

Puppetry-Based Learning and Children's Holistic Development

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Abstract

Puppetry in early childhood care and education enhances and entices children to participate in play and learning activities. Children learn a variety of skills, knowledge, think creatively and develop their talents and experiences. The purpose of the study is to draft a puppetry-based learning conceptual framework and the perception of early childhood educators on the application of puppetry-based learning, which encompasses puppet crafts, pretend play with puppets, puppet shows and storytelling with puppets, the purpose being to enhance children's holistic development. One hundred early childhood educators were selected from the government and private early childhood centers around Kuala Lumpur. The research data were collected through a questionnaire survey and were analysed using independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA. Results showed that early childhood educators have a positive perception towards the usage of puppets in supporting children's creativity and imagination, intellect, language and communication, social and emotions, physical, moral, spirituality and values development. The findings of the study supported the hypotheses that the perception of early childhood educators according to the status of center and experience in care and education at the early childhood center were not significant. Early childhood educators have a positive perception of the application of puppetry-based learning in supporting children's holistic development. Puppetry-based learning has given a positive impact based on the puppetry activities to be used in supporting children's holistic development. Educators, parents, resident artists and curriculum developers play an important role in promoting and preserving puppetry-based learning.

Keywords: Puppetry-Based Learning, Children Holistic Development

INTRODUCTION

Puppetry as education and entertainment is a great tool to deliver knowledge, skills, convey the message and facilitate children's playing and learning experiences. Although puppetry has been shown to aid children's holistic development, not all educators applied it in education and care extensively. Puppetry-based learning encompasses puppet crafts, pretend play with puppets, puppet shows, and storytelling with puppets. Puppets as a pedagogical tool, pretend play, craft and performance have their notable demand; they constitute a genre of play, art and literature for children (Majaran, 2012; Korosec, 2012; Loy, Nordin, Nor Mashitah & Sophia, 2017; Rumi Gupta, 2020). In early childhood education centre, puppetry is a great method of conveying information to children. The use of puppets in playing, performance, teaching and learning activities can train children's positive skills, knowledge, experiences and behaviors. Children involved in puppet activities can recount and remember the information they have learned.

This first research objective is to draft a puppetry-based learning conceptual framework and children's creativity and imagination, intellect, language and communication, social and emotions, physical, moral, spirituality and values development. This second research objective is to identify whether there are differences or similarities between the perceptions of government and private early childhood educators on the application of puppetry-based learning in facilitating children's holistic development. Third, to identify whether there are differences or similarities in terms of the duration of

early childhood educators' teaching experience on the application of puppetry-based learning in assisting the development of children's holistic development.

The first research hypothesis suggests no significant difference between the perception of government and private early childhood educators' perception towards the application of puppetry-based learning in children's holistic development. Second, suggests no significant difference between the perceptions of early childhood educators on the application of puppetry-based learning in children's holistic development based on the duration of their teaching experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Puppetry-based learning, which encompasses puppet crafts, pretend play with puppets, puppet shows, and storytelling with puppets, would facilitate children's holistic development. Educators can make puppet crafts for children out of various recyclable, reusable and reducible materials. Children will undergo self-experiment and gain aesthetic art experience by using the materials. They would enjoy colouring, drawing, creating and painting with minimum supervision. Puppets are fantastic tools and a fun extension of pretend play. To children, puppets are living and breathing beings. Children can play and talk to puppets. With little guidance from educators, children can make their puppets and play out a scene with puppets and facilitate children's holistic development (Korosec, 2013; Compton, 2016; Hikmah Nur, 2017).

To rehearse a puppet show, fundamental household objects and readily available materials can be easily adapted for use as both puppets and puppet shows. Turn a table with sturdy legs on aside. Children can sit behind the tabletop and perform a show by holding puppets over the edge of the table. Cut a window on one side of a cardboard appliance box. A puppet show project includes script adaptation, puppet making, stage making, percussion music, puppet movement, performance practice and performance. Storytelling with puppets leads the children into an imaginary world. Using puppets to tell stories is a wonderful technique. Educators can use the puppet as the narrator to introduce a storytelling session. Educators can also use finger puppets, hand puppets, or open-mouth talking puppets to act as characters within the story. Children can discover the joy of literature and learn through storytelling with puppets (Kroflin, 2012).

