Golden Age
Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang
Anak Usia Dini

OPEN ACCESS

Egalitarian Education: The Practice of Independent Learning at PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta

Rohinah[1], Septi Indriyani[2], Abdul Aziz[3]
[1]Department of Early Childhood Islamic Education, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, [2]STAI Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta, Indonesia, [3]UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Check for updates

Abstract
Education at early childhood education (PAUD) Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) in Yogyakarta focuses on liberating and holistic development, nurturing students' faith, character, health, knowledge, independence, creativity, and responsibility through a research-based approach centered on nature and individual talents. Unlike traditional schools, SALAM, often called a 'school of life' or 'life laboratory,' emphasizes experiential learning in a natural setting, aligning education with each student's unique interests and abilities. This study aims to analyze how the concept and practice of independent education are applied at PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam Yogyakarta. Employing a descriptive-qualitative approach, the research investigates how this educational philosophy translates into practice, emphasizing critical thinking, autonomy, and humanization. Through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, the study captures the perspectives of educators, administrators, and other stakeholders. Key findings include the integration of Freire's concepts into pedagogical practices, such as fostering egalitarian educator-student relationships, prioritizing dialogue, and embedding ethics in the curriculum. The study also examines the practical implications of this approach, highlighting the roles of educators as facilitators and the importance of nurturing environmental awareness and critical thinking from an early age. While the study's findings affirm the potential of Freire's model in early childhood settings, its context-specific nature and focus on a single institution necessitate caution in generalizing the results. Consequently, the research underscores the need for further exploration in diverse educational contexts. The study's implications extend to educational policy and practice, advocating a shift towards more participatory, student-centered, and dialogue-driven learning environments. This research contributes to the discourse on global educational reform by demonstrating the transformative power of liberatory education in fostering egalitarian and humanizing educational experiences.

Introduction
The pursuit of humanizing education systems globally, particularly in early childhood education (PAUD), is a matter of significant importance. The influence of PAUD on subsequent developmental stages is profound, shaping individuals' academic, social, and moral perspectives (Abdul Latif et al., 2021; Adhani et al., 2023). Traditional educational models often regard students as products of a rigid system, neglecting the nurturing of essential humanistic values and critical thinking skills. This prevalent issue in education, exemplified in institutions like PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta, calls for a paradigm shift towards more egalitarian and independent learning frameworks. Such a shift is critical for fostering holistic development in early childhood, as highlighted by studies demonstrating the foundational impact of quality PAUD on later life stages.

Munir Mulkhan's critique of the education system highlights a profound issue: the stifling of critical thinking and creativity in classrooms, which he links to broader societal and moral problems (Mulkhan, 2002). This critique is echoed in studies showing that traditional educational practices often value conformity over individuality, leading to an oppression of will in children and a lack of encouragement for genuine understanding and inquiry (Fatmawati & Latif, 2019; Latif et al., 2020). Such observations have sparked a debate on the need for a paradigm shift in education, moving away from rote learning and towards an approach that values creativity, critical thinking, and the holistic development of students.

The "banking model" of education, as described by Paulo Freire, serves as a critique of traditional educational dynamics characterized by a top-down, teacher-centered approach (Freire, 2000). This model treats students as passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in their learning process. The implications of this model extend beyond the classroom, contributing to a broader oppression within the educational realm. Studies have supported Freire's critique, indicating that such an approach can hinder the development of independent thinking and creativity in students (Fikri Haikal et al., 2023; M. Husni, 2020).

In contrast to the traditional model, alternative educational settings like Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) in Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta represent a paradigm shift. SALAM's approach provides a more egalitarian and humanistic educational environment. Here, students are encouraged to learn from diverse sources, and the teacher-student relationship is based on mutual respect and informality (Nidyawati, 2017; Prasetia et al., 2021). This method challenges the conventional hierarchical education model and highlights the potential benefits of fostering egalitarian relationships in the educational process.

However, this perception of teachers does not seem to be the case at the non-formal educational institution Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta. This alternative school attempts to provide ample space for children to learn from various sources (Nidyawati, 2017). A notable feature is the absence of mandatory school uniforms for children and teachers, who all wear casual and non-formal attire. The teacher-student relationship established here is very egalitarian, as evidenced by the use of "mas and mbak" (brother and sister) for teachers instead of "Mr./Mrs. Teacher," etc. This approach aims to foster a more egalitarian and humanistic relationship between teachers and students.

The approach adopted by SALAM aligns with emerging research in egalitarian education and independent learning. For example, home-based family engagement in early learning activities has been linked to significant developmental benefits in children, particularly in emergent numeracy and literacy (Rey-Guerra et al., 2022). Similarly, the COEDU-IN Project demonstrated the effectiveness of educational robotics in teaching computational thinking and digital skills inclusively, catering to diverse groups of children, including those with Down syndrome and hospitalized minors (González et al., 2023). These studies reinforce the potential of alternative educational approaches that prioritize egalitarian values and independent learning, offering a promising direction for educational reform.

