

LEARNING FROM HOME FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ERA: CASE STUDY IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

The Covid-19 (C-19) pandemic has occurred in all countries in the world since 2020. Its rapid transmission and the deadly impact forced efforts to adjust the way of human life, including in the world of education. One of the efforts to prevent the spread of this virus in Indonesia is to implement the Learning from Home (LFH) policy. Communication between the teacher and the child during LFH is conducted with technological intermediaries. This LFH policy must also be conducted at the level of early childhood education. What form of LFH can be done while still based on the principle of early childhood education, namely Learning Through Play? This paper aims to get an overview of the implementation of LFH in early childhood which was conducted in 2021 in one of the kindergartens in South Tangerang, Indonesia. The method used is a case study involving teachers in kindergarten, namely three teachers at level A (for children aged 4-5 years), three teachers at level B (for children aged 5-6 years), and a teacher in playgroups (for children aged 3-4 years). This study's results describe the planning, implementation, and evaluation of LFH in kindergarten, as well as opportunities and constraints from the teacher's point of view. LFH planning is carried out by teachers every month to anticipate policy changes. The daily activity plan outlines the monthly plan, with flexible activities from morning to evening to accommodate the working parents. The implementation of LFH is carried out by teachers with the help of Zoom for synchronous meetings and WhatsApp for asynchronous communication. Evaluation of the implementation of LFH is carried out by teachers, including daily evaluations and comprehensive evaluations carried out every week to two weeks. LFH opportunities perceived by teachers are that parents become more intensely involved in their children's education and opportunities for teachers and parents to improve their skills in using information technology. Meanwhile, the obstacles of LFH that are felt by teachers are that LFH relies heavily on technological devices and adequate internet access which is not necessarily owned by every family, and the lack of readiness of parents to accompany their children in conducting LFH activities as directed by the teacher. The suggestion for this research is that it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study of the ideal implementation of LFH for early childhood in Indonesia, following the character and needs of the diverse regions of Indonesia.

Keywords: Learning from Home, Early Childhood Education, Learning Through Play

1 INTRODUCTION

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many things happened unexpectedly, including in education. Distance learning (DL) is one of the safest alternatives to break the chain of the spread of COVID-19. At the school level, this DL was later known as Learning from Home (LFH). This LFH also applies to the level of early childhood education (ECE), although it is not as easy as for higher education unit levels in practice.

The problems that arise in early childhood education institutions (ECE) during the implementation of LFH are very varied and unique enough to make it interesting to conduct a study. Based on interviews with ECE teachers in South Tangerang, Indonesia, several problems that arose in the ECE institution during the implementation of LFH were as follows: (1) unpreparedness of the parents of students who suddenly had to become teachers at home, (2) many parents who do not recognize the learning character of their children, so it seems difficult to accompany their children to play while studying at home, (3) the teacher's unpreparedness in providing interactive learning materials with the use of technology, (4) there is no standardized disaster emergency curriculum that can be applied if disasters such as the Covid-19 pandemic occur, (4) there is no certainty of how long this pandemic will end, so this creates uncertainty in providing explanations to parents who often insist that face-to-face learning be carried out immediately, (5) limited internet access thus affecting the LFH learning process, (6) many parents who do not understand learning with LFH, (7) children enjoy playing gadgets during LFH, (8) school administration costs are in the spotlight of parents who feel disadvantaged if school fees must be paid in full as in normal conditions, due to the fact that children are at home almost 24 hours, and (9) the lack of stimulation of children's social emotional development by parents during this covid -19 pandemic.

However, although the learning problems in ECE institutions are very diverse, learning activities must continue. This paper discusses the description of the implementation of LFH in one of the kindergartens in South Tangerang, Indonesia, namely Al-Hikmah Kindergarten, starting from planning, and implementation to evaluation.

1.1 LFH Planning

In contrast to regular face-to-face learning, ECE teachers were initially unprepared when suddenly asked to do LFH planning. Ideally, teachers create a single unit plan that all children from different locations can complete. Good planning will ensure consistency in learning outcomes (NSW Government Website - Education, 2020). Several institutions developed this plan in detail, as the Laburnum Institute did, as follows: (1) socializing the LFH program to parents, (2) preparing a 2-week program for LFH, (3) giving time for children and parents to organize the study room and its routines, the tools they have, and the tasks that must be done, (4) establish a protocol for teachers to communicate with children (Laburnum, 2020).

