



Implementation Of Snakes And Ladders Game On Cognitive Development Of 5-6 Year Old Children

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the author's observations at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten, where the snakes and ladders game has been implemented as part of early childhood learning activities. However, there are not many studies that discuss in depth the role of teachers in optimizing the benefits of this game for children's cognitive development. The purpose of this study is to determine the application of the snakes and ladders game in children aged 5–6 years. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. Data sources consist of primary data (observation results, interviews, and documentation) and secondary data (documents and photos of activities in the school environment). Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation, while data analysis was carried out through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results show that the snakes and ladders game at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten is used as a fun, interactive, and educational learning medium, helping children develop cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills. Children become more understanding of the concepts of numbers, sequences, and strategic thinking, and are able to solve simple problems. Teachers play an important role in integrating games into the learning process, creating a meaningful learning atmosphere, and guiding children to learn while playing enthusiastically.

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INTRODUCTION

Childhood is a crucial period for providing various stimuli for optimal child development. What a child learns early in life will have a significant impact on their future life (Nurachadijat & Selvia, 2023). Therefore, Early Childhood Education plays a central, fundamental, and strategic role in facilitating a child's overall growth, including spiritual, motor, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development (Haryono et al., 2024). The primary goal of PAUD is to develop quality Indonesian children, namely children who grow and develop according to their developmental level and are optimally prepared to enter basic education and later life (Widodo, 2020).

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As a formal educational institution at the preschool level, PAUD (Early Childhood Education) has a different learning system than higher levels. Early childhood is in a golden age that requires specialized services and motivation through educational games that can support their growth and development (Ahya'Ulya & Mardiyana, 2024). One important aspect of child development is cognitive development, which includes the ability to think, recognize numbers, and understand basic concepts through play (Aprinda et al., 2025). One effective medium for developing these abilities is educational games (APE), such as snakes and ladders. These games enable teachers to create a fun learning process without making children bored (Ariyanti, 2016).

Early childhood education aims to provide educational stimulation so that children are prepared for basic skills and knowledge before entering higher levels of education. This stimulation is provided through harmonious guidance, nurturing, and care between teachers, parents, and the surrounding environment so that children can learn by imitating, observing, experimenting, and engaging their full intellectual potential (Etnawati, 2021). In this regard, cognitive development plays a fundamental role in shaping children's thinking skills, enabling them to understand and solve problems logically (Kabanga et al., 2025).

According to (Nisaq et al., 2025), early childhood is a sensitive period where children are highly responsive to the stimuli provided. If stimulation is provided appropriately, brain function and thinking skills can develop optimally. This is reinforced, who states that 80% of human brain development occurs between the ages of 0–8 years, so providing appropriate stimulation is crucial during this period (Vassiliu et al., 2023).

In theory, Piaget explains that children's cognitive development occurs through four main stages: sensorimotor, pre-operational, concrete-operational, and formal-operational. Meanwhile, Vygotsky emphasized that children's cognitive development is strongly influenced by social interactions and the surrounding environment (Nurapriani, 2023). Therefore, early childhood learning activities must be tailored to their unique characteristics and developmental stages.

From an Islamic perspective, the importance of providing early education is also explained in the words of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Kahf, verse 46, which states, "Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world, but the deeds that are enduring and righteous are better with your Lord in reward and better as a source of hope." This verse emphasizes that children are a trust that must be properly educated to become an intelligent and moral generation (Prihatini & Mursid, 2022).

To ensure optimal cognitive development, teachers need to use appropriate educational games. One such game is Snakes and Ladders, a simple yet educational board game. This game not only teaches the concepts of numbers and sequence but also trains children to think strategically and understand cause and effect, as well as learning to work together and interact with peers (Zega & Suprihati, 2021).

However, based on initial observations at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten in Palembang, Agam Regency, it was found that children's cognitive abilities, particularly in recognizing numbers 1–10, were still relatively low. Furthermore, although snakes and ladders toys were available, their use was limited to entertainment and not intended as a learning tool that supports cognitive development (Tuhuteru et al., 2022). The classroom learning process tended to be classical, with the teacher as the center of learning activities, while children remained passive listeners. This situation resulted in children being less active, easily bored, and

lacking a fun and meaningful learning experience.

The primary principle of early childhood education is learning through play, where children can explore their thinking, language, motor skills, and social-emotional skills. Therefore, efforts are needed to optimize the use of snakes and ladders as a learning tool that can help children develop their cognitive abilities effectively and enjoyably (Engkizar, Jaafar, Muslim, et al., 2025).

METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. The goal was to describe in depth the application of the Snakes and Ladders game to develop the cognitive abilities of 5-6-year-old children at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten, Palembang, Agam Regency (Engkizar et al., 2023).

Data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation involving teachers, the principal, and students (Slavin et al., 2009). Secondary data were obtained from school documents and photographs of learning activities. Data collection techniques included observation to observe the application of the Snakes and Ladders game, interviews to determine the teacher's role and children's responses, and documentation as supporting evidence.

Data analysis involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Through this process, researchers were able to clearly illustrate how the Snakes and Ladders game was used as a learning medium that impacted children's cognitive development (Engkizar, Jaafar, Hamzah, et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Using the Snakes and Ladders game as a learning medium can provide a fun and interactive learning experience for children (Pujihastuti, 2024). This method allows them to learn while playing, which can increase their motivation and interest in learning. Furthermore, this game can help children develop their cognitive potential effectively. However, it is important to remember that the Snakes and Ladders game is only one learning method that can be used to develop cognitive skills in early childhood (Puspitasari & Ningtyas, 2024). Other approaches, such as the use of other learning media or project-based activities, can also be effective alternatives. Educators need to consider a variety of learning methods that suit the needs and characteristics of children.

The Snakes and Ladders game is not only fun but also an educational tool that can shape children's character, social skills, and cognitive aspects from an early age (Rahmadiani, 2020). The combination of educational and entertainment values makes this game a relevant and effective choice at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten.

Interview with the principal of Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten, Mrs. DY, on July 12, 2025: School support for implementing the Snakes and Ladders game in the classroom is crucial to ensuring enjoyable and effective learning. Schools need to provide facilities, teacher training, and curriculum support to effectively integrate the game into the teaching and learning process (Sabila et al., 2021).

Respondents highlighted the importance of the school's institutional role in ensuring that the Snakes and Ladders game is not merely a recreational activity but is truly integrated into a meaningful learning process. With structural support from the school, the Snakes and Ladders game can be an effective, enjoyable learning medium that thrives on the creativity of educators (Saputra, 2024).

According to the interview results, the Snakes and Ladders game is implemented regularly, once or twice a week. This frequency is considered ideal for:

Providing Variety in Learning (Uce, 2015). Children receive a fun learning experience without feeling bored, as the game is played infrequently but consistently. Optimizing Learning Time: With a measured frequency, the game does not interfere with the main learning activity but instead serves as a refreshing break that enriches the teaching method (Setiawati, 2021). Reinforcing Educational Objectives: Through weekly implementation, children can continue to apply and retain concepts such as turns, numbers, and simple strategies learned in the game.

With these various objectives, the Snakes and Ladders game serves as a comprehensive learning tool that adapts to the needs of children in kindergarten. The Snakes and Ladders game at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten is implemented as a fun, interactive, and educational learning medium (Sudaryanti et al., 2024). The game is designed to holistically develop children's cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills. With teacher modifications to the rules, such as adding tasks and questions to each box, the game becomes more contextual and supports the achievement of subject matter such as mathematics, language, and moral values. The school also provides full support by providing facilities, teacher training, and integrating the game into the curriculum (Syamsiyah et al., 2023). This activity is conducted routinely once or twice a week to maintain children's enthusiasm without disrupting the main academic program. The children react very positively—they are enthusiastic, more active, and learn to manage their emotions in a fun way. Overall, the snakes and ladders game has proven to be more than just entertainment, but also an effective educational tool for early childhood learning, thanks to a combination of teacher creativity, institutional support, and children's enthusiasm for learning (Tahir, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on research at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten, the implementation of the Snakes and Ladders game as a learning medium has been proven to have a positive impact on early childhood development, including cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills. This game creates a fun, interactive, and meaningful learning environment, where children can learn while playing without pressure.

Through this activity, children learn patience, cooperation, communication, and emotional control, while also honing logical thinking, counting, and recognizing symbols and sequences. School support through the provision of facilities, teacher training, and integration of the game into the curriculum contributes to the effectiveness of this method.

The Snakes and Ladders game also helps teachers create contextual learning by modifying the rules according to the theme and objectives of the lesson. This activity, conducted once or twice a week, maintains children's enthusiasm and enriches their learning experience. Overall, the Snakes and Ladders game is not simply a form of entertainment, but a holistic and adaptive learning medium that fosters learning motivation, strengthens character, and supports the holistic development of early childhood at Kasih Bunda Salareh Aia Kindergarten.

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