Despite advancements, significant gaps and controversies remain in early childhood education. Studies like those by (2019) and Simpson et al. identify limitations in current teaching methods, particularly in fostering independent thinking and critical analysis among young learners. These gaps underscore the need for further research into more effective educational models, especially those promoting egalitarian and independent learning environments. For instance, research suggests that early childhood STEM education, emphasizing play-based learning, can foster young children's independent learning and responsiveness to their natural environment, contributing to sustainable development (Campbell & Speldewinde, 2022). Furthermore, implementing research-based learning models has been shown to improve critical thinking skills in students, especially those with field-dependent cognitive styles (Budayawati et al., 2019), indicating the potential for such methods in early education settings.

This study aims to delve into the role of liberation education in shaping educators' perspectives and practices at PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul

Yogyakarta. It examines the implementation of independent learning and its impact on the school's public space. The research aligns with global educational trends emphasizing the importance of fostering independent learning skills from an early age. For instance, the study of UK higher education students highlighted the evolution of independent learning skills, showing how peer support plays a crucial role in their development (Hockings et al., 2018). Additionally, the effectiveness of the independent learning approach in fostering autonomy and practical application of knowledge at the Cikoneng Islamic Boarding School (YPI) provides insights into its potential benefits (Firdaus & Al Husaeni, 2023). These examples underscore the importance of the current study's focus on independent learning in early childhood education.

The research aims to comprehensively analyze the egalitarian and independent learning models practiced at PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam Yogyakarta. It involves an in-depth exploration of the roles of teachers, the curriculum, and the overall educational atmosphere that promotes independent learning and critical thinking. By addressing existing limitations in the field and contributing to ongoing debates on education reform, the study offers practical insights for educators and policymakers. The findings of this study are expected to have implications not only for the Indonesian educational context but also for the global discourse on innovative and humanistic approaches to early childhood education. This aligns with the findings on the influence of early socioeconomic status, childhood intelligence, education level, and life-course social mobility on memory and cognitive impairment in later life, emphasizing education's role in providing resilience against age-related cognitive decline (Staff et al., 2018).

Methods

This study was conducted as field research at PAUD SALAM Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta, embracing a descriptive-qualitative approach aimed at understanding social phenomena from the perspectives of the involved individuals (Emzir, 2015). This methodological choice is predicated on the principles of descriptive research, which, as noted by Suharsini Arikunto, typically does not involve the formation of hypotheses, thereby negating the need for hypothesis testing in this context. The phenomenological approach sought to intricately detail the characteristics, behaviors, and patterns observed within the study's social settings (Bungin, 2007). The primary participants in this research were the educators at PAUD SALAM, complemented by input from the school's management, principal, administrative staff, and an array of school documents. The study's procedures incorporated a triad of data collection techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and extensive document analysis.

The qualitative nature of the research dictated the use of specific tools like observational checklists, interview guides, and document analysis frameworks, which were instrumental in gathering detailed, first-hand data from the field. Data collection was executed through a strategic triangulation method, combining observational insights, interviews, and documentary evidence to understand the educational dynamics at PAUD SALAM comprehensively. Following the data gathering phase, analysis was conducted by the Miles and Huberman method, characterized by data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification processes (Miles et al., 2014). A robust triangulation of techniques and sources was employed to ensure the study's reliability and validity. This methodology entailed corroborating information gleaned from various methods and sources, reinforcing the research findings' authenticity and reliability. The systematic application of the Miles and Huberman analytical framework further underscored the study's methodological rigor and credibility.

Result

3.1. The Concept of Liberation Education in Paulo Freire's Perspective
3.1.1. Biography of Paulo Freire

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire, born on September 19, 1921, in Recife, Brazil, emerged as a figure of optimism amidst adversity, characterized by his impoverished childhood and experiences of hunger. His upbringing in a democratic environment fostered in him a respect for dialogue, shaping his character into one sensitive to social injustices. The economic crisis of 1929 that

plunged his family into poverty profoundly influenced his worldview. Freire's confrontational ideas towards Brazil's government led to his imprisonment in 1964 and subsequent exile to Chile, where he played a pivotal role in a literacy eradication program, gaining international recognition and a position at UNESCO. His experiences in the United States during the 1960s, particularly amidst racial unrest, further broadened his understanding of oppression beyond geographical confines, influencing his later works which prominently featured themes of violence. Freire's life, marked by constant challenges and state oppression, molded him into an organic intellectual dedicated to defending the marginalized and combating the "culture of silence" prevalent in Brazil, thus embodying the very principles he advocated in his educational theories.