Puppetry and children's development. Puppetry-based learning functions as a teaching programme aid for translating playing, teaching and learning activities that include the elements of creativity and imagination, intellect, language and communication, social and emotions, physical, moral, spirituality and values in creating holistic individuals.

Puppetry activities assist children in improving their creativity and imagination. The active involvement of children in puppetry activities can help them express their original ideas and enhance their problem-solving skills. Children transform their ideas and perceive things in different ways. The use of puppets in the classroom brings benefits to children in the teaching of art activities. The intellectual and cognitive maturity of a child can be discovered through puppetry activities to promote exploration and experimentation hence enabling them to make judgments and decisions appropriately. Puppetry activities usually include mental exercises and aspects like comprehension, knowledge, analysis, application and assessment. The use of puppets in the classroom brings benefits to children in the teaching of science and mathematics (Korosec, 2013; Ivon, 2014). Language and communication skills are the heart of children's learning. The use of puppets can improve language skills and children's communication skills. Children can pick up a puppet and begin speaking in a different voice and they will quickly adapt to the personality of the portrayed character which is usually very different from their own. A child can master language and communication when they have listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and can interact with others, which can be garnered through puppetry activities (Kroflin, 2012; Caganaga & Kalmis, 2015; Hikmah, 2017). In these activities, the children would express their feelings through the puppets. They would accept the views of other children during the art and craft session, play, storytelling and performance.

Puppetry activities help children develop socially. During puppetry activities, they have to interact, adapt, and understand the forms of interaction with other children. Additionally, they need to compromise and cooperate in puppetry activities. They need to share materials and artistic equipment

and show sensitivity towards the needs of other children. Positive attitudes and negative attitudes of children from socio aspects can be identified with the use of puppetry activities. Puppetry activities facilitate emotional development in children because they are allowed to express feelings like sadness, happiness, anger, fear, and hatred. Therefore, such activities help children build positive attitudes like self-discipline and self-control. Puppetry activities can also encourage the development of psychomotor particularly the development of fine motor skills. The use of materials and equipment in puppet art gives a form of effective exercise for hand muscles and coordination of hands and eyes for children. In terms of health and safety, children are trained to practice a healthy way of life and stay away from harm. Puppetry activities can help children to develop their morals, spirituality and values. These exercises have educational and entertainment functions; both can be used to promote good moral beliefs and appreciation of natural beauty. Additionally, the use of waste materials in puppet activities can educate children to appreciate the natural beauty of God's creation (Korosec, 2013).

Loy's (2021) study on the implementation of puppetry activities in early childhood programs includes role play, crafts, performances, storytelling, singing and moving with puppets, question and answer as well as reading stories with puppets. Findings show that the use of puppet activities can (i) improve cognitive and memory, (ii) enhance creative imagination, (iii) positive emotions, (iv) social skills and interaction during learning, (v) train concentration, language and communication, (vi) improve the mental and physical health as well as (vii) the spiritual and moral values of the child. Kroger and Nupponen's (2019) study of puppets as a pedagogical tool is to systematically investigate the available evidence on the benefits of using puppets in early childhood education. Findings of the study report the potential and benefits of using puppets to (i) produce and promote children's communication, (ii) create a positive classroom atmosphere, (iii) enhance children's creativity and imagination, (iv) foster children's cooperation to group assignments and (v) change children's attitudes and behaviors. Both studies suggest puppetry activities can be integrated into playing, teaching and learning activities to aid children's holistic development and enliven a cheerful and effective play and learning environment in early childhood centers.

It is found that the application of puppetry-based learning can facilitate children's holistic development. As an effective pedagogical strategy, puppetry-based learning is appropriate to be practiced so that early childhood educators and children can benefit from the pedagogical process.

METHODOLOGY

Mixed method research was applied in this study. A qualitative study is used for the first research objective to draft a puppetry-based learning and children's holistic development conceptual framework. Conceptual framework drafting based on puppetry activities in early childhood programmes and puppetry as a pedagogical tool literature review from Google Scholar and e-journal. Quantitative studies are used for the second and third research objectives to identify teachers' perceptions on the application of puppetry-based learning in assisting the development of children's holistic development in terms of government and private early childhood educators and the duration of early childhood educators' teaching experience. The sample of the quantitative study consists of one hundred early childhood educators from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the private sector around Kuala Lumpur. The research data were obtained through a questionnaire survey and were processed using independent samples t-test and one-way ANOVA.

FINDINGS

Finding of first research objective: Puppetry-based learning and children's holistic development conceptual framework.

This conceptual framework draft is based on two main research that included Loy (2021) entitled Puppetry activities in early childhood programmes, as well as Kroger and Nupponen (2019), entitle Puppet as a pedagogical tool: A literature review. The conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 drafting a puppetry-based learning conceptual framework that encompasses (i) puppet crafts, (ii)

pretend play with puppets, (iii) puppet shows, and (iv) storytelling with puppets. The process of puppetry activities includes the elements of creativity and imagination, intellect, language and communication, social and emotions, physical, moral, spirituality and values in creating children's holistic development.

Creativity and imagination development. Puppet activities increase children's creativity and train them to think outside the box. Pretend play with puppets shaped children's imagination and teach them to learn about the world. Children manipulate puppets, express themselves, plan puppet activities, act, interact, respond and try out various roles using puppets. Children take part in pretend play, puppet crafts, shows and storytelling with puppets using their creativity and imagination.

Language and communication development. Children develop their communication skills by talking through puppets in pretend play. During puppet shows, children use puppets to interact with other children as well as the adults around them. Pretend play, puppet shows and storytelling with puppets encourage children to speak. They learn words, sentences and short stories through puppetry activities.

Intellect development. Children have the opportunity to develop memory, thinking skills by exploring and manipulating various types of puppets. Children discover cause and effect and how to manipulate puppets. They learn concepts such as size, texture and colour can be developed through puppet craft activities while space and volume of voice, are developed through play activities, performances and storytelling using puppets.

Social and emotional development. Social skills can be trained through puppet activities. Children learn to be tolerant and cooperate in groups during puppet activities. They are trained to share, take turns, listen to the opinions and ideas of other children. They can enjoy better peer relationships. Strong social skills help children get along with other children more easily after participating in puppet activities.

Puppet activities give children the opportunity to try new things. Individually and grouping puppet show activities can develop confidence, self-esteem and feel good about oneself. Puppet activities give children the opportunity to explore, express and act on their emotions.

Physical development. Playing finger puppets and making puppet crafts that use a lot of fingers movement helps the development of fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination of children. Puppet performances according to the storyline and puppet movements along with music train children's balance and gross motor movements.

Moral, spirituality and values development. The messages in the puppet shows and stories provide an opportunity for children to appreciate religious and spiritual values. Children will be able to learn about the uniqueness of culture, way of life and global issues through puppets coming from countries with different backgrounds.

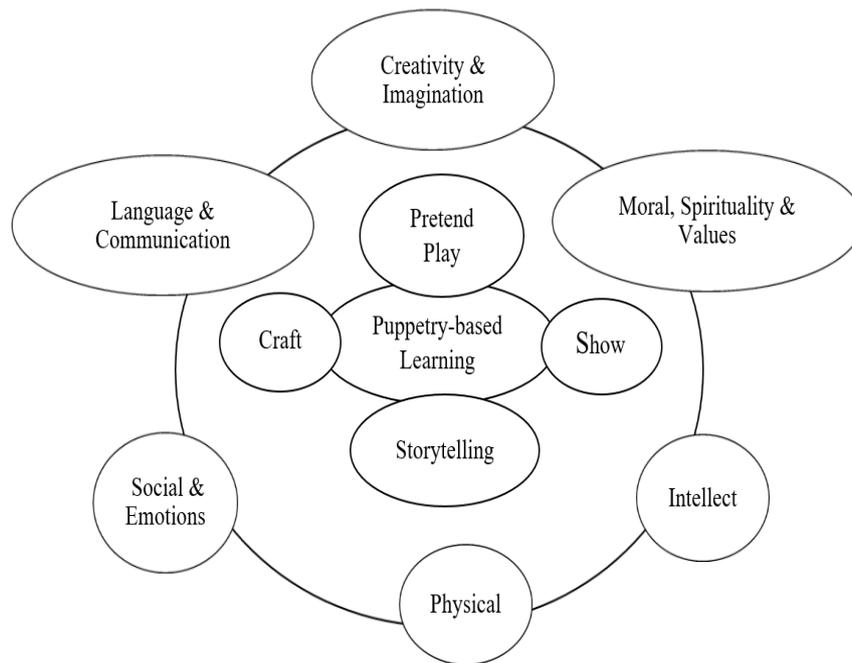


Figure 1 Puppety-Based Learning Conceptual Framework

Finding of second research objective: Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 was developed to identify whether there was a significant difference in the perception of government early childhood educators and private early childhood educators on the application of puppety-based learning in facilitating children's holistic development in terms of creativity and imagination, intellect, language and communication, social and emotions, physical, moral, spirituality and values development.

Table 1: T-test results on the perception of government and private early childhood educators towards puppety-based learning in children's holistic development

School status	N	Mean	SP (Std.D)	Dk (df)	t	Sig
Government	62	140.21	14.223	98	0.729	0.678
Private	38	141.4	14.615			

N represents the number of respondents

* signifies significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 1 shows that the mean obtained for the government group is 140.21 with a standard deviation of 14.223, whereas the mean obtained for the private group is 141.24 with a standard deviation of 14.615. The t-test results showed that the value of $t(98) = 0.729$, which was insignificant. This means the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. The t-test results showed no significant difference in the perception of government early childhood educators and the perception of private early childhood educators towards the application of puppety-based learning in facilitating children's holistic development.

Finding of third research objective: Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 shows no significant difference was noted in the perceptions of early childhood educators based on the duration of their teaching experience for 10 years or below, 11-20 years and 21 years old on puppety-based learning in helping children's holistic development in term of creativity and

imagination, intellect, language and communication, social and emotions, physical, moral, spirituality and values development. One-way ANOVA was used to identify the perception of government and private early childhood educators according to their experience.

Table 2 A One-Way ANOVA Decision On The Perception Of Government And Private Early Childhood Educators According To Teaching Period Of Conducting Puppetry-Based Learning In Early Childhood Center

Variable	JKD (Sum of square)	dk (df)	MKD (Mean square)	F	Sig
Between groups	375.675	2	187.837		
In group	19892.325	97	205.076	0.916	0.404
Total	20268.000	99			

Table 2 shows no significant difference according to the perceptions of the early childhood educator towards applying puppetry-based learning in children's holistic development based on the duration of their teaching experience in early childhood education center is $F(2, 97) = 0.916, p > 0.05$. Therefore, the statement for this hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of puppetry-based learning in children's holistic development based on the duration of teaching early childhood educators in early childhood education center is received

DISCUSSION

The implementation of puppetry activities in early childhood centers can help children's holistic development, attract attention and their interest in learning as well as change their behavior. Loy's (2021), as well as Kroger and Nupponen's (2019), selected research paper succeeded to draft a puppetry-based learning and children's holistic development conceptual framework. The research results show that the perception of early childhood educators towards puppetry-based learning in children's holistic development is positive. The findings show no significant difference between the perception of government and the perception of private early childhood educators in viewing puppetry-based learning to facilitate children's holistic development. This finding indicates that the educators in public early childhood and the educators in private early childhood have the same perception of puppetry-based learning in facilitating children's holistic development. The perceptions of the early childhood educators perceptions based on the duration of their teaching experience at an early childhood education center also show no significant difference. This finding suggests that new early childhood educators and experienced early childhood educators have the same perception of puppetry-based learning as a method to facilitate children's holistic development. The results of this study are in line with the studies of Korosec (2013), Caganaga and Kalmis (2015), Loy (2021), as well as Kroger and Nupponen's (2019) which state that the use of puppets as a pedagogical tool can facilitate the development of children's holistic development.

CONCLUSION

Since puppets have been listed as pedagogical tools in the early childhood curriculum and can help the holistic development of children, early childhood educators need to apply puppetry-based learning in playing, teaching and learning. Recommendations to puppetry educators, parents, resident artists and curriculum developers should be emphasised in looking forward to puppetry-based learning to facilitate children's holistic development.

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