1.2 Implementation and Evaluation of LFH

The implementation of LFH at the ECE institution does not only take place in Indonesia but also in the world. This is because of the global COVID-19 outbreak. Practical solutions that can be done by teachers in LFH during the pandemic are: (1) teachers continue to carry out LFH by preparing learning administration, (2) providing learning with a habituation approach to daily activities, from waking up, preparing breakfast, to worshipping and memorizing. daily prayers, (3) providing online materials according to the media and facilities at home, (4) because not all parents can access the internet, it is necessary to make blanks in the form of examples of media used every day that has been scheduled with how to be delivered by courier and taken according to schedule by following health procedures, (5) teachers continue to monitor, record children's progress through videos and photo recordings sent by parents (6) teachers make evaluations of learning outcomes by involving parents .

Although LFH needs to be implemented, the factor of life safety remains a priority. This is following the recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) in implementing LFH for early childhood, namely: (1) focusing on good health behaviors, such as covering the nose and mouth area when coughing or sneezing with hands and washing hands as often as possible, (2) singing a song while washing hands to practice handwashing with a recommended duration of 20 seconds, (3) being creative in training children to wash their hands regularly, for example by giving gifts to children who wash their hands on time, (4) using dolls to explain symptoms (sneezing, coughing, fever) and what to do if they feel sick (e.g. if the head or stomach hurts, the body has a fever) and how to comfort someone who is sick (cultivating empathy and safe caring behaviors), and (5) ask children sit apart from each other, have them practice extending their arms or 'flapping their wings' as a safe distance limit, they should keep enough space not to touch their friends (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020).

2 METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research design with the type of case study research. This type was chosen because this study wanted to see a portrait of the implementation of LFH in kindergarten and find solutions to problems that occurred in the implementation. The data sources in this study were the principal and 7 teachers of Al-Hikmah Kindergarten, South Tangerang, Indonesia. The teachers involved in this study were 3 teachers at level A (for children aged 4-5 years), 3 teachers at level B (for children aged 5-6 years), and 1 teacher at the playgroup level (for children aged 3-4 years). The research was conducted in the odd

semester of 2021/2022, namely from July to December 2021. The instrument used in this study was to observe and then triangulate the data through interviews and document analysis to check the validity of the data (Sugiyono, 2010). After the data is valid, then data analysis is carried out using the Miles and Huberman model data analysis technique which consists of data reduction, data display, and verification (Miles, Matthew B.; Huberman, A. Michael; Saldana, 2019).

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are divided into three stages, which include planning, implementing, and evaluating LFH in kindergarten.

3.1 LFH Planning

LFH planning in the ECE institution has the characteristic of being carried out remotely through the media. The devices used in the implementation of LFH at Al-Hikmah Kindergarten are Whatsapp and zoom applications. Synchronous meetings are carried out using Zoom between teachers and children, which are held once a week for each class. The plan is written in the daily plan. The morning activity begins with making a morning journal by drawing freely as usual. The core activity which is usually in face-to-face learning is prepared for 3 types of activities, in LFH it is simplified into 1 activity. An example of a Daily Lesson Plan during LFH is as follows.

**CHILDREN'S CREATIVITY AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES
(LFH) GROUP B**

Semester/Week : II / -4
Group : B
Day/date : Tuesday, August 3, 2021

Morning activities (08.00 -09.00)
♣ Repeating Surah Al Qoriah
♣ Morning Journal Free Drawing

Afternoon Activities (10.00 – 12.00)
♣ Stamping with fingers (the procedure is conveyed by the teacher)
♣ This activity can use food coloring that is at home
♣ Activities are reported via WhatsApp Groups (WAG) to class teachers, in the form of photos or videos

Evening Activities
♣ Daily prayer (prayer after adhan)
♣ Hadith (hadith says good or be silent)
♣ This activity can be done at night or just before the child goes to bed

Activity Options
➢ Reading story books
➢ Play with mom and dad
➢ Watering plants, tidying toys and storing toys in their place.




Fig.1. Example of Daily Plan for Group B in Kindergarten

Based on the LFH daily plan in Fig. 1, the teacher tries to provide direction for activities not only during study hours as usual in kindergarten but activities that can be conducted by parents until the afternoon or evening. This is planned by the teacher with the assumption that during the COVID-19 pandemic, children are confined at home due to the implementation of social restrictions so that activities are attempted briefly but divided by several times so that children do not get bored quickly (Crijnen, 2020). Also to anticipate parents who can only accompany their children to learn while playing in the afternoon or evening after coming home from work (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021). Teachers also provide a wide selection of activities that practice life skills or accommodate children's hobbies (Pohle et al., 2021). The choice of activities for children is important so that children can develop their abilities according to what they are interested in, not feeling forced by certain activities determined by parents or teachers. In addition, the choice of activities will also develop the child's responsible attitude towards the choices he has made. So the various choices of these activities will stimulate the cognitive and emotional development of children (Jurayeva, 2022).

However, at the end of 2021, when the covid 19 virus began to decrease, learning had been carried out using blended learning, using face-to-face learning twice a week, while the other three days in the LFH format.

3.2 Implementation of LFH

The implementation of LFH at the ECE institution sometimes does not match the schedule given by the teacher. The implementation depends on the assistance of parents who are at home and the child's psychological situation (Ludji & Marpaung, 2021). For example, activities in the morning have been scheduled according to the willingness list from parents. However, in practice, these activities can take place in the afternoon or even at night due to several obstacles, including the child is not willing to make a video call (VC) with the teacher according to the schedule, or when the VC is done the child is playing and not focused. Another obstacle is that parents who work full time only return home at night and can only accompany LFH children after returning from work (Samiji & Khomsiyatun, 2021).

However, many parents are enthusiastic about this LFH activity and regularly send evidence of their children's learning activities at home in the form of photos or videos (Nottingham et al., 2021). The following is an example of documentation sent from parents



Fig. 2. Various Reports of Children's Activities During LFH at Home

3.3 LFH Evaluation

Daily evaluations by teachers are carried out to see the progress of children's development in LFH activities while at home. While the comprehensive evaluation of the implementation of LFH is carried out once a week or once every two weeks. An example of a daily evaluation form for group B is as follows.


Table 1. Example of Daily Evaluation from Group B LFH Implementation

DAY/DATE	GROUP	ACTIVITIES/TOPICS	STRATEGY	CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION		
				Total	Presence	%
Tuesday, September 14, 2021	B1, B2, B3	Morning Activities (08.00-09.00)		42 children	33 children	80
		1. Beginning reading stimulation	Video Call	3 classes		
		2. Repeating surah Al Qoriah	Voice Note			
		3. Morning journal: free drawing	Send photos via WAG			
		Afternoon Activities (10.00-12.00)				
		Fingerpainting	Send photos via WAG			

	Evening Activities (Flexibel)				
	Repeating surah Al Qoriah	Video Call			
	Hadith says good or be silent	Voice Note			
	Daily prayer	Send photos via WAG			
	Play with mom and dad				
	Reading a storybook				

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that the media that is widely used during LFH is the WhatsApp (WA) application, either through WA groups, voice notes, video calls, or WA calls. Evidence of activities at home is usually sent by parents in WhatsApp Group (WAG) in the form of photos or videos (Hidayat et al., 2022). An example of a two-week overall evaluation is as follows.

LFH Evaluation Phase I (August 2-13, 2021) Group B



- Some working parents have not routinely accompanied their children in LFH.
- In class B1 there are 4 children who do not report activities,
- In class B2 there are 6 children who do not report activities and
- In Class B3 there are 4 children who do not report activities
- Parents' reports went well and routinely, except for some children who were allowed to leave because their younger siblings were sick so that their parents could not accompany their children to study.