3.1.2. The Concept of Liberatory Education in the Perspective of Paulo Freire

Paulo Freire's educational philosophy vehemently opposes the traditional tabula rasa theory of education, as proposed by John Locke, which is widely adopted in modern educational systems. Freire criticizes this approach for treating humans as passive recipients of knowledge, akin to empty vessels to be filled. This perspective led to the development of the banking model of education, characterized by its rigid and oppressive nature. In this model, the educational process is a one-way street: teachers are the sole source of knowledge, dictating content and methodology, while students passively absorb information without critical engagement. Freire argues that this model not only stifles creativity and critical thinking but also reinforces a power imbalance between teachers and students, ultimately leading to a neutral and disengaged stance in education.

Contrastingly, Freire advocates for a liberatory form of education, which he sees as essential for humanizing the individual. In his view, education should empower students to critically understand and engage with their realities, thus enabling them to achieve a state of critical consciousness. Freire categorizes human consciousness into magical, naive, and critical, with the goal of education being to elevate individuals to the level of critical consciousness. This approach is in stark opposition to the dehumanizing practices of traditional educational models. Freire's emphasis on humanization positions education as a tool for liberation from oppressive structures, encouraging students to become active participants in their learning journey and in the larger societal context. This perspective aligns with the primary goal of National Education, underscoring the importance of a human-centered approach in educational processes.

Freire's critique extends to the politicization of education, which he perceives as detrimental to the true purpose of schooling. He asserts that schools should serve as safe, nurturing environments, akin to a second home for students, free from political manipulation. This environment is crucial for fostering enlightened, critically thinking individuals. In Freire's view, education is not merely an academic exercise but a vital process for developing awareness and consciousness. It is through this conscious awakening that individuals can recognize and challenge the social constructs that bind them, thereby achieving true liberation. Freire's educational philosophy, with its emphasis on humanization and critical consciousness, offers a transformative approach to education, challenging traditional models and advocating for a more equitable and empowering system.

3.2. The Practice of Liberating Education at SALAM Early Childhood Education Center in Yogyakarta

The hallmark of SALAM is liberating each student to express themselves freely. With this freedom of expression, students are not constrained and are free to choose what they like. Consequently, the learning process becomes enjoyable rather than a forced activity. The primary motivation for children to learn is enjoyment. It is no surprise that the first school established by Ki Hajar Dewantara was Taman Siswa. The word "Taman" (garden) in Ki Hajar Dewantara's concept aimed to build a mindset in children that school is a delightful garden, not a frightening place.

SALAM is unique because it liberates its students from the obligation to wear uniforms. Allowing students to dress freely impacts their mindset, especially regarding the uniformity of

subjects. Students can express their appearance, including wearing sandals to school, coloring their hair, having long hair, and more. This uniform-free approach stems from the belief that uniform thinking can harm their mindset. SALAM does not want its students to be trapped in a mindset prioritizing uniformity. Therefore, it starts with something tangible, like allowing students to wear casual clothes. Wearing non-uniform clothes can influence children's thinking, showing them that diversity is acceptable and beautiful when embraced.

This includes the freedom to choose subjects they want to learn. Every child is unique in their talents and interests. Therefore, it is essential that lessons cannot be standardized for all students. For example, not all children like or excel in mathematics, even though it is an important subject. Hence, SALAM strives to create a free space for children to discover their identity and potential by eliminating barriers between subjects. As a result, the knowledge they acquire is what they desire, not what others impose. Children's inner desires are brought out, allowing them to experience, touch, examine, analyze, and ultimately draw conclusions. The knowledge they discover is not because of what others say.

At SALAM, educators are not seen as infallible teachers. Instead, they act as playmates, conversation partners, discussion companions, and facilitators who help children discover their true selves. This approach distinguishes SALAM's educational concept from that of other formal schools. Instead of formally addressing educators as "teachers," students at SALAM can call them "Bu," "Pak," "Kakak," or even "Bunda." This fosters an egalitarian relationship between students and educators, facilitating two-way communication between facilitators and students.

Such two-way communication significantly impacts children's psychology. The openness of children towards facilitators, social environments, and natural surroundings makes education a perfect dialogic process. Thus, dialogue is not merely a superficial exchange where the teacher is the sole provider of information, and students learn in silence. In reality, children are the most outstanding teachers for themselves and a source of learning from their peers (and for their parents as well).

The success of an educator in this context is inseparable from the importance of communication. As Paulo Freire stated, liberating education demands the importance of a dialogic space in the teaching-learning process because, in dialogue, students respect each other, learn from each other, and avoid the pressures of authority. The dialogue that develops is critically dialogic. Therefore, the relationship between teachers and students at SALAM is egalitarian, positioning teachers and students as subjects, not subjects and objects.

The dialogic space created between teachers and students at SALAM is not just about transferring knowledge but makes learning more meaningful as students engage in learning to learn. For instance, when a child arrives late at SALAM, the school does not apply a punishment system for tardiness. Late-arriving children are warmly welcomed by all educators, even if they arrive just before the end of the lesson. Additionally, when children arrive late, they are often asked to share their experiences during their journey. This approach is valuable because it recognizes that learning occurs not only in school but in all places, as every place can be a learning medium for humans.

