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Gradual Sewing Activities as an Effort to Improve Children's Fine Motor Skills at RA Nw Tanak Beak Barat

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to enhance the fine motor skills of early childhood learners through the implementation of structured and progressive sewing activities. Employing a classroom action research methodology, the study adopts the Kurt Lewin model, which consists of four systematic stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted with Group A kindergarten students as the primary subjects. Data collection incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods, utilizing observation and interview techniques to gather comprehensive insights into the children's motor skill development. The intervention involved introducing sewing activities in a gradual and developmentally appropriate manner, allowing children to build skills progressively over time. The findings of the study demonstrate a positive impact of gradual sewing activities on the development of fine motor skills among early learners. Observable improvements were recorded in each cycle, indicating consistent and significant progress in students' ability to perform tasks that require fine motor coordination. These enhancements were particularly evident in the children's increased precision, hand-eye coordination, and manual dexterity. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that gradual sewing activities represent an effective and practical strategy for supporting fine motor skill development in early childhood education. The structured nature of the activities, combined with their engaging and hands-on approach, makes them a valuable addition to the learning environment. As such, educators are encouraged to consider incorporating similar activities into early childhood curricula to foster motor development in a purposeful and enjoyable manner.

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Introduction

Early childhood represents a critical period of growth and development in an individual's life. As stipulated in Article 28 of the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, paragraph 1, early childhood is defined as children in the age range of 0 to 6 years. This phase is characterized by rapid development in multiple domains—physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and moral. According to Montessori (as cited in Sujiono, 2009), the years from birth to six constitute the "golden age," a sensitive period when children are

particularly receptive to learning and highly responsive to stimulation from their environment. During this formative stage, structured and appropriate educational interventions are crucial to optimizing developmental outcomes.

Early childhood education (ECE) is a purposeful and systematic effort to provide appropriate stimuli to children from birth to six years of age to support holistic development. The primary goal of ECE is to prepare children both mentally and physically for future educational experiences. This includes nurturing a variety of developmental aspects, such as cognitive abilities, language proficiency, emotional intelligence, and most notably, motor skills. The foundation for lifelong learning and adaptability is laid during this period, making ECE an essential stage in the educational continuum.

Kindergarten serves as a formal education unit within the framework of early childhood education. Targeting children aged four to six years, kindergarten education is designed to cultivate the full potential of each child. According to the Ministry of National Education (2014), the function of kindergarten is to foster, grow, and optimize all dimensions of child development so that essential skills and behaviors are formed according to the child's developmental stage. Kindergarten programs are structured to ensure children are ready for elementary education, both in terms of academic skills and socio-emotional readiness.

Motor development plays a particularly important role in early childhood, as it underpins many other developmental domains. According to Hurlock (1987), motor development refers to the process of gaining control over bodily movements, which involves the coordination of the nervous system, muscles, and brain. This development is continuous, beginning with reflexes at birth and progressing through repeated, purposeful movements. Motor development is generally categorized into gross and fine motor skills. Gross motor skills involve large muscle movements such as walking, jumping, and running, whereas fine motor skills involve small, precise movements such as grasping, writing, cutting, and manipulating small objects.

Fine motor development is especially vital in early childhood as it supports activities that are foundational to learning, such as writing, drawing, and other forms of manual expression. Sujiono (2009) defines fine motor skills as movements involving small muscles in specific body parts, particularly the hands and fingers, which are necessary for tasks requiring precision. Fine motor development is influenced not only by physical maturation but also by learning and environmental stimulation. Children require both readiness and repeated practice to refine these skills. Opportunities for exploration, exposure to model behaviors, appropriate guidance, and motivation are essential to facilitate fine motor learning.

Hurlock outlines five key principles of motor development. First, motor development depends on the maturity of muscles and nerves. Children cannot perform certain tasks until their physiological systems are sufficiently developed. Second, learning motor skills before children are developmentally ready is ineffective. If the necessary physical structures are not mature, attempts to teach certain motor tasks will not be successful. Third, motor development follows a predictable pattern. Educators can use this principle to assess a child's current developmental level and anticipate future progress. Fourth, motor development can be used as an indicator of general developmental health. Comparing a child's motor skills with age-appropriate benchmarks can help identify potential developmental delays. Lastly, individual variations exist in the rate and rhythm of motor development. While general trends can be predicted, each child progresses at their own pace, and educators must respect these differences when planning learning activities.

Fine motor development can be supported through various structured activities in early childhood education settings. Activities such as tracing, stringing beads, cutting with scissors, folding paper, and especially sewing, have been recognized as effective methods for promoting fine motor growth. Sewing, in particular, is a multifaceted activity that not only refines motor coordination but also nurtures concentration, logic, patience, and creativity. Sujiono (2009) and Sularmi (2014) identify sewing as a valuable activity in early childhood education that supports the development of small muscle coordination, hand-eye coordination, and precise wrist and finger movements.

Christianti (2014) emphasizes that sewing can significantly enhance a child's concentration, logical reasoning, and writing preparedness by strengthening the hand, wrist, and finger muscles. Furthermore, Devianti (2013) notes that sewing fosters patience, accuracy, neatness, and problem-solving skills, and encourages creative expression. The integration of sewing into the kindergarten curriculum can thus serve dual purposes: supporting fine motor development and offering meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that engage young children.

Despite its benefits, the effectiveness of sewing activities in developing fine motor skills depends greatly on how the activity is introduced and facilitated by educators. Field observations reveal that children often struggle with sewing tasks when instructions are unclear or too advanced for their developmental level. For instance, in one classroom, children were asked to sew patterns using raffia string and paper with pre-punched holes. Many students inserted the string incorrectly, repeated holes, or followed no consistent pattern. These errors were attributed to a lack of guided instruction, as the teacher provided only brief explanations without ensuring comprehension or allowing time for questions.

This highlights the need for educators to adapt instructional strategies to children's cognitive and motor abilities. Introducing sewing activities in gradual, manageable steps allows children to internalize each stage of the process and gain confidence in their abilities. Teachers should model each step clearly, offer ample opportunities for practice, and provide supportive feedback. Such an approach ensures that sewing activities are not only enjoyable but also developmentally appropriate and effective in enhancing fine motor skills.

In conclusion, early childhood is a pivotal period for fostering holistic development, with fine motor skills forming a crucial part of this process. Sewing activities offer a valuable tool for promoting fine motor development, supporting not only physical coordination but also cognitive and emotional growth. However, to maximize the benefits of sewing activities, educators must deliver them in a developmentally appropriate manner, recognizing the unique pace and learning styles of each child. By incorporating well-structured sewing activities into early childhood education, teachers can provide meaningful learning experiences that support children’s readiness for future academic and life challenges.

This study is therefore motivated by the need to further investigate the effectiveness of structured, step-by-step sewing activities in improving fine motor skills among young children, particularly within the context of Group A students at RA NW Tanak Beak Barat. Through this research, it is expected that a deeper understanding will be gained regarding best practices in implementing sewing as an instructional strategy in early childhood education.

Methods

This research employs a Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology to investigate the influence of gradual sewing activities on the fine motor skills of Group A children at RA Nw Tanak Beak Barat, in the 2023-2024 academic year. This study follows a cyclical process consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research is conducted in two cycles, with each cycle containing improvements based on the findings from the previous cycle. The subjects of this study are children in Group A at RA Nw Tanak Beak Barat, totaling 20 students. The participants consist of both male and female students, aged between 4 to 5 years old. The selection of this group is based on the developmental needs of fine motor skills at this early childhood education stage. The object of this study is the gradual sewing activity as a method to enhance fine motor skills in young children. The activities are designed to involve simple sewing tasks that gradually increase in difficulty, fostering the development of hand-eye coordination, finger dexterity, and concentration. The data collection techniques used in this research include observation, performance tests, documentation, and interviews. Observation is used to assess students' fine motor skill development before, during, and after the

implementation of gradual sewing activities. Observations are recorded using structured observation sheets focusing on aspects such as grip strength, coordination, and accuracy in threading and stitching. The performance test requires students to complete practical sewing tasks at different stages of the intervention. Their performance is evaluated based on specific criteria such as neatness, accuracy, and speed. Documentation in the form of photographs, video recordings, and anecdotal records is collected to provide qualitative evidence of students' progress in sewing activities. Interviews with teachers and caregivers are conducted to gain insights into the children's improvements and challenges faced during the intervention.

