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The Role of Early Childhood Teacher as a Facilitator, Creator, and Motivator in Improving Children's Cognitive Abilities

Nurul Hidayah[1], M. Zuhdi Zainul Majdi[2]
[1]Program Studi Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini, Fakultas Tarbiyah, Institut Agama Islam Hamzanwadi Pancor, Indonesia
[2] Program Studi Bimