

Analysis of Early Childhood Play Activities in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse various publications related to research discussing play activities in early childhood in Indonesia during the period 2015-2025. The research approach used in this study was qualitative, with a literature review based on data obtained from the Scopus database using Publish or Perish software. The results of the study show that publications related to play activities in early childhood in Indonesia occurred mostly in the period 2022-2025, with the highest number in 2025, namely 20 studies. After analysing the literature sources related to play in early childhood, the focus was on aspects of child development, which consisted of 11 studies. Thus, these findings illustrate that research related to play activities provided to children is still limited to the form of developmental stimulation. As a follow-up, the researchers hope that there will be more research that prioritises play activities as a child's right or children's wellbeing.

Key Word:

Play Activities, Early Childhood, Literature Study

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Introduction

Playing is an activity commonly done by children. (Hayati & Putro, 2021) state that playing is one of the routine activities done by children as a form of enjoyment. Play can also be done for specific purposes or can be competitive in nature (Fydarliani et al., 2021). Thus, play activities can be used as a form of stimulation for children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.

In the learning process in early childhood education units, play activities are a way for children to learn. Play activities are often used as a means of stimulating aspects of child development, such as cognitive, physical and motor, social and emotional, language, moral, and artistic abilities (Ardi & Devianti, 2021). In addition, play activities can also be used as an alternative therapy for children with special needs such as ADHD and autism (Palupi et al., 2023; Watari et al., 2021). Therefore, in practice, play activities have many benefits for early childhood.

Play activities carried out by children can be an effort to develop themselves and their talents. One of them is stimulating cognitive abilities, which can be done through snakes and ladders games that aim to provide children with direct experiences related to cause and effect (Prihatini & Mursid, 2022). In addition, children's kinaesthetic abilities can be stimulated through various activities that require cooperation, such as play activities based on the Reggio Emilia approach (Sartika et al., 2023). Furthermore, play activities that are close to the children's environment also strengthen their acquisition of experiences, thereby stimulating them through their surroundings (Aisy et al., 2024).

However, the application of play activities for children is currently still viewed as merely a form of learning stimulation. This can be seen from several studies related to the application of play activities, particularly several studies conducted in Indonesia. Such as the study conducted by (Sari et al., 2025) which focused on children's motor development and health by looking at the involvement of parents and teachers in providing play-based mathematics learning stimulation. Another study conducted by (Intani et al., 2025) had the same objective of observing the impact of a pedagogical music learning approach through traditional games on children with disabilities. From this description, it can be seen that research related to play activities in early childhood

focuses on their use as a form of stimulation for child development and has not touched on the essential aspect of children's right to play.

Playing is a child's right that should be fulfilled as a basic need. Playing provides children with the opportunity to develop their personality and creativity (Andayani, 2021). The existence of quality and safe play facilities is also one of the indicators in fulfilling the right to play (D. Wahyuni et al., 2022). In addition, teachers' conceptions of play activities also influence the fulfilment of children's right to play (Iskandar, 2021). Therefore, research related to play in fulfilling children's right to play still needs to be further explored.

Research related to children's play activities should emphasise children's needs. However, current research focuses on the use of play activities and games as learning activities and processes to stimulate children's abilities. For example, research by (Fydarliani et al., 2021) focused on the use of conklak games in stimulating and developing cognitive abilities in early childhood. In addition, research conducted by (F. Wahyuni et al., 2024) also explains the use of picture card games as a learning tool to stimulate the social and emotional aspects of children aged 5-6 years. Therefore, this study focuses on the possibility of further research related to play in early childhood by discussing previous studies. This study aims to describe previous literature using a literature study approach related to written sources or research related to play activities in early childhood.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review that allows researchers to examine various literature sources that support the research objectives. This approach was chosen to obtain an in-depth, comprehensive, and structured understanding of previous studies through the process of screening, selecting, and analysing available scientific literature (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007). The data in this study were obtained from scientific articles published within a certain period and accessed through the Google Scholar scientific literature search engine, with the help of the Publish or Perish application. The following is a chart of the stages of literature study analysis in this study:

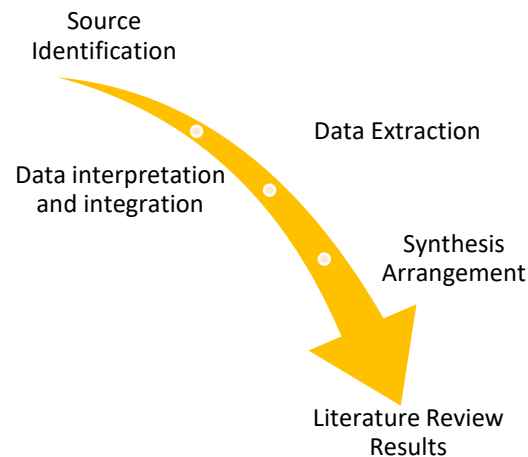


Figure 1. Literature Study Analysis Stage

Identification of sources is carried out by grouping the obtained literature sources. Next, data extraction is carried out with the aim of extracting important information from the identified reference sources. Data interpretation and integration are used to analyse the data results to identify patterns from the reference sources. The results of pattern identification will be synthesised so that they can be organised, and the results of a literature review related to play activities in early childhood can be obtained.

Results and Discussion

A literature review of the Scopus database identified 23,035 documents related to play activities in early childhood from 1920 to 2025. The highest peak of publications related to play activities in early childhood occurred in 2024, when there were 1,488 articles related to play activities carried out by early childhood. The increase in 2024 was due to the growing number of researchers interested in child safety during play activities.

In Indonesia, research related to play activities in early childhood was conducted between 2017 and 2025. During this period, the highest number of publications was in 2022-2025, with a total of 60 articles. The peak was in 2025, with 20 articles.

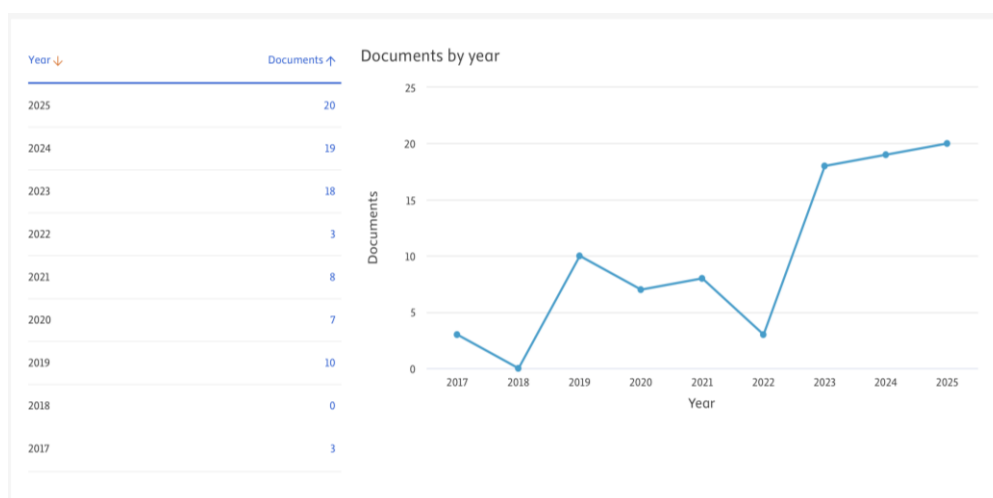


Figure 2. Publication trends on play activities in early childhood in Indonesia from 2017 to 2025.

In 2025, there was a surge in the number of articles discussing modifications to play activities in developing various aspects of child development. From 20 articles in 2025, researchers categorised articles classified specifically in the field of social sciences, with subjects related to play activities and early childhood limited to Indonesia. The extracted articles will be interpreted and integrated to obtain an analysis and organised according to the theme, namely play activities aimed at stimulating aspects of child development. The following is a list of articles that have been filtered and analysed based on the Scopus database according to the category and relevance to the topic of discussion in each literature source.

