

RUMAH BELAJAR CERIA: INCREASING CHILDREN'S MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC UNDERSTANDING THROUGH INTERACTIVE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Rumah Belajar Ceria is a community service program aimed at increasing children's interest in learning and academic skills in Rukun Warga (RW) 03, Mulyojati Village, Metro City. This initiative was motivated by the low motivation to learn and limited access to tutoring in the area. The program employed interactive learning methods involving a personal approach, ice-breaking activities, educational games, and academic guidance. During implementation, participation increased from 8 to 18 children per session, showing a significant rise in enthusiasm and engagement. Evaluation was conducted through direct observation and feedback from both participants and their parents. The results demonstrate the program's effectiveness in enhancing children's learning motivation and understanding of academic material. To ensure sustainability, the program is planned to be developed further through the formation of a community-based learning forum and the involvement of volunteers from partner schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Mulyojati Village is one of the densely populated areas in Metro City, which faces various challenges in the field of education, especially for children who still experience difficulties in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Based on the results of observations that have been made, it was found that some children in Rukun Warga (RW) 03 Mulyojati Village do not have adequate literacy and numeracy skills. This problem is exacerbated by limited access to tutoring, both at home and in the surrounding environment. Lack of motivation to learn and less interactive learning methods are also factors that hinder their academic development.

Fatmawati et al. (2022) emphasized that education has an important role in shaping quality and independent human resources, as well as a tool to free society from underdevelopment and ignorance. Therefore, the Community Service Team (PKM) of the University of Muhammadiyah Metro designed the Rumah Belajar Ceria program as a solution to improve the quality of education for children in the environment. This program is designed to improve the quality of relationships between students and educators through more innovative, interactive, and fun learning methods (Badri et al., 2022).

Community empowerment in education, such as through Rumah Belajar Ceria, plays an important role in providing access to quality learning experiences, especially for children in underserved areas (Dona, 2022). This program is present in response to various challenges in education, including a lack of access to non-formal tutoring facilities and low motivation to learn due to monotonous teaching methods. To overcome these problems, Rumah Belajar Ceria adopts a more flexible and child-oriented learning approach by involving learning assistance sessions, ice-breaking, educational games, and interactive discussions that can increase students' creativity and understanding.

Putri et al. (2023) stated that non-formal learning programs, such as Rumah Belajar Ceria, have the main goal of motivating children to be more enthusiastic about learning and improving their literacy from an early age. With innovative learning methods, children are not only encouraged to understand academic material but also to develop creativity and independence in learning. In addition, Lisnawati (2016) added that Rumah Belajar Ceria also functions as a forum for inclusive and quality education, which can be accessed for free by children from underprivileged families.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on children's learning motivation, especially due to the shift to distance learning, which has limited social interaction that is essential for their development (Irawan et al., 2022; Llorent & Vélez-Calvo, 2023; Ye et al., 2023). Research shows that prolonged online education has led to increased feelings of loneliness and decreased academic self-concept among elementary school students, highlighting the need for strategies to improve their social-emotional well-being (Ye et al., 2023). Programs aimed at restoring children's enthusiasm for learning should incorporate a fun learning approach that fosters social connections, as these connections have been shown to increase engagement and self-study during online classes (Radulescu et al., 2023; Gherghel et al., 2023). Thus, a multifaceted approach that emphasizes social interaction and emotional support is essential for revitalizing children's academic and social skills post-pandemic (Apostol et al., 2023). Therefore, this program also aims to restore the spirit of learning for children affected by the pandemic, by presenting a more enjoyable learning approach and supporting the development of their academic and social skills.

The Rumah Belajar Ceria allows children to choose the learning materials that suit their individual needs. They are also encouraged to ask for further explanations on topics they do not understand and receive assistance in completing school assignments. Each learning session lasts for 90 minutes, beginning with ice-breaking activities, followed by focused learning, and concluding with an open discussion to foster interaction between participants and mentors. The main objectives of this program are: (1) to improve children's literacy and numeracy skills; (2) to build motivation and independence in learning; and (3) to create an inclusive and enjoyable alternative learning space. It is expected that through this program, children in Rukun Warga (RW) 03 Mulyojati Village can enhance their academic abilities, develop positive study habits, and gain confidence in facing educational challenges. This article presents a detailed description of the implementation, methodology, and outcomes of the Rumah Belajar Ceria program, with the hope that it can serve as a replicable model for other communities in similar contexts.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The implementation of the Rumah Belajar Ceria program is divided into three main stages, namely preparation, implementation, and evaluation. Each stage is designed to ensure the effectiveness of the program in improving the quality of children's learning in Rukun Warga (RW) 03 Mulyojati Village.

Preparation Stage

At this stage, program planning is carried out, including the determination of schedules and the preparation of various technical needs. The activity schedule is prepared by considering the availability of participants and the implementation team. After the schedule is set, the PKM team prepares learning materials and the necessary tools. To increase children's involvement, the team also distributed pamphlets to parents and the community as a means of information about the goals and benefits of the Rumah Belajar Ceria.

Implementation Stage

The activity takes place twice a week, namely every Monday and Saturday at 18.30 – 20.00 WIB. Each session begins with an opening greeting and a prayer together to create a comfortable learning atmosphere. Furthermore, children are given the freedom to choose the material they want to learn or get guidance in understanding the lessons at school. Companion students guide them in small groups, with a ratio of 1-2 students per companion to improve learning effectiveness.

For children who are still learning to read, special sessions are provided with more intensive teaching methods. After 30 minutes of learning, the activity was temporarily stopped for ice-breaking sessions or educational games to maintain their enthusiasm for learning. Learning resumes for the next 30 to 60 minutes.

At the end of the session, a casual discussion or free talk was held for 15-30 minutes to strengthen the relationship between participants and companions, increase children's confidence in communicating, and allow them to share learning experiences. The activity was closed with a joint prayer before the children returned home with the assistance of parents or guardians.

Evaluation Stage

Evaluations are conducted periodically to measure the effectiveness of the program and identify aspects that need improvement. The assessment was carried out through direct observation and feedback from participants. Children were allowed to convey their impressions, messages, and suggestions related to the program that had taken place. In addition, the PKM team also conducted internal reflection and discussion to design a strategy for future program development.

With a systematic approach at each stage of implementation, Rumah Belajar Ceria is expected to provide optimal benefits for children in Rukun Warga (RW) 03 Mulyojati Village and become a non-formal learning model that can be applied in various other communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The Rumah Belajar Ceria program has been carried out regularly every Tuesday and Saturday since August at Rukun Warga (RW) 03 Mulyojati Village. This activity was attended by eight children from the surrounding environment who actively participated in the learning session. This program aims to help children understand subject matter that they have not mastered in school and increase their interest and motivation in learning through an interactive and fun learning approach.

During the implementation of the program, children are given personal guidance in understanding school materials, doing assignments, and improving their literacy and numeracy skills. In addition, the learning methods applied, such as ice-breaking, educational games, and interactive discussions, can create a more interesting and less boring learning atmosphere.

Based on feedback from participants, the majority of children felt helped by the existence of the Rumah Belajar Ceria. They admitted that it was easier to understand the previously difficult material and get motivated to study harder. In addition, the more personal approach of the accompanying students provides a sense of comfort for children to ask questions and discuss their lessons.

The success of Rumah Belajar Ceria can be seen from the increasing enthusiasm and confidence of children in learning. Children who were previously less active in learning began to show an increase in their involvement, both in discussions and in doing schoolwork. This shows that a more flexible approach to non-formal tutoring can be a solution for children who experience difficulties in the formal learning system.

In addition to the academic impact, this program also provides social benefits for participants. Free talk sessions and joint coloring activities provide opportunities for children to interact with each other, build better social relationships, and develop their creativity. This is in line with the research of Putri et al. (2023), which stated that a fun and interactive learning environment can increase children's motivation and cognitive abilities. However, in the

implementation of this program, there are still several challenges, such as the limited number of participants and the difficulty of building consistent learning habits outside of the Rumah Belajar Ceria session. Therefore, the sustainability of this program requires further support from the community, parents, and schools so that children get optimal benefits.

The following is a documentation of some of the activities that have been carried out in this program.



Figure 1. Learning Activities

In this session, the children participated in learning activities with great enthusiasm. They received guidance from accompanying students in understanding school materials that had not been mastered. The personal and interactive approach helps children understand the concepts taught more easily and increases their interest in learning.



Figure 2. Group photo after learning

In this session, after the learning activities, participants and the accompanying team captured moments of togetherness through a group photo session. This activity is not only evidence of documentation but also a symbol of togetherness and enthusiasm in building a positive and fun learning environment.



Figure 3. Joint Coloring Activities

In this session, in addition to academic learning, the **Rumah Belajar Ceria** program also held creative activities, one of which was coloring together. This activity aims to develop creativity, improve fine motor skills, and provide a more relaxed and fun learning atmosphere for children.

Discussion

The results of the Rumah Belajar Ceria program show that the interactive learning approach significantly contributes to improving children's learning motivation and academic understanding. This is evidenced by the increase in the number of participants from 8 to 18 children for the program, with an average attendance rate of 80% in each session. Activities such as personalized tutoring, ice-breaking, and educational games created a learning atmosphere that was more engaging and enjoyable. Feedback from children and parents confirmed that participants found it easier to understand difficult material and felt more motivated to study.

This finding aligns with Maharani et al. (2025), who emphasize that learning motivation is strongly correlated with academic engagement, especially when students feel supported and autonomous conditions are replicated in the small-group guidance setting of this program. Similarly, Ramadhani et al. (2024) highlight that high motivation boosts persistence in learning science subjects, which is reflected in the improved interest of children in literacy and numeracy materials at Rumah Belajar Ceria. Furthermore, Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass (2024) point out that parental involvement fosters motivation and resilience, an element also observed in this program through positive parental feedback and support. Thus, the interactive methods used not only align with but also operationalize best practices from the literature, demonstrating tangible results in improving both academic outcomes and learning enthusiasm among participating children.

High learning motivation is essential for educational success, especially in non-formal learning environments such as Rumah Belajar Ceria, where autonomy, competence, and connectedness are emphasized. Research shows that students who feel in control of their learning and receive social support are more motivated, leading to better academic outcomes (Maharani et al., 2025; Choden & Rigdel, 2024). For example, Maharani et al. found a significant positive correlation between learning motivation and student engagement, suggesting that motivated students are more likely to excel academically (Maharani et al., 2025). Similarly, Ramadhani et al. highlighted that high motivation fosters perseverance and perseverance, especially in science subjects (Ramadhani et al., 2024). In addition, the role of supportive relationships, including parental involvement, is essential in nurturing a growth and resilience mindset, which is crucial for maintaining motivation (Willems & Gonzalez-DeHass, 2024). Overall, fostering an environment that promotes intrinsic motivation through choice and interaction can significantly improve learning experiences and outcomes.

Research shows that emotional engagement in interactive learning significantly increases students' retention and interest in information, especially through the use of ice-breaking activities and educational games. For example, Zaina et al. highlighted that play encourages engagement and concentration among children, especially when incorporating interactive elements such as hand gestures (Zaina et al., 2019). Similarly, Liu et al. found that watching interaction during live video streaming improved learning performance and metacognition among elementary school students, suggesting that social interaction improved educational outcomes (Liu et al., 2023). Furthermore, Fernández-Abella et al. showed that interactive learning programs, whether virtual or traditional, effectively improve working memory and mathematical skills, emphasizing the importance of task structure over the medium used (Fernández-Abella et al., 2019). Takbiri et al. also reported that gamification, such as using Easter eggs, significantly improved motivation and learning performance in K-6 students (Takbiri et al., 2023). Collectively, these studies underscore the positive impact of interactive and emotionally engaging learning environments on student participation and anxiety reduction (Chzhen et al., 2022).

The findings of the program at Cheerful Learning Homes are in line with the existing literature that emphasizes the effectiveness of community-based learning environments in improving children's cognitive skills, especially in literacy and numeracy. Strong social interaction

in learning settings significantly outperforms traditional, teacher-centered methods in encouraging cognitive development (Gerholm et al., 2019). Furthermore, the application of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory underlines the role of scaffolding in education, where facilitators support children according to their developmental needs until they achieve independence (Côté et al., 2018). This approach has been shown to produce positive outcomes in understanding complex academic concepts, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, as evidenced by various studies showing improved cognitive trajectories in the context of similar interventions (Blair & Raver, 2014; Miller et al., 2011; Bavarian et al., 2013).

Although the program has yielded positive results, there have been several challenges in its implementation, such as a limited number of participants and a lack of consistency in children's attendance. Research shows that successful implementation requires robust strategies, including effective communication and flexibility in scheduling to improve participant retention (Loon et al., 2023). Additionally, community involvement and the inclusion of family members in program design can increase acceptance and ease of implementation (Chang et al., 2023). To address these challenges, a comprehensive socialization strategy and collaboration with schools are essential to increase participation and ensure consistent attendance (Haddon et al., 2023; Mclaughlin et al., 2023). Therefore, a broader socialization strategy as well as collaboration with schools is needed to increase the number of participants and consistency in their attendance.

Based on the results of these findings and discussions, several recommendations can be applied to the Rumah Belajar Ceria to increase its effectiveness and sustainability. One important step is to increase the involvement of parents and the community so that children can be more consistent in participating in programs and get more optimal learning support at home. In addition, the use of simple technology, such as visual media or interactive learning applications, can be an innovative solution to enrich learning methods and make them more engaging for children. Collaboration with schools also needs to be strengthened so that the materials taught are more integrated with the formal curriculum, so that children get a more comprehensive learning experience.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Rumah Belajar Ceria program has been effectively implemented in RW 03 Mulyojati Village since August and has shown a positive impact on participating children, particularly in improving their literacy and numeracy skills. Through interactive and enjoyable learning approaches such as ice-breaking, educational games, and open discussions, the program has successfully increased children's motivation and engagement in learning. Most participants reported that the program helped them better understand difficult materials and complete schoolwork more easily, while also fostering social interaction and confidence during group activities.

To enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the program, several improvements are recommended. First, broader outreach and socialization are needed to increase the number of participants, particularly by involving parents and the local community. Second, incorporating digital media and interactive learning tools can enrich learning methods and maintain student interest. Third, adding more volunteers or mentors will allow for more personalized guidance. Finally, collaboration with schools is essential to align the content with the formal curriculum, while ongoing evaluations should be conducted regularly to refine the program based on participants' evolving needs.

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