SALAM, as a liberating school, is not based on lessons but on research aligned with the interests of the children. Subjects are treated as processes, and in discovering knowledge, SALAM's learning model uses research based on the children's interests. Children eventually encounter subjects like Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, and others through this process. However, they discover these subjects through activities they enjoy. With this research-based approach, children naturally find their knowledge without being burdened with imposed knowledge or rote memorization. In essence, the learning experience at SALAM is about building critical thinking skills in students. This aligns with Paulo Freire's vision of education, where the goal is to develop individuals who are knowledgeable and capable of critical thought and understanding.

3.3. Practical Implications of Liberating Education

The concept of the educator in the perspective of liberating education at SALAM Early Childhood Education Center emphasizes five key roles: the educator acts as a playmate, conversation partner, facilitator, discussion leader, and stimulus for the child. These concepts imply a dialogic approach that is interactive and inclusive. The dialogic process between egalitarian educators and students fosters open knowledge of change or development. However, the knowledge students acquire also implies a limited permanence, as suggested by the inevitability of human life. Liberating education, which essentially humanizes individuals, becomes a space for freeing humans from curiosity, thereby creating better and new things. In line with this, liberation-based education also shapes knowledgeable, creative Indonesian citizens who are democratic and responsible. Suppose Indonesian people accommodate the educational model proposed by Freire. In that case, it will lead to the creation of individuals built through a process of humanization, as opposed to animalization or mechanization, which tends to lead to dehumanization.

The educational practices implemented at SALAM Early Childhood Education Center in Nitiprayan, Kasihan, Bantul, and Yogyakarta have wholly embraced the liberating education theory advocated by educational figures like Paulo Freire and Ki Hajar Dewantara. This education model prioritizes happiness and builds the mindset that school is a delightful playground. The alignment between theory and practice makes the praxis of liberating education a distinctive feature not found in other schools. The practical implications of liberating education implemented at SALAM Early Childhood Education Center for its students include:

3.3.1. Developing Awareness in Children

One factor that leads to feelings of oppression is the lack or absence of opportunities, resulting in an inability to act even when one desires to. This has crystallized in the educational process at SALAM Early Childhood Education Center, fostering dialogue and leading to collective awareness. Awareness is unique to humans, not possessed by other creations of God. Human awareness allows individuals to position themselves according to their beliefs. Reflection expresses awareness that can provide conviction and resilience in specific situations and environmental conditions.

3.3.2. Building Environmental Awareness

The liberation-based education process at SALAM utilizes nature as a learning medium. Here, facilitators strive to instill environmental awareness from the beginning of the learning process, especially when faced with environmental realities like excessive waste. This environmental consciousness is cultivated when students are directly taken to areas experiencing environmental issues in daily life, such as waste disposal sites. This builds a mindset in students about the complex, cracked texture of soil in areas with plastic waste, thus shaping their mindset to reduce plastic use.

Students form this mindset when they directly confront environmental issues, absorbing cause-and-effect information and ultimately fostering a caring and appreciative attitude towards the environment. The environmental awareness instilled at SALAM also impacts their habits of maintaining the environment in their communities. This occurs because the educational concept at SALAM originates from the children's will and awareness, without coercion from educators. Learning directly from nature, they learn from actual experiences encountered in daily life. Being in a rural environment, they learn to cultivate soil, make compost, plant, care for plants, harvest, and even process the harvest according to their abilities and age. This learning process is enjoyable and unburdened for them. Observing their surroundings makes them more sensitive to the environment, appreciating their achievements, cooperating, and building strong self-confidence. For example, engaging in activities like collecting waste and separating organic from inorganic materials instills a moral to respect nature by not littering indiscriminately.

3.3.3. Developing Critical Thinking

Learning through local wisdom sharpens their critical thinking through various experiences as they learn in the classroom. They observe everything around them and interact with peers, facilitators, and the community. This simple, natural, and uncontrived learning process leads children to understand and discover knowledge independently. They learn to think and make decisions independently, finding nothing too complicated or frightening, as everything stems from their daily experiences, making them always comfortable and happy in the learning process.

Moreover, not only children but also parents and teachers/facilitators learn at SALAM. Everyone harmoniously participates in the learning process. Education should be for everyone and ideally starts with children. By creating harmony with local wisdom and providing opportunities for children, we are building a learning process to mature and be responsible towards oneself, family, the surrounding environment, and most importantly, the Creator of Nature.

3.3.4. Cultivating Ethics from an Early Age

Ethics are crucial in human life, distinguishing humans from other beings. Education should ideally lead to the development of civilized individuals with noble ethics. Ki Hajar Dewantara, the Father of Indonesian Education, emphasized the importance of ethics. With ethics, each individual stands as a free person capable of self-governance. This defines a civilized person and is education's overarching aim and purpose.