Author and Year of Publication	Title and source	Focus of study	Main Findings	Relevance to the research
(Utami, 2025)	Beyond the binary: Exploring gendered role negotiation and teacher mediation in playworld pedagogy	This study focuses on gender constructions identified by children through their play activities.	The findings of this study indicate that children's gender constructions are inseparable from socio-historical conditions. In addition, this study also shows that play activities	The findings of this study emphasise that play activities are linked to gender construction in children.

			contribute to supporting existing gender roles in children. The findings of this study emphasise that play activities are linked to gender constructions in children.	
(Sari et al., 2025)	Exploring the influence of parental-teacher engagement in play-based mathematical learning on motor development and health outcomes in early childhood	the role of parenting and teachers in stimulating abilities	The findings of the study emphasise the results of collaboration between parents and teachers to stimulate aspects of child development using mathematics-based play activities.	This researcher emphasises cooperation and collaboration between parents and teachers in the process of stimulating children by using games.
(Intani et al., 2025)	Integrating music-movement pedagogy into inclusive physical education for children with intellectual disabilities	This study focuses on the impact of using structured music for physical development stimulation in children with mild to moderate disabilities.	This study shows that movement music can intervene in the physical development of children with disabilities, especially children with mild-moderate intellectual disabilities.	The relevance of this study focuses on the impact of structured music intervention on physical development in children with intellectual disabilities.
(Padli et al., 2025)	Understanding Motor Skill Growth in Children Aged	This study focuses on the involvement and support	The findings in this study show that parents focus on	This study has relevance in the use of play activities as

	3-6 Years: Parenting Perspectives from a Mixed-Method Approach	provided by parents to develop motor skills in children aged 3-6 years.	development that supports children's academics. Thus, supporting motor skills is only delegated to educational institutions and some play activities such as playing soccer.	support for developing children's motor skills abilities provided by parents.
(Kamelia et al., 2025)	The influence of physical activities on children language development: a systematic literature review	This study focuses on the relationship between physical activity and language development in children using a literature review.	The findings of this study state that physical activity can form a productive environment for developing children's language, especially in play and game activities. In addition, the play environment can improve communication skills in children.	This research has relevance in the involvement of the play environment as an effort to provide physical activity as a form of stimulation of children's language skills.
(Akbar et al., 2025)	Sports Psychology Perspectives on Cognitive Aspects in Shaping the Pathways of Young Football Players in Indonesia and Malaysia	The research focuses on the role of cognitive aspects in youth soccer in Indonesia and Malaysia.	The findings in the study show that cognitive aspects in young athletes will affect the skills of playing football, especially in mental readiness, decision	This research shows the relevance of the relationship between cognitive aspects and the ability of young athletes to play long soccer games in

			making, emotions and sportsmanship of athletes.	Indonesia and Malaysia.
(Utami et al., 2024)	Conceptual PlayWorlds: A transformational model for children's learning and development in an early childhood education setting in Indonesia	This research focuses on PlayWorlds activities to form an environment for stimulating children's learning and development based on the concept of History-Culture.	The main findings of this study suggest that in stimulating children's learning and development by using PlayWorlds, 5 important things are needed, namely the role of the teacher as a play partner, the meaning of play, freedom, reason, and emotion and cognition.	This research has relevance in the application of the PlayWorlds method in conditioning the learning environment and child development.
(Salamah & Sarjiyem, 2025)	Game-based educational media and associative skills in kindergarten students' early reading and writing development	This study focuses on analysing the use of play-based learning activities on social skills and interactions that will impact children's literacy skills.	The results show that play can be a medium in developing children's literacy skills and associative social skills so that play-based learning can be a necessary activity to stimulate children's literacy and social skills.	This research has relevance in the implementation of play-based learning activities as an activity to develop social skills and will have an impact on children's literacy.
(Komaini et al., 2025)	Nature as school: Indigenous Mentawai	This research focuses on local wisdom-based play	The results of this study show that local wisdom-based	This research has relevance in analysing the relationship

