide a safe physical space such as allowing children to jump or spin in the living room and offer socio emotional support. Conversely, authoritarian parents who demand flawless dancing have been shown to diminish a child's willingness to explore creative movement.

In various studies published in Juridikdas and Jurnal Pelangi, Siti Mariah and her early childhood education (PAUD) research team (2025-2026) identified three key aspects of the parental role in the success of children's creative dance: (1) facilitator and provider of resources, helping to prepare clothing that allows for free movement, music to stimulate the child at home, or simple props; (2) primary motivator, offering applause and praise, and joining in the movement to foster self-confidence and bonding; and (3) attentive guide, observing the child's interests, appreciating the unique, natural movements the child creates, and ensuring the child avoids physical injury while moving.

Based on various concepts regarding the parental role in supporting art and creative dance stimulation for young children, this study concludes that fostering creativity through creative dance at the Dharma Kumara Early Childhood Education center in Mataram City is highly effective. This success stems from a harmonious collaboration between teachers acting as facilitators of exploratory movement and parents, who serve as primary motivators by fostering a secure,

encouraging atmosphere at home. Consequently, this approach stimulates the motor, cognitive, and socio emotional development of young children in an enjoyable manner, free from the constraints of rigid, conventional dance rules.

The Creative Dance Activity Process

To ensure young children do not feel stiff or restricted during dance activities, the approach must shift from rote memorization of an instructor's movements to playful exploration of their own bodies. These activities prioritize the process over the final product; a child's ability to convey ideas and express movements during the activity is more important than evaluating the quality of the resulting dance or the technical execution of the movements. The creative dance process designed to foster creativity in preschool aged children consists of three stages: (1) exploration, (2) improvisation, and (3) composition. These stages are adapted from the dance creation process outlined by Sumandiyo Hadi (1996), but their application for preschoolers is tailored to the child's cognitive, motor, and behavioral capabilities.

To clarify, each stage and the activities undertaken by both the teacher and the students are outlined below. (1) exploration is the process of probing ideas as a means of responding to external objects or stimuli. It encompasses thinking, imagining, sensing, and responding. In children's creative dance, this stage involves delving into the theme; the teacher uses it to stimulate imagination through storytelling and by having students observe objects related to the theme such as pictures. The teacher stimulates the children's imagination through storytelling and dialogue; for instance, if the chosen theme is butterflies, the teacher might show a picture of a butterfly, ask students to observe it, and have them identify its characteristics. Subsequently, the teacher describes the butterfly's metamorphosis, and the children observe images depicting each stage of the process. (2) improvisation is defined as the discovery of movement through chance or spontaneity; even if the movements that emerge have been learned or discovered previously, the element of spontaneity marks the presence of improvisation. In creative dance, the improvisation stage is when children express the imaginative concepts from the previous stage through spontaneous movement. This is facilitated by the teacher's encouragement such as questions or prompts like asking, after seeing the picture of the caterpillar, how does it move? How does a butterfly fly? or Try to mimic the movement of a butterfly sipping nectar." (3) composition is defined as the process of shaping or integrating the dance movements that have been discovered. Once the exploration and improvisation stages which are observed by the teacher are complete, the teacher selects specific movements born of the children's creativity to serve as the building blocks for the dance routine. However, movements performed in unison as a group should be limited to specific sections so that the dance as a whole continues to reflect the imaginative expression derived from the children's creativity. For example, in the butterfly dance, during the exploration stage, the teacher describes the metamorphosis process, which consists of three phases: the caterpillar, the chrysalis, and the butterfly.

Steps for Creative Dance Activities

Although this activity focuses primarily on the students' actions, the teacher must still design the procedural steps to ensure the learning process is well directed and to establish a benchmark for the teacher's success in delivering the material. While the activity is naturally closely linked to movement or the physical aspect this is not the only area of development; creativity and imagination also have significant potential to flourish through this activity, and linguistic skills can be fostered simultaneously to some extent. Therefore, outlining the activity steps makes it possible to monitor whether the process is successfully achieving the intended objectives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above, it is evident that creative dance is an activity that utilizes dance as a means to foster children's creativity. This activity prioritizes the child's creative engagement, ultimately yielding outcomes that are novel to both teachers and parents. The activity operates on the principle of being from the child, by the child, and for the child, with the teacher serving merely as a motivator and guide. By incorporating play and storytelling methods, this activity holds significant potential for enhancing imagination and developing creativity. Stimulated by the teacher, children can express themselves through spontaneous movement, ultimately creating their own dance material. However, the focus of developing creativity lies not in the final product, but in the process itself, which unfolds in three stages: exploration, improvisation, and composition. The author hopes that creative dance can be adopted as an activity model within early childhood education (PAUD), given its substantial potential to foster children's creativity.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research should investigate the effectiveness of creative dance as a structured pedagogical model for enhancing creativity in early childhood education (PAUD), with particular emphasis on the developmental outcomes associated with the exploration, improvisation, and composition stages. Advanced studies could employ mixed-methods or longitudinal research designs to examine changes in children's creative thinking, imagination, self-expression, problem-solving skills, and originality across diverse educational settings. Further investigation should also identify how teachers' facilitation strategies, storytelling techniques, play-based activities, and classroom environments influence children's creative engagement and autonomy. In addition, developing and validating standardized assessment instruments would help establish reliable indicators for evaluating creativity development through creative dance. Comparative studies involving different teaching approaches, age groups, and socioeconomic backgrounds could provide deeper insights into the applicability and effectiveness of this model. These research directions would contribute to a stronger empirical foundation for integrating creative dance into early childhood curricula and developing evidence-based pedagogical practices that support children's holistic development.

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