Fig. 3. Example of Two Weeks Evaluation of LFH Implementation

Based on this evaluation in Fig.3, it can be seen that the participation of parents in assisting children in carrying out activities at home is not optimal, especially for children whose parents work full time. In addition, there are still many parents who have not reported their children's activities at home to the teacher. This is usually because parents forget to send reports after all they have switched to doing other things at home (Hammons et al., 2022). This is understood

by the teacher and the teacher only gently reminded parents to immediately send the report. Reminders from teachers to parents with soft and warm language are part of efforts to build healthy communication (Dyle-Palmer, Cheryle Faye; McGilly, 2016). Healthy communication between teachers and parents in kindergarten will build a harmonious relationship (Turauskiene & Braslauskiene, 2020). This harmony will make it easier for kindergarten teachers to invite parents to be more intensively involved in the implementation of learning, especially LFH (Jagiello, 2018).

In addition to routine activities, periodically teachers and children (accompanied by parents) also hold class meetings that are carried out synchronously through Zoom meetings (Zehbe, 2021). An example of an evaluation of the implementation through the Zoom meeting is as follows.

Evaluation of Zoom Meeting October 8, 2021 Group B



- In general, the activities went well and conducive
- Parents are very supportive of holding Zoom meetings for children in their class.
- Reading stimulation activities have started to be carried out through Zoom meetings
- Class meetings via Zoom meetings are scheduled once a week according to the agreement.

Fig. 4. Example of Evaluation of Zoom Meeting Implementation

However, the implementation of LFH in kindergarten turned out to be very varied among children in group B, group A or playgroup. The older the child, the relatively easier learning with LFH. On the other hand, the younger the children are, the more they are not ready to carry out LFH according to the teacher's plan (Takamatsu, 2022). The following is an example of evaluating the implementation of LFH in group A (children aged 4-5 years).

LFH Evaluation October 2021, Group A

1. The activity of coloring magazines is carried out by children, but there are some inputs from parents.
 - ✓ Coloring magazines are considered boring, so it is difficult for parents to persuade children to do it (because it is only coloring)
 - ✓ It is expected that there will be a new child's worksheet every day.
2. Communication runs smoothly both in groups, WA calls, and video calls (VC) with parents and children.
3. When the VC was done, there were still children who didn't want to join, so they were given the option of using a WA call. The children of group A1 tend to be all shy. If invited to join VC individually they tend not to want to. Especially if they are invited to join in VC for classmates
4. Overall communication between teachers and parents is quite harmonious, so that if there is an input from parents it will be quickly discussed or resolved.




Figure 5. Example of Evaluation of LFH Implementation in Group A

3.4 Obstacles of LFH Implementation and Solutions

One of the things to note about LFH in kindergarten is that children's need for physical bonding with teachers and friends is still high (Nieto, 2018). This is following one of the evaluation points from the teacher, “for overall complaints, many children are getting bored and asking when school starts like before”. This problem was initially difficult to solve, especially when the spread of the covid virus was very high. But when the transmission of the virus had slowed, it was decided that one of the solutions was a home visit program (Shekhar, 2022). This program begins with mapping the zones based on where the children live which are divided into 3 zones, namely red (danger), yellow (alert), and green (safe). The teacher provides opportunities for children who live in the green zone area by conducting a home visit, namely by visiting one of the parents' houses, and in that house, 4 to 6 children have been collected whose houses are close together even though the children are of various ages. This is enough to help children to complete their longing to play with their friends (Yanovich & Bar-Shalom, 2022). However, this solution cannot be applied by teachers to children who live in areas that are still classified as red or yellow zones.

One of the obstacles to implementing LFH according to teachers is about timing and direct communication between teachers and parents (Akbari, 2021). As the teacher wrote in the evaluation report:

“Parents of children in the playgroup are indeed a bit difficult to respond to and report activities at home. Some parents are even difficult to contact. The cause of this problem has not yet been determined. Is it because the child prefers to play alone outside of the activities suggested by the teacher, or is the father/mother still busy because of the implementation of Work from Home (WFH)” (Latifah, 2020).

This obstacle is overcome by the teacher communicates with parents again and reschedules activities that have not been carried out. Parents are given time slack to accompany their children in activities at home according to their parents' time (Oppermann et al., 2021). Some parents who work full time agree and choose the time of the night to do these activities. However, there are still parents who do not report activities with their children at home because they do not have a smartphone installed with WhatsApp, so it is difficult to report evidence of activities at home.