	children's play activities based on local wisdom for enriching motor skills	activities that aim to stimulate children's motor skills in Mentawai.	play has a positive impact on children's motor development. In addition, local wisdom-based play activities have a positive impact in the form of independence and physical strength on children in Mentawai.	between local wisdom-based play activities in children's motor skills due to the support of the environment and local wisdom around children.
(Turner et al., 2025)	From open fields to inside worlds: three generations of childhood in Yogyakarta, Indonesia	This research focuses on analysing socio-economic shifts in play, socialization, mobility and the urgency of childhood across three generations in Yogyakarta.	The results showed that there was a shift in play patterns in each generation as well as mobility in the outdoor environment due to the influence of socio-economic changes in society.	This research shows relevance in analysing play activities based on interaction patterns influenced by socio-economic conditions in each generation in Yogyakarta.
(Rahmaniya et al., 2025)	Understanding emotion in early age: a systematic review of the role of emotional awareness in early childhood education	This research focuses on early childhood emotional awareness related to several aspects of development such as social-emotional, cognitive, language, physical, creativity as	The results show that emotional awareness has a positive relationship to support play activities that will impact other aspects of development.	This research has relevance in the relationship between play activities and emotional awareness and various aspects of child development.

		well as on play and learning activities.		
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Among the 20 articles in the Scopus database, only 11 research articles are relevant to play as a form of stimulation for every aspect of child development. From this research, there are four categories related to play activities, namely play as a medium for gender construction in early childhood, as in the study conducted by (Utami, 2025), play as an effort to stimulate aspects of child development, as in the studies (Akbar et al., 2025; Komaini et al., 2025; Padli et al., 2025; Rahmaniya et al., 2025; Salamah & Sarjiyem, 2025; Sari et al., 2025), play as stimulation for children with disabilities (Intani et al., 2025), and finally the play environment and its relationship to child development aspects (Kamelia et al., 2025; Turner et al., 2025; Utami et al., 2024).

The second category states that play is an activity aimed at stimulating children's development. Research conducted by (Akbar et al., 2025; Komaini et al., 2025; Padli et al., 2025; Sari et al., 2025) focused on the use of play activities to stimulate children's motor and physical development. Research conducted by (Sari et al., 2025) focused on mathematics-based play activities for motor and health development in children. Research conducted by (Padli et al., 2025) focused on parents' perspectives on developing motor skills in children aged 3-6 years. Furthermore, (Akbar et al., 2025) mentioned that psychological development will affect young athletes' ability to play ball in terms of decision-making, social, and cognitive skills. And research conducted by (Komaini et al., 2025) states that local wisdom-based play activities will have a positive influence on motor development in children. This is because games that originate from the environment will provide more experiences for children's development.

In addition to motor and physical development, play also aims to develop other aspects of development, such as social skills that impact children's literacy. As stated in a study conducted by (Salamah & Sarjiyem, 2025) playing helps children develop social skills, particularly communication and associative skills. Another study conducted by (Rahmaniya et al., 2025) playing helps children develop social skills,

particularly communication and associative skills. Another study conducted by (Intani et al., 2025) has integrated structured music to support the physical development of children with disabilities who have mild to moderate intellectual impairments.

Finally, the category related to the play environment describes play activities that are influenced by the environment surrounding the child. Research on this fourth category was conducted by (Kamelia et al., 2025; Turner et al., 2025; Utami et al., 2024). The research conducted by (Kamelia et al., 2025) focused on the involvement of the play environment in developing children's language skills. This research was a systematic literature review aimed at examining various research sources. Furthermore, the research by (Utami et al., 2024) focused on the use of the PlayWorlds learning method in conditioning the play environment as an effort to support child development. Finally, the research conducted by (Turner et al., 2025) was a field study related to changes in play patterns across three generations influenced by the dynamically changing socio-economic situation of the community.

From these studies, it can be seen that previous research sourced from the Scopus database has not discussed much about play activities aimed at fulfilling children's rights or children's wellbeing. Therefore, in future research, it is hoped that there will be more studies related to play that prioritise play as a means of fulfilling children's rights.

Conclusion

From the discussion and explanation of the above research, it can be concluded that research related to play and games only focuses on four categories, namely play as a form of gender construction, play as stimulation of child development, play as stimulation of abilities in children with disabilities, and the environment as a shaper of play patterns. However, this study still has limitations in that there is still little research in 2025 in the Scopus database related to play activities carried out in Indonesia, particularly in fulfilling children's rights through play activities. Therefore, the researchers recommend further research related to play and games in fulfilling children's rights and children's wellbeing.

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