Ethics are also the result of all the interactions and teaching-learning processes in schools. Teaching ethics through subjects, including religious studies focusing more on teachings, admonitions, and advice, is ineffective in nurturing children's ethics. The current mainstream school dynamics, which emphasize achievement and competition, also affect the formation of relationships between children, teachers, parents, and others. The overall dynamics in schools influence how students think and act. Therefore, to build good ethical education, the foundational philosophy, objectives, and methods must be harmonious to develop humanistic individuals.

Based on this understanding of ethical education, the management of SALAM Early Childhood Education Center aspires to realize an education where all the dynamics, from teaching-learning activities to other activities, are based on harmonious objectives and methods to nurture humanistic individuals. The ethical education at SALAM is not separated between academic teaching and moral values and is not conveyed through subjects like religious education. At SALAM, there is no division of material taught in various subjects as in other schools. Therefore, SALAM does not have a fixed schedule for each day. Ethical education at SALAM is imparted through the overall dynamics occurring there. The school management system, the teaching-learning process, and various other activities are deliberately structured to support the formation of children's ethics. This approach stems from Pak Toto, the founder of SALAM, who believes that ethical education should indeed be imparted through the entire dynamics of the school.

The learning processes and activities at SALAM, such as class agreements, traditional markets, daily duties, waste banks, and home visits, are intentionally designed as opportunities for children to face reality and practice responsibilities introduced by SALAM. This method is chosen due to concerns about ethical education that is more doctrinal, advisory, and far from children's imagination. SALAM also has the motto "take care of yourself, take care of friends, take care of the environment" as fundamental values to instill in children. This motto is based on an understanding of what freedom entails. The freedom introduced to children at SALAM is about making them happy and instilling responsibility towards themselves, others, and their environment.

Discussion

The present study embarked on exploring the role of liberation education in shaping educators' perspectives and practices at PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta, specifically in the context of fostering egalitarian relationships in early childhood education. This inquiry is deeply rooted in the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire, which emphasizes liberation through education (Afida et al., 2021). As Freire envisioned, liberation education entails a critical engagement with reality, aiming to humanize and liberate individuals from oppressive conditions (Herbst, 2023; Keriapy & Tafonao, 2022). In aligning with these principles, SALAM's approach reflects a significant shift from traditional pedagogical models, instead prioritizing the holistic development of children within an egalitarian framework.

Liberation-based learning at SALAM Early Childhood Education Center also implements projects for its students. These projects aim to provide direction appropriate to the child's developmental age in all aspects of development (religious-moral values, physical-motor, emotional-social, language, and cognitive) to prepare the child for the next level of education. Consequently, at the end of the foundational phase, children demonstrate a fondness for practicing the basics of religious values and good character, pride in their identity, literacy skills, and foundational knowledge in science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics to foster a love of learning and readiness for primary education. This aligns with research conducted by Latif and Sidiq, where SALAM school is characterized by a freedom-based learning style, indirectly providing children with valuable experiences (Sidiq & Muqowim, 2020).

The role of educators in this context is to provide a foundation for children to understand themselves and the world. Children trained to learn based on their life needs and capable of answering critical questions will find it easier to face life, make decisions, solve problems (solutively), and take risks. Project activities are an investigative adventure for children with teacher guidance as educators on topics that interest them, experiencing the discovery process (Budiraharja et al., 2021). The concept of liberating education also applies that the desired knowledge comes from personal desire. Children's inner desires are brought out, allowing them to experience, touch, examine, analyze, and ultimately draw conclusions. The knowledge they discover is not based on what others say but is sought independently (Mardliyah et al., 2020; Sholihah & Machali, 2017; Wartini, 2015).

The independent education system teaches students to take the initiative and engage in creative activities in the learning process. This is crucial as children aged 0-5 years are in the golden age (Darnis & Dodd, 2021; Formen & Waluyo, 2023; Herlambang et al., 2023; Karima, R & Kurniawati, 2020; Mukhlis, 2019; Rohmah & Sulong, 2023; Salsabila et al., 2023; Ulfah, 2018; Utari et al., 2023). This period is the best for physical, emotional, and intellectual development, significantly determining their future (Budiraharja et al., 2021; Halimah, 2018). Therefore, the findings of this research have implications for strengthening the liberation of learning in early childhood education.

The study's findings illuminate several intriguing aspects of SALAM's approach. Foremost among these is the center's emphasis on liberatory education, characterized by a significant departure from the conventional educator-student dynamic. Instead, a subject-subject relationship is fostered, underpinned by freedom of expression, choice, and research-based learning (H. et al., 2023; Jefferson et al., 2018). Notably, this approach reflects a commitment to fostering critical consciousness and autonomy among students, in line with Freire's educational ideals.