Another obstacle is that teachers also feel doubtful because there is no standardized guide on the implementation of LFH in ECE institutions. This is following the findings of (UNICEF, 2020) which state that the drawback of online learning is the limited availability of pedagogical guidelines for educators, resulting in an additional burden on children and educators. This problem was given a solution through an online sharing forum with several kindergarten teachers in the sub-district, by inviting competent resource persons. In these forums, apart from the presentation of material from the resource persons, it is usually followed by a warm discussion about various problems that were found by the teachers during the implementation of the LFH (Fosse et al., 2020).

Based on some of these constraints, a brief table can be made as follows.

Table 3. LFH Constraints and Selected Solutions

No.	Problem	Solution
1	Children are tired of studying at home and miss their teachers and friends	Clustered home visits based on safe zones by teachers every two weeks
2	It is difficult for parents to be contacted by teachers to report the progress of their children's activities during LFH at home	Reschedule activities by providing time tolerance, especially for parents who both work full time
3	Uneven access to the internet for parents	The teacher provides an alternative activity report from parents with a

		written journal that is collected periodically
4	The teacher is doubtful about the quality of the LFH learning that is being carried out because they feel they have not received adequate training	Regular sharing forums with kindergarten teachers throughout the sub-district are held to discuss issues related to LFH

3.5 Opportunity of LFH

Despite experiencing various obstacles during the implementation of the LFH, kindergarten teachers also felt various opportunities and opportunities in the implementation of the LFH. These opportunities include, among others, that parents are more intensively involved in their children's education because every day children are more at home with their parents during the pandemic (Siu & Ng, 2022). Another opportunity is that teachers are 'forced' to learn information technology skills quickly because LFH requires the use of various applications as communication bridges between teachers and children (Wahyuni & Ariyanti, 2020).

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that the LFH planning is carried out by considering the time available for parents to accompany their children at home. When the spread of the covid 19 virus began to decrease, learning was designed with blended learning, namely face-to-face learning in kindergarten twice a week, while the remaining three days were still in the LFH format. The implementation of LFH in kindergarten utilizes the use of technology, namely Zoom for synchronous meetings and Whatsapp Groups for asynchronous meetings. The teacher evaluates the implementation of LFH in their classrooms, either through daily evaluations or comprehensive evaluations every one to two weeks, so that they can make improvements for the next LFH period.

Based on the evaluations of the teachers, the implementation of LFH at the ECE institution during the Covid-19 pandemic still encountered several obstacles, namely: children were bored studying at home and missed their teachers and friends, and some parents were difficult to contact the teacher for the progress of children's activities at home, and teachers doubt the quality of their LFH learning because they feel they have not received adequate training.

The obstacles faced by LFH teachers are: LFH relies heavily on technological devices and adequate internet access which is not necessarily owned by every family, and the lack of readiness of parents to accompany their children in carrying out LFH activities according to

the teacher's directions. These various obstacles were then found solutions through evaluation meetings of all teachers in kindergarten.

Meanwhile, the opportunity for LFH at ECE institutions that teachers perceive is that parents are more intensively involved in their children's education, as well as opportunities for teachers and parents to improve their skills in using information technology.

Some suggestions that can be conveyed in the implementation of LFH at ECE institutions are (1) to teachers, should arrange more creative and innovative activities so that they can develop the potential of early childhood during LFH activities, (2) for parents, should remain calm in assisting children to study at home and being a fun study partner so that children can still feel happy, (3) for ECE institutions, it is necessary to think about better education services during LFH and consider reducing tuition fees for students due to the decline in most parents' income since the pandemic, (4) for the Ministry of Education, should actively provide socialization and guidance on LFH learning, especially in ECE institutions to eliminate parental concerns about children's health, (5) for PAUD experts and academics, to conduct a more in-depth study of the implementation LFH for early childhood.

In addition, this research needs to be deepened by conducting research on the ideal application of LFH for ECE institutions in Indonesia according to the character and needs of the diverse regions of Indonesia.

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