The data collected is analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative analysis involves interpreting observational data and documentation using descriptive analysis to identify behavioral and developmental changes in students' fine motor skills. Quantitative analysis involves processing the performance test results using percentage analysis to measure the improvement in students' sewing abilities across the cycles. The research procedure begins with the planning stage, where sewing activities suitable for children's developmental levels are designed. Necessary materials such as fabric, plastic needles, yarn, and perforated boards are prepared, along with observation sheets and assessment rubrics. An initial assessment of students' fine motor skills is conducted before the intervention begins. During the implementation stage, gradual sewing exercises with structured difficulty levels are introduced, with teachers guiding students in handling sewing materials safely and effectively while encouraging participation through engaging and interactive approaches. Observation is carried out simultaneously with the intervention to monitor students' progress and record findings. Challenges and difficulties faced by students are identified to provide a basis for reflection. The reflection stage involves analyzing the results obtained from the observation and performance tests, making improvements for the next cycle based on identified challenges, and adjusting activities to better meet students' developmental needs. This methodological approach ensures a systematic evaluation of the effect of gradual sewing activities on fine motor skill development among early childhood students. The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights into effective hands-on learning strategies for improving fine motor coordination in young learners.

The implementation of gradual sewing activities in this study is designed to align with the developmental stages of young children. The structured progression of sewing tasks allows students to develop their fine motor skills at an appropriate pace. By starting with simple tasks such as threading a large plastic needle through pre-punched holes in fabric or cardboard, students gain confidence and familiarity with the sewing process. As they become more skilled, the complexity of the activities increases, requiring more precision, control, and concentration. This gradual approach ensures that students do not become overwhelmed and can experience a sense of

accomplishment at each stage. The role of the teacher in this study is crucial in guiding students through the sewing activities. Teachers provide demonstrations, individualized support, and encouragement to help students develop their skills. The interactive nature of the learning process fosters an engaging and enjoyable experience for the students. Teachers also observe students closely, noting their progress and challenges, and making necessary adjustments to improve the effectiveness of the intervention. The teacher's role is not just to instruct but also to motivate and support students as they develop their fine motor abilities through hands-on practice.

Another important aspect of this study is the incorporation of peer collaboration in the sewing activities. While each student works on their individual sewing tasks, they are also encouraged to observe and learn from their peers. Collaborative learning allows students to share techniques, offer assistance, and develop social skills while working on their sewing projects. This peer interaction fosters a positive learning environment where students feel supported and encouraged to improve their abilities. Additionally, seeing their classmates succeed motivates students to put in greater effort and take pride in their work. The research also takes into account the challenges that students may encounter while engaging in sewing activities. Some students may struggle with hand-eye coordination, while others may find it difficult to maintain focus or manipulate small objects. By carefully analyzing these challenges, teachers can implement strategies to support students' individual needs. For instance, students who have difficulty with fine motor control can be provided with larger, easier-to-handle materials before gradually transitioning to more precise tasks. The flexible approach in this study ensures that all students can participate and benefit from the intervention.

An essential component of this research is the evaluation of students' fine motor skill development over time. By conducting pre- and post-intervention assessments, the study is able to measure the effectiveness of gradual sewing activities in improving students' abilities. The comparison of initial and final performance provides valuable data on how students progress through each cycle. The study also examines the consistency of improvements, ensuring that students retain and build upon the skills they have acquired rather than experiencing short-term gains. The integration of documentation, such as photographs and video recordings, serves as an important tool for both research analysis and instructional reflection. By capturing students' progress through visual records, teachers and researchers can review specific moments in the learning process to better understand how students develop their skills. This documentation also allows for a more comprehensive assessment of student engagement, persistence, and creativity in their sewing tasks. Furthermore, visual records provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their teaching strategies and refine their instructional approaches for future lessons.

The involvement of parents and caregivers is also considered in this study to reinforce learning beyond the classroom. Parents are informed about the objectives and

benefits of the sewing activities, encouraging them to support their children's development at home. Some parents may choose to provide additional sewing materials or engage their children in similar fine motor skill exercises outside of school. By creating a connection between home and school, this study emphasizes the importance of consistent practice and reinforcement in developing fine motor skills. Beyond improving fine motor skills, this study also explores the broader benefits of sewing activities for young learners. Engaging in structured, hands-on tasks helps children develop patience, perseverance, and problem-solving skills. As they progress through the sewing activities, they learn to follow instructions, pay attention to details, and overcome small challenges skills that are transferable to other areas of learning. The sense of achievement students experience when completing a sewing project fosters confidence and a positive attitude toward learning.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to early childhood education by providing evidence-based insights into the effectiveness of gradual sewing activities. As fine motor skill development is a critical aspect of early childhood learning, this research highlights the importance of incorporating practical, engaging, and developmentally appropriate activities into the curriculum. The study also underscores the need for a structured, supportive approach in helping students acquire and refine essential motor skills. In conclusion, this study presents a comprehensive investigation into the impact of gradual sewing activities on young children's fine motor development. Through careful planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, the research aims to provide meaningful insights into how hands-on, skill-building activities can enhance students' abilities. By addressing the challenges, measuring progress, and emphasizing collaborative learning, this study serves as a valuable resource for educators seeking to integrate effective motor skill development strategies into early childhood education.

Result

The findings of this study indicate that the gradual sewing activities had a significant impact on the fine motor skill development of Group A children at RA Nw Tanak Beak Barat. At the beginning of the study, many students demonstrated difficulties in performing basic sewing tasks such as threading a needle, holding materials steadily, and making precise stitches. However, as they progressed through the structured sewing exercises, notable improvements were observed in their coordination, dexterity, and concentration. By the end of the intervention, most students were able to complete sewing tasks with greater accuracy and confidence.

Observations during the implementation of the sewing activities showed that students initially struggled with controlling their hand movements and maintaining focus. However, as they became more familiar with the tasks, their ability to manipulate the sewing materials improved. Teachers recorded an increase in students' ability to grip the sewing needle correctly, align stitches neatly, and thread yarn through small holes

with minimal assistance. These observations were further supported by the performance test results, which revealed an increase in the number of students who successfully completed sewing tasks at an acceptable level of proficiency.

The performance test results demonstrated steady progress across both cycles. In the first cycle, only a small percentage of students were able to complete their sewing tasks without errors. However, by the second cycle, a significant improvement was noted, with more students achieving higher levels of accuracy and neatness. This suggests that repeated practice and gradual difficulty adjustment played a crucial role in enhancing students' fine motor skills. The ability of students to complete increasingly complex sewing tasks with greater ease by the end of the study highlights the effectiveness of the gradual sewing intervention. Additionally, student engagement levels increased throughout the study. Initially, some students showed hesitation or frustration when faced with sewing tasks that required fine motor control. However, as they gained confidence and familiarity with the process, their enthusiasm and persistence improved. Many students expressed excitement about their sewing projects, eagerly participating in each session and demonstrating a sense of accomplishment upon completing their tasks. This increased motivation contributed to their overall improvement in fine motor skills and their ability to focus for longer periods.

The analysis of observational data indicated that students' ability to coordinate their hand movements showed significant enhancement. By the end of the intervention, students were able to manipulate sewing materials with greater control, demonstrating improved grip strength and finger dexterity. Teachers also noted a decrease in students' dependency on assistance, as they became more independent in completing their sewing tasks. This finding suggests that the gradual sewing activities helped students develop self-confidence in their abilities, leading to increased autonomy in performing fine motor tasks. The documentation collected throughout the study, including photographs and video recordings, provided qualitative evidence of students' progress. These visual records captured moments of students practicing sewing tasks, showcasing their initial struggles and subsequent improvements. The documentation also revealed that students developed problem-solving skills as they found ways to correct their mistakes and refine their techniques over time. This suggests that in addition to enhancing fine motor skills, the sewing activities also contributed to cognitive development by encouraging logical thinking and problem-solving.

Interviews with teachers further confirmed the positive impact of the sewing activities on students' fine motor skills. Teachers reported that students who previously struggled with fine motor tasks, such as holding a pencil properly or using scissors, showed noticeable improvements after participating in the sewing activities. Some teachers also observed that students displayed greater patience and perseverance when working on other classroom activities that required fine motor precision. This indicates that the benefits of the sewing intervention extended beyond the sewing sessions and positively influenced other aspects of students' learning. The quantitative analysis of the performance test results further supported the effectiveness of the gradual sewing method. The percentage of students who successfully completed sewing tasks increased from 60% in the first cycle to 90% in the second cycle. This data

highlights a significant improvement in students' fine motor abilities, demonstrating that consistent practice and progressive task difficulty contributed to their skill development. The increase in accuracy, speed, and confidence in performing sewing tasks further validated the success of the intervention.

Moreover, the impact of the gradual sewing activities on students' concentration levels was evident. Teachers observed that students who initially had difficulty maintaining focus during sewing sessions gradually developed better attention spans. This was reflected in their ability to complete tasks without frequent distractions and their increased engagement in fine motor activities. The development of sustained concentration suggests that hands-on, engaging activities like sewing can help young learners build essential cognitive skills necessary for academic success. Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that the gradual sewing activities were highly effective in improving the fine motor skills of Group A students at RA Nw Tanak Beak Barat. The structured, step-by-step approach allowed students to develop their coordination, dexterity, and concentration at a comfortable pace. The combination of hands-on practice, teacher support, peer interaction, and engaging tasks created a positive learning environment that fostered skill development. The significant improvements observed in students' performance, engagement, and independence suggest that sewing activities can be a valuable tool for enhancing fine motor development in early childhood education.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the effectiveness of implementing gradual sewing activities as a strategy to enhance fine motor skills among Group A students at RA NW Tanak Beak Barat. By employing a structured methodology that incrementally increased the complexity of sewing tasks, children were able to improve their hand-eye coordination, dexterity, and concentration in a developmentally appropriate and engaging manner. The observed progress across both cycles of the intervention supports the notion that consistent, repetitive, and scaffolded practice plays a significant role in strengthening fine motor capabilities during early childhood. These outcomes are consistent with existing literature that highlights the value of experiential and hands-on learning in supporting developmental milestones at this critical stage.

A notable outcome of this intervention was the marked improvement in the students' ability to handle sewing tools and materials with greater precision. Initially, many children encountered difficulties with basic tasks, such as threading a needle, holding fabric in place, and creating even stitches. However, over time and with consistent practice, their confidence and skill levels showed measurable improvement. This suggests that a gradual introduction to fine motor tasks—supported by instructional guidance—can be highly effective in developing the refined movements necessary for more complex manual tasks. Such findings highlight the importance of

providing young learners with structured and meaningful opportunities to refine their motor skills through practical and interactive activities.

Another significant insight gained from this study is the role of motivation and student engagement in supporting the development of fine motor skills. At the beginning of the intervention, some students expressed reluctance and frustration when confronted with the challenges posed by sewing activities. However, as they became more familiar with the tasks and began to experience success, there was a noticeable increase in their enthusiasm and willingness to participate. This shift in attitude had a direct impact on their persistence and engagement in completing sewing assignments. The positive emotional responses observed among the participants reaffirm the need for learning experiences that are not only age-appropriate but also enjoyable and intrinsically motivating, to sustain attention and promote active participation.

The observations further reveal that the gradual sewing intervention fostered greater independence among the students. During the initial stages of the program, children frequently required assistance from teachers or peers to complete their tasks. As they advanced through the cycles, however, many began to demonstrate increased autonomy in handling the materials and solving minor problems independently. This development of self-reliance is a valuable outcome, as it suggests that well-designed, hands-on learning experiences can contribute to the cultivation of problem-solving skills and personal confidence in young learners.

Equally important was the role played by teachers in facilitating the students' progress. The study highlighted that clear instructions, demonstrations, and responsive scaffolding by educators were essential in helping students navigate the sewing tasks successfully. Teacher involvement—through modeling techniques, offering encouragement, and delivering constructive feedback—was instrumental in fostering both skill acquisition and student engagement. These findings underscore the importance of active teacher support in activities that require precision and patience, particularly when working with young children who are still developing their motor coordination.

Beyond the enhancement of fine motor skills, the sewing activities also contributed to improvements in the students' ability to focus and maintain attention over extended periods. Children who initially displayed restlessness or difficulty concentrating during sewing sessions gradually became more patient and attentive as they adapted to the tasks. Teachers observed that students demonstrated greater perseverance, attention to detail, and a willingness to engage with tasks that required sustained concentration. These outcomes suggest that fine motor activities such as sewing can positively

influence cognitive abilities, particularly in developing attention span and task persistence—skills that are foundational for future academic achievement.

The broader implications of these findings point to the value of incorporating tactile and experiential learning strategies within early childhood education settings. The success of the sewing intervention illustrates that young children benefit from activities that involve active engagement and physical manipulation. These types of learning experiences provide a more effective pathway to skill development than passive instructional methods. The results advocate for a pedagogical approach that emphasizes hands-on, interactive learning to support not only physical development but also cognitive and emotional growth.

Quantitative data collected from performance assessments further validates the effectiveness of the sewing intervention. A noticeable increase in the number of students who successfully completed sewing tasks from the first to the second cycle provides empirical evidence of progress. This data also supports the principle that repetition and graduated increases in task difficulty are vital components in the learning process. As the level of challenge rose gradually, students were able to adapt, improve, and gain confidence without becoming overwhelmed, thus optimizing the learning outcomes.

In addition to the students' achievements, feedback from teachers and caregivers reinforced the positive impact of the intervention. Educators noted that students who participated in sewing activities not only improved in fine motor skills but also exhibited enhanced performance in other classroom tasks requiring similar hand movements. Moreover, some teachers observed a spillover effect, wherein students became more enthusiastic and engaged in other hands-on learning activities. This indicates that the benefits of sewing interventions may extend beyond motor skill development and contribute to a broader enhancement of learning attitudes and behaviors.

In summary, the outcomes of this study provide compelling evidence that gradual and structured sewing activities represent an effective pedagogical tool for developing fine motor skills in early childhood education. The integration of repeated practice, step-by-step progression, teacher support, and student engagement created a learning environment conducive to meaningful growth in coordination, independence, and concentration. These findings suggest that practical and interactive activities like sewing should be considered for inclusion in early childhood curricula to foster both motor and cognitive development. As the data illustrates, such approaches not only promote specific skill acquisition but also nurture the overall confidence and engagement of young learners, preparing them more effectively for subsequent educational challenges.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that gradual sewing activities effectively enhance the fine motor skills of Group A children at RA NW Tanak Beak Barat. Through structured, progressively challenging tasks, students developed key abilities such as hand-eye coordination, dexterity, focus, and independence. Repetitive practice, combined with clear teacher guidance and engaging, hands-on learning, fostered both skill acquisition and student motivation. Over time, children showed increased confidence, autonomy, and concentration, suggesting that developmentally appropriate, tactile activities can support broader cognitive and behavioral growth. Performance assessments and teacher feedback further confirmed the success of this approach, highlighting its potential as a valuable strategy in early childhood education.

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