Comparing these findings with existing literature reveals both alignments and contrasts. For instance, the importance of dialogue and egalitarian educator-student relationships at SALAM resonates with Rey-Guerra et al. (2022), who found that home-based family engagement in early learning yielded significant developmental benefits. Similarly, the focus on critical thinking and ethics parallels findings from the COEDU-IN Project (González et al., 2023), emphasizing educational robotics for inclusive learning. However, SALAM's approach diverges

from conventional methods like the whole language teaching method (Zhou, 2021), emphasizing a more fluid, student-centered learning environment.

The significance of these findings lies in their demonstration of how liberatory education principles can be effectively implemented in early childhood settings. SALAM's model, emphasizing critical thinking, self-expression, and the role of educators as facilitators, presents a compelling case for rethinking traditional educational paradigms. However, considering the unique cultural and institutional context of SALAM, it is imperative to interpret these findings with caution. The generalizability of these results to other educational settings may be limited, necessitating further research to understand the applicability of such an approach in diverse contexts (Feitosa et al., 2022).

Continuing the exploration of the study's significance, it becomes evident that SALAM's approach offers a nuanced understanding of how education can contribute to the holistic development of children. This aligns with contemporary educational discourses that advocate for integrating ethical education and critical thinking from an early age (Lahmar, 2020; Sahin, 2018). However, the need for cautious interpretation remains, especially in replicating such a model in different socio-cultural environments. The potential of this approach to influence broader educational practices and policies should be further investigated, particularly in terms of its impact on children's long-term developmental outcomes.

The implications of this study are multifaceted. Primarily, it underscores the potential of liberation education to foster egalitarian relationships in early childhood education, challenging traditional hierarchical models. This has significant educational policy and practice implications, suggesting a shift towards more participatory, dialogue-based, and student-centered learning environments. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of educators in facilitating such environments, suggesting a need for professional development programs that align with these principles (Nazarullail & Maskulin, 2023). Finally, the research at SALAM offers insights into the practical application of liberatory education principles, providing a model that could be adapted and implemented in diverse educational settings to promote egalitarian and humanizing educational experiences.

In summary, the findings from PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam offer a compelling case study in applying Paulo Freire's liberatory education principles in early childhood education. The emphasis on fostering egalitarian relationships, critical thinking, and autonomy among young learners aligns with contemporary educational ideals and challenges traditional pedagogical approaches. While the implications of these findings are significant, they must be considered within the specific cultural and institutional context of SALAM, with further research needed to explore their broader applicability and long-term impact on educational practices and policies.

Conclusion

The aim was to scrutinize how independent education, inspired by Paulo Freire's liberatory approach, is actualized in an early childhood education setting. This was achieved by examining the pedagogical practices at PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam and assessing their alignment with Freire's educational philosophy. The study revealed that PAUD Sanggar Anak Alam implements a liberatory educational model emphasizing critical thinking, autonomy, and humanization. This approach diverges from traditional education models by fostering a subject-subject relationship between educators and students, prioritizing dialogue, and integrating ethics into all aspects of learning. These practices, aligned with Freire's perspectives, contribute to creating a learning environment that is both egalitarian and transformative. The findings highlight the feasibility of implementing such principles in early childhood settings, urging a paradigm shift in educational policy towards more participatory, student-centered, and dialogue-driven environments. However, the study's context-specific nature and focus on a single institution suggest caution in generalizing these results, pointing to the need for further research in diverse educational contexts. Ultimately, this research underscores the transformative power of liberatory education in shaping egalitarian, humanizing educational experiences, offering valuable insights for global educational reform.

References

Abdul Latif, M., Munastiwi, E., & Humaida, R. (2021). Marketing of Early Childhood Education Institution: Covid-19 Pandemic Vs. Normal. *Child Education Journal*, *3*(3), 137–149. https://doi.org/10.33086/cej.v3i3.2128

Adhani, D. N., Nazarullail, F., Latif, M. A., & Fitri, F. (2023). NakKanak Peter Media: Introducing Numbers and Geometric Shapes to 4-5-Year-Olds. *Goden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini*, *8*(4), 239–248. https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2023.84-04

Afida, I., Diana, E., & Agus Puspita, D. M. . (2021). Merdeka Belajar dan Pendidikan Kritis Paulo Friere dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam. *FALASIFA : Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, *12*(02), 45–61. https://doi.org/10.36835/falasifa.v12i02.553

Budayawati, L. P. I., Jovanka, V., Fitriyah, S., & Finali, Z. (2019). The analysis of the implementation of research-based learning to improve students' critical thinking skills based on their cognitive style. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, *243*(1), 12169. https://doi.org/10.1088/1755-1315/243/1/012169

Budiraharja, B. S., Muti'ah, T., & Sugiarto, R. (2021). Berpikir merdeka pada pendidikan sanggar anak alam (SALAM) yogyakarta. *Jurnal Spirits*, *11*(2), 158–164. https://doi.org/10.30738/spirits.v11i2.12674

Bungin, H. M. B. (2007). *Penelitian kualitatif : Komunikasi, ekonomi, kebijakan publik, dan ilmu sosial lainnya.* Kencana.

