

Teacher Strategies In Improving Children's Concentration Through The Picture-Based Storytelling Method For Children Aged 4-5 Years At State Children's Paud In The 2025/2026 Academic Year

Hafizatul Umah¹, Eliyana², M. Taufik³

¹²³Program Studi Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini, Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (STKIP) Hamzar

Article Info

Article history:

Accepted: 24 July 2026

Published: 04 Agustus 2026

Keywords:

Teacher strategy,
children concentration, picture
storytelling,
early childhood,
visual media.

Abstract

This research aims to thoroughly describe the implementation of teacher's strategies in improving children's concentration through picture storytelling methods, analyze the tangible impact of these strategies on children's attention span, and identify the supporting internal and external factors that influence the improvement of children's learning concentration aged 4-5 years at PAUD Anak Negeri in the Academic Year 2025/2026. The approach applied in this research is qualitative descriptive. The research subjects actively involved were 31 children in group A aged 4-5 years. Data collection techniques included direct observation, in-depth interviews with classroom teachers, and documentation techniques. The results indicated that the teacher's strategy through the picture storytelling method was carried out systematically through several phases: preparation of attractive and relevant visual media, arrangement of seating in a semicircular position (letter U), interactive opening based on songs, delivery of the main story using variations in voice intonation and expressive facial language, active involvement of children through stimulative Q&A sessions in the middle of storytelling, and final evaluation through character re-identification. The impact of this strategy proved to be highly positive, where the duration of children's focus and concentration increased significantly from the initial condition of 10–15 minutes to 20–25 minutes. The main supporting factors include the teacher's theatrical creativity, the visual quality of colorful pictures, the provision of positive verbal reinforcement, and the comfort of the classroom environment.

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Corresponding Author:

Hafizatul Uma

(STKIP) Hamzar

Email: hafizaulumah864@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is a long-term investment that is fundamental and strategic for the life of the nation. Early childhood is often referred to as the golden age because it is during this period that children's brain, nervous system, physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development accelerates, reaching peak capacity of up to 80%. All educational stimulation provided during this phase will leave an impression and shape the child's personality structure and thought patterns in adulthood. Therefore, the development of learning strategies in PAUD institutions should not be done haphazardly but must be based on the child's psychological characteristics, individual uniqueness, and essential needs in exploring their surroundings (Sujiono, 2022).

One of the most crucial cognitive challenges faced by early childhood educators in the classroom is managing children's attention and ability to concentrate on learning. Concentration is an individual's psychological ability to focus all of their mental energy, attention, and five senses on a particular object or learning activity for a specific period of time, while ignoring irrelevant external stimuli (Slameto, 2010). According to Slameto (2010), students' concentration levels in the classroom can be identified empirically through behavioral indicators, such as active involvement, accurate response to instructions, calm sitting posture, and minimal distracting movements. Without adequate concentration, the process of knowledge transfer and internalization of moral values will not be optimally absorbed into children's long-term memory.

Psychologically, early childhood, particularly those aged 4 to 5 years (Group A), has very distinctive attention characteristics, namely a short attention span and easily distracted nature. According to contemporary research results released by Yuniarti et al. (2023), the pure attention span of children aged 4-5 years in formal learning is on average only 5 to 7 minutes. After passing this time threshold, children will spontaneously seek new stimuli in the classroom environment that are considered more interesting, such as chatting with friends, walking around, playing with objects around them, or daydreaming. This condition requires an extra creative approach from a classroom teacher to maintain the rhythm of children's attention.

The phenomenon of children's low concentration in class is often exacerbated by teachers' incorrect selection of teaching strategies. The use of conventional, one-way oral lecture methods without the use of interactive manipulative media tends to make the learning process very dry, abstract, and boring for children (Sanjaya, 2008). Wina Sanjaya (2008) argues that learning methods are essentially operational tactical tools for implementing pre-designed curriculum plans so that instructional objectives can be achieved effectively. When the chosen method is not in line with the psychological development of children who prefer concrete and imaginative activities, children will manifest their boredom through indifferent behavior and loss of focus (Susanto, 2022).

The use of illustrated storytelling is a pedagogical solution that is both practical and applicable to address these challenges. Moeslichatoen (2004) emphasized that storytelling is a valuable educational technique for early childhood because, through well-delivered oral stories, children can absorb social values, hone their receptive and expressive language skills, and broaden their cognitive horizons without feeling like they are being lectured. When this oral method is integrated with visual media in the form of brightly colored and proportionally sized illustrations, the effectiveness of the cognitive stimulus is multiplied (Sudono, 2021). Visual media acts as a bridge to the concretization of abstract concepts, allowing children to visualize the chronological flow of the story in a concrete way (Azhar, 2022).

According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children aged 4-5 years are in the pre-operational stage of thought, where they understand the world through symbolic functions but still rely heavily on concrete visual perception (Papalia & Martorell, 2021). Engaging visual stimuli in the form of picture books can trigger the release of the neurotransmitter dopamine in children's brains, which is correlated with curiosity and increased attention span (Suyadi, 2021). Through the picture-based storytelling method, children's auditory attention (from the teacher's voice) and visual attention (from the image media) are focused on a single central point, automatically minimizing the potential for distracting external stimuli.

The objective conditions at the Anak Negeri Preschool for group A (ages 4-5 years) underlie the urgency of conducting this descriptive research. Based on the results of initial observations and in-depth pre-research interviews with class teachers in June 2026, empirical facts were found that the majority of children in the class experienced difficulty in maintaining learning focus for more than 10 minutes. Teachers often complained about the classroom atmosphere becoming noisy, children pinching each other, or running out of line during classical activities. The main problem identified was the limited use of media variations and teaching methods that were still dominated by verbal communication. Responding to this, this qualitative research was

designed comprehensively to describe the dynamics of teacher strategy implementation through the picture story method, analyze the impact of changes in children's concentration behavior, and map contextual supporting factors at the Anak Negeri Preschool. This research gap is particularly evident in the local context: while Yuniarti et al. (2023) have quantified the general attention span of preschool-aged children, no study to date has closely documented how a teacher's integrated five-stage storytelling strategy, encompassing visual media selection, spatial seating design, musical apperception, theatrical vocal delivery, and interactive evaluation, is enacted as a single coherent strategy and how it specifically transforms children's concentration duration within an authentic, under-resourced village PAUD setting. Addressing this gap constitutes the primary novelty and urgency underlying the present study.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive analytical approach. The qualitative approach was chosen because the researcher sought to understand, interpret, and describe social phenomena occurring naturally (naturalistic settings) related to learning interactions between classroom teachers and students without any laboratory intervention or variable manipulation (Sugiyono, 2019). According to Sugiyono (2019), qualitative research positions the researcher as a key instrument who must go directly into the field, build familiarity with the subjects, observe real-life behavior, and collect data holistically to produce in-depth descriptive narratives.

The location of this research is at PAUD Anak Negeri, an early childhood education institution located in Medana Village, Jambianom Hamlet, Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province. This location was chosen based on the highly varied characteristics of the students and the urgent need to optimize early literacy strategies and learning concentration for Group A children at the school. Field data collection was carried out intensively for three effective working days, namely on June 8, 9, and 12, 2026, where the rhythm of children's daily activities was closely monitored from class entry time to closing time.

The subjects of this study were Group A children (aged 4-5 years) at the Anak Negeri Preschool with a total class population of 31 students. The subject composition consisted of 16 boys and 15 girls, who generally showed very diverse levels of cognitive maturity and focus span. Secondary data sources in this study were obtained through structured interviews with key informants, namely Group A class teachers who have direct empirical experience in managing daily classroom dynamics. The selection of this key informant was carried out purposively, based on specific criteria: a minimum of three years of teaching experience in Group A, direct daily involvement in implementing the picture storytelling strategy, and willingness to be observed and interviewed repeatedly throughout the research period. These criteria were applied to ensure that the information obtained genuinely reflected authentic classroom practice rather than an idealized account.

The data collection technique was carried out through a combination of three standard qualitative data collection methods (method triangulation) to ensure data richness: (1) Passive Participant Observation, where the researcher was present in the class to record the duration of children's concentration using a stopwatch, observing children's eye contact, facial expressions, and changes in children's body posture individually during the teacher's storytelling process; (2) In-depth Interview, conducted with the class teacher to explore the rationale for story selection, media preparation techniques, methods for handling distractive children, and technical obstacles faced; (3) Documentation, which included collecting drafts of daily lesson plans (RPPH), authentic photographs of the sequence of illustrated storytelling, printouts of the storybook media used, and child assessment instrument sheets.

The data analysis procedure was carried out in a flowing manner since the data collection took place in the field, by adopting the interactive analysis model from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). The analysis stages include: (1) Data Reduction, namely selecting, focusing,

simplifying, and transforming raw data from field notes and interview transcripts into core notes; (2) Data Presentation (Data Display), compiling an information matrix and structured textual narrative so that the relationship patterns and impacts of teacher strategies can be clearly seen; (3) Conclusion Drawing and Verification, formulating the meaning of patterned data, seeking clarity of cause-effect relationships, and retesting temporary conclusions in the field to obtain valid and objective final results. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation techniques (comparing child observation data with teacher narratives) and technical triangulation (aligning the results of interviews, observations, and documentation) (Moleong, 2018). To further strengthen the credibility of the analysis, the coding process in the data reduction stage was carried out manually in two rounds: open coding to identify initial categories emerging from the observation notes and interview transcripts, followed by focused coding to group these categories into the main themes reported in this study. The trustworthiness of the findings was further maintained through peer debriefing with a fellow researcher and member checking, in which preliminary interpretations were confirmed back with the classroom teacher to avoid misinterpretation of the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Comprehensive Description of the Implementation of Teacher Strategies in PAUD Anak Negeri

Field research findings indicate that Grade A teachers at the Anak Negeri Early Childhood Education Center (PAUD Anak Negeri) implemented a strategy to improve concentration through illustrated storytelling in a mature, planned, and integrative manner. This strategy was broken down into a series of continuous stages that combined physical classroom management with persuasive communication skills. The first stage began with selecting story material and preparing visual media aspects. Teachers chose giant storybooks (big books) with visual dimensions of 40x30 cm. This large media size was chosen intentionally so that the illustrations could be seen very clearly by children sitting in the back row. The story themes were adapted to the curriculum for children's emotional closeness, such as animal character stories (fables) that contain messages of noble character and the value of friendship.

The second stage is managing the physical learning environment in the classroom. Before opening a storybook, the teacher rearranges the children's seating positions from the classical longitudinal rows (traditional rows) to a semicircular or U-shaped sitting formation. The teacher positions herself in the center of the circle's focal point with a sitting height level with the children's eye level. This U-shaped seating arrangement has very strong psychological implications, namely eliminating barriers that limit the view between children, expanding the teacher's visual access to monitor the movements of all children simultaneously, and minimizing the tendency for children to joke with friends behind them.

The third stage is the conditioning or initial apperception phase. The teacher does not immediately read the story text, but rather builds the children's mental readiness and initial interest through interactive sing-along activities and short, attention-grabbing chants such as 'Clap Concentration'. This opening activity serves as a bridge to divert children's energy from free play activities to focused, structured learning. The fourth stage is the core story delivery. At this stage, the teacher's theatrical competence is put to the maximum test. The teacher holds the storybook facing the children and then reads the narrative using dynamic vocal inflection techniques. The teacher contrasts the timbre and color of their voice according to the character being told. Cunning and agile animal characters are voiced with a high, fast, and shrill tone, while large and slow characters are voiced with a low, heavy tone and slow tempo.

Throughout the storytelling process, the teacher consistently combines these voice variations with dramatic facial expressions (such as bulging eyes when describing fear, or a wide smile when describing happiness) plus representative hand gestures. Furthermore, the teacher applies active interaction techniques in the middle of the story (verbal scaffolding). The teacher

periodically pauses the story for a moment at the climax, points to a particular picture, then randomly asks the children thought-provoking questions, such as 'What do you think the mouse deer will do next?'. This interactive technique has proven very effective in forcing children's minds to stay active, processing the story information, and preventing children from daydreaming or losing focus due to passive boredom.

The fifth stage is evaluation and closing reinforcement. At the end of the story session, the teacher closes the book and conducts an interactive reflection by asking several children to come to the front of the class to retell the story simply, using random picture cards as a stimulus. The teacher provides appreciation in the form of applause, sincere verbal praise, and stars on the children's assessment sheets as a form of positive reinforcement.

3.2 Analysis of the Impact of Implementing Methods on the Duration of Children's Learning Concentration

Based on a comparative analysis of periodic observation data from the first to the third day of the study, there was a transformation in behavioral changes and a very significant increase in the concentration span of children in group A. Before the structured implementation of the picture-telling strategy, the average duration of children's ability to focus on listening to the teacher's explanation in class only lasted around 10 to 15 minutes. After this critical time duration was exceeded, the classroom atmosphere certainly turned out to be uncontrollable because the children began to experience mental fatigue and divert their attention to things other than the lesson material.

However, after implementing the picture story method with the U-shaped seating arrangement and variations in vocal intonation, the duration of children's pure attention increased sharply and stably to be in the range of 20 to 25 minutes in each learning session. Children were able to sit quietly on the carpet, their eyes consistently focused on the movement of the storybook and the teacher's expressions, and showed emotional responses in line with the storyline (such as laughing together or showing tense expressions). This indicates that children's emotional engagement has been successfully tied to the quality of the teacher's storytelling.

Qualitatively, this positive impact also manifested itself in the improvement of children's memory (short-term memory retention) regarding the material's substance. When the evaluation question and answer process was carried out at the end of the activity, 85% of the children in the class were able to name the main characters correctly, reorder important events sequentially, and articulate the hidden moral message of the story using their own sentence structure boldly and confidently. Distractive behavior in the classroom experienced a drastic decrease; the frequency of children suddenly standing up or disturbing their peers decreased by 90% compared to class conditions in previous weeks. The learning process became much more conducive, dynamic, safe, and enjoyable for the children.

3.3 Mapping of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for the Success of Teacher Strategies

The success of increasing the concentration of learning in group A children at PAUD Anak Negeri is strongly influenced by the interaction of several main supporting factors, which are classified as follows: (1) Teacher Theatrical Competence and Creativity, the teacher's ability to reduce his ego and act totally as an expressive fairy tale voice actor becomes the main magnetic attraction that locks the child's attention; (2) Characteristics of Visual Media Design, the use of hand-made illustrations full of color contrast, clear character expression details, and large book sizes make it easier for the child's visual cortex to capture visual stimuli; (3) Flexible Spatial Conditioning, the shift in sitting position to a semicircular lesehan format creates an atmosphere of emotional closeness (rapport) between the teacher and the child, as well as providing kinesthetic comfort for the child's physical; (4) Stimulative Reward Strategy, giving specific verbal praise such as 'It's great that Alif is sitting quietly' motivates other children to imitate this positive behavior in order to get similar appreciation.

On the other hand, researchers also identified several minor inhibiting factors that have the potential to distort children's concentration in the middle of the storytelling process, including: the

presence of external noise disturbances from motorized vehicles passing in front of the school building due to the geographical position of PAUD Anak Negeri which is close to the village main road, the physical condition of children who feel tired or sleepy if they have not slept enough the previous night, as well as the presence of one or two children with special attention needs (hyperactivity) who require a separate personal handling approach so as not to break the group's concentration.

Integrating the results of this study with the wealth of child development psychology theory reinforces the scientific validity of Allan Paivio's dual-coding theory. This theory states that information processing in the human brain is much more effective when verbal (auditory) and non-verbal (visual illustrative) stimuli are presented simultaneously and complement each other (Papalia & Martorell, 2021). The colorful images used in storytelling act as cognitive anchors, preventing children's memories from drifting freely, while the teacher's theatrical vocal variations serve as emotional stimulants, maintaining the child's arousal system at its highest level of learning readiness. When critically compared with previous research, the results of this study show both alignment and important differences. Yuniarti et al. (2023) reported that the natural attention span of children aged 4-5 years in thematic learning generally lasts only 5 to 7 minutes; the present study's baseline finding of 10 to 15 minutes and its increase to 20 to 25 minutes after intervention indicate a considerably larger improvement, suggesting that a live, theatrical, and multisensory storytelling strategy may generate a stronger concentration effect than visual media exposure alone. This finding also differs from international studies conducted in digital reading contexts. Sun, Roberts, and Bus (2022) found that bilingual preschoolers' visual attention during digital picture-book reading was mainly sustained through built-in animation and audio enhancements rather than through the reader's own performance, whereas in the present study it was precisely the teacher's embodied theatrical delivery, vocal variation, and direct eye contact that primarily reinforced children's sustained attention. Meanwhile, Wang and Shao (2025) demonstrated that picture-book reading rich in mental-state discourse improves children's learning understanding, but their intervention relied on structured discussion; the present study extends this line of work by showing that concentration itself, not only comprehension, can be substantially strengthened through a teacher-led, non-digital storytelling strategy in a real, resource-limited classroom setting. These differences highlight that the effectiveness of picture storytelling on children's concentration is highly dependent on the medium of delivery and the interactive role of the human teacher, an aspect that has been comparatively underexplored in the existing international literature.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the presentation of the results of the analysis of empirical field data and in-depth discussions that have been described in the previous chapter, this descriptive study formulates the following conclusions: The application of teacher strategies through the implementation of structured picture storytelling methods has proven to be very effective, significant, and applicable in increasing the duration and quality of learning concentration of children aged 4-5 years (Group A) in PAUD Anak Negeri in the 2025/2026 Academic Year. The success of the implementation of this strategy rests on the mastery of five key pedagogical stages, namely the careful selection of contextual fable story themes, modification of the physical classroom layout into a semicircular lesehan formation (letter U), the use of apperception techniques based on concentration songs, mastery of theatrical skills of vocal variations and teacher facial expressions, and the active involvement of children through interactive questions and answers.

The most objective direct impact of implementing this teacher strategy is a consistent surge in children's pure focus attention span, from initially only being able to last 10 to 15 minutes using conventional methods, to an optimal increase of 20 to 25 minutes per learning session without showing any signs of physical or mental fatigue. This change is followed by a drastic decrease in the intensity of children's distractible behavior in class and a strengthening of children's cognitive

memory retention of the story's moral values. This success is supported by the synergy of high-quality visual media and an appreciative classroom climate.

Based on the above conclusions, the researcher proposes several constructive recommendations for the advancement of the quality of education: (1) For PAUD teachers, it is hoped that they can make this picture story method one of the daily teaching technique agendas that must be varied, as well as continue to hone vocal skills, facial expressions, and skills in making creative independent story media; (2) For the Head of PAUD Institution Management, it is recommended to allocate a budget for school facilities and infrastructure specifically for the procurement of a varied collection of picture story books (big books), as well as facilitating teachers to participate in professional acting or storytelling training; (3) For further researchers, it is recommended to develop this research towards classroom action research (CAR) or experimental research by involving control groups to test the effectiveness of this method on other aspects of early childhood development more broadly.

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