Campbell, C., & Speldewinde, C. (2022). Early Childhood STEM Education for Sustainable Development. *ustainability*, *14*(6), 3524. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14063524

Darnis, S., & Dodd, J. (2021). Increasing the Learning Result of Early Mathematics Odd and Even Numbers through Montessori "Cards and Counters" Activity: A Quasi-experimental Study. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, *7*(2), 99–110. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2021.72-01

Emzir. (2015). *Metodologi Penelitian Pendidikan Kualitatif dan Kuantitatif.* Rajawali.

Fatmawati, F., & Latif, M. A. (2019). Implementasi Model Pembelajaran Sentra di TK Amal Insani Yogyakarta. *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini*, *4*(2), 25–34. https://doi.org/10.14421/JGA.2019.42-03

Feitosa, J., Hagenbuch, S., Patel, B., & Davis, A. (2022). Performing in diverse settings: A diversity, equity, and inclusion approach to culture. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, *22*(3), 433–457. https://doi.org/10.1177/14705958221136707

Fikri Haikal, Sutrisno, Rahmadin Munauwarah, & Muhammad Isa Anshori. (2023). Analisis Konsep "Kampus Merdeka" dalam Critical Pedagogy Perspektif Paulo Freire. *Risalah, Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam*, *9*(4), 1449–1466. https://doi.org/10.31943/jurnal_risalah.v9i4.567

Firdaus, N., & Al Husaeni, D. N. (2023). Independence of Learning with the Concept of Self-Taught in Non-Formal Education Units in Pesantren Cikoneng, Ciparay District (YPI). *Islamika*, *5*(2), 488–499. https://doi.org/10.36088/islamika.v5i2.2956

Formen, A., & Waluyo, E. (2023). Storytelling Podcast as an Alternative Learning Tool for Early Childhood Education: A TPACK-Based Reflection. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak*, *9*(1), 29–38. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2023.91-03

Freire, P. (2000). *Pendidikan Kaum Tertindas.* LP3ES.

González, C. S., Violant-Holz, V., & del Castillo-Olivares Barberán, J. M. (2023). *Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes in Childhood Education: A Pilot Study BT - Proceedings TEEM 2022: Tenth International Conference on Technological Ecosystems for Enhancing Multiculturality* (F. J. García-Peñalvo & A. García-Holgado (eds.); pp. 448–454). Springer Nature Singapore.

Halimah, S. (2018). Pelaksanaan pembelajaran di sekolah kehidupan sanggar anak alam (SALAM) yogyakarta. *E-Jurnal Skripsi Program Studi Teknologi Pendidikan*, *7*(8), 804–813.

Herbst, J.-H. (2023). Current and Future Potentials of Liberation Pedagogies: A Discussion of Paulo Freire's, Augusto Boal's, and Johannes A. van der Ven's

Approaches. *Religions, 14*(2), 145. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020145

Herlambang, S., Suratman, B., & Kadir Naffati, A. (2023). The Role of Javanese Women in Domestic and Public Spheres: Challenges, Trade Motives, and Parenting Practices. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 9*(2), 153–168. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2023.92-07

Hockings, C., Thomas, L., Ottaway, J., & Jones, R. (2018). Independent learning – what we do when you're not there. *Teaching in Higher Education, 23*(2), 145–161. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2017.1332031

Husni, H., & Munandar, D. S. (2023). Reading Latin American Liberating Pedagogy from an Islamic Education Perspective. *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam, 10*(2), 139-160. https://doi.org/10.36667/jppi.v10i2.649

Husni, M. (2020). Memahami Pemikiran Karta Paulo Freire "Pendidikan Kaum Tertindas" Kebebasan dalam Berpikir. *Al-Ibrah, 5*(2), 41–60. https://ejournal.stital.ac.id/index.php/alibrah/article/view/103

Jefferson, A., Gutierrez, C., & Silverstein, L. (2018). Liberatory Public Education: A Framework for Centering Community and Democracy in Public Education. *The Urban Review, 50*(5), 735–756. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-018-0467-8

Karima, R., & Kurniawati, F. (2020). Kegiatan Literasi Awal Orang Tua pada Anak Usia Dini. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 6*(1), 69–80. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2020.61-06

Keriapy, F., & Tafonao, T. (2022). Liberation Education according to Paulo Freire and its Application in Christian Religious Education: A Teacher-Student Education Collaboration. *PASCA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen, 18*(2), 198–207. https://doi.org/10.46494/psc.v18i2.201

Lahmar, F. (2020). Islamic Education: An Islamic "Wisdom-Based Cultural Environment" in a Western Context. *Religions, 11*(8), 409. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080409

Latif, M. A., Munastiwi, E., Puspita, D., & Amanah, A. P. (2020). Analisis Total Quality Management (TQM) pada Pendirian TK Islam Terpadu Mutiara Plus Banguntapan. *AWLADY: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 6*(2), 301–312. https://doi.org/10.24235/awlady.v6i2.5783

Mardliyah, S., Siahaan, H., & Budirahayu, T. (2020). Pengembangan Literasi Dini melalui Kerjasama Keluarga dan Sekolah di Taman Anak Sanggar Anak Alam Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Obsesi: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, 4*(2), 892–899. https://doi.org/10.31004/obsesi.v4i2.476

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. Sage Publications.

Mukhlis, A. (2019). Dominasi Guru Perempuan dalam Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini: Persepsi Stakeholder. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 5*(2), 117–134. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2019.52-01

Mulkhan, A. M. (2002). *Nalar Spiritual Pendidikan: Solusi Problem Filosofis Pendidikan Islam*. Tiara Wacana Yogya.

Nazarullail, F., & Maskulin, D. (2023). Identification of the Formation of Character Education Values for Preschool Children in the Disruption Era. *Golden Age: Jurnal Ilmiah Tumbuh Kembang Anak Usia Dini, 7*(4), 169–176. https://doi.org/10.14421/jga.2022.74-02

Nidyawati, D. E. (2017). Konsep dan Implementasi Pendidikan Berbasis Alam Di Sanggar Anak Alam (ALAM) Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Spektrum Analisis Kebijakan Pendidikan, 4*(6), 331–343.

Prasetia, S. A., Fahmi, M., Alfiyah, H. Y., & Syifa'i Adienk, F. M. (2021). Menyandingkan Pendidikan Pembebasan Paulo Freire dengan Pendidikan Islam. *TARBAWI, 10*(1), 1–32. https://doi.org/10.36781/tarbawi.v10i1.160

Rey-Guerra, C., Maldonado-Carreño, C., Ponguta, L. A., Nieto, A. M., & Yoshikawa, H. (2022). Family engagement in early learning opportunities at home and in early childhood education centers in Colombia. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 58*, 35–46. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2021.08.002

Rohmah, L., & Sulong, K. (2023). Fostering Early Childhood Attachment: The Impact of Caregiver Relationships in Islamic Boarding School Education. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 9*(2),

103–114. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2023.92-03

Sahin, A. (2018). Critical Issues in Islamic Education Studies: Rethinking Islamic and Western Liberal Secular Values of Education. *Religions, 9*(11), 335. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9110335

Salsabila, A., Samawi, A., & Astuti, W. (2023). The Effectiveness of Video Tutorial-Based Audiovisual Media on the Aspects of Prayer Movements in 5-6-Year-Old Children. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 9*(1), 51–62. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2023.91-05

Sholihah, Z., & Machali, I. (2017). Pendidikan Agama Islam di Sekolah Alternatif SD Sanggar Anak Alam (SALAM) Nitiprayan Kasihan Bantul Yogyakarta. *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan, 15*(2), 225-240. https://jurnal.iainponorogo.ac.id/index.php/cendekia/article/view/1135

Sidiq, A. M., & Muqowim, M. (2020). Pengembangan Kreativitas Anak melalui Konsep Merdeka Belajar di Sanggar Anak Alam. *SELING: Jurnal Program Studi PGRA, 6*(2), 146–156. https://jurnal.stitnualhikmah.ac.id/index.php/seling/article/view/630

Simpson, A., Stein, M., Rosenberg, M., Ward, B., Derbyshire, A., Thornton, A. L., & Jackson, B. (2023). Early childhood educator outcomes from online professional development for physical literacy: A randomised controlled trial. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 68*, 102464. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2023.102464

Staff, R. T., Hogan, M. J., & Whalley, L. J. (2018). The influence of childhood intelligence, social class, education and social mobility on memory and memory decline in late life. *Age and Ageing, 47*(6), 847–852. https://doi.org/10.1093/ageing/afy111

Ulfah, M. (2018). Pengaruh Penggunaan Strategi Pembelajaran Inquiry terhadap Kecerdasan Naturalis Anak Usia Dini di Kabupaten Majalengka. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 4*(1), 31–50. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2018.41-03

Utari, S. M. D., Arifin, I., & Dian Putra, Y. (2023). Exploring the Impact of Parent Gathering Programs on Cultivating Religious Character in Early Childhood: A Case Study. *Al-Athfal: Jurnal Pendidikan Anak, 9*(2), 129–140. https://doi.org/10.14421/al-athfal.2023.92-05

Wartini, A. (2015). Keindonesiaan Pada Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Upaya Integrasi Ilmu Ke-Islaman dan Karakter Kebudayaan Indonesia (Studi Kasus di Sanggar Anak Alam Yogyakarta). *Toleransi: Media Ilmiah Komunikasi Umat Beragama, 7*(1), 35–52. https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/toleransi/article/view/1420

Zhou, J. (2021). The Enlightenment of the Educational Concept of "Whole Language" on Early Reading Education. *2021 2nd International Conference on Computers, Information Processing and Advanced Education*, 345–348. https://doi.org/10.1145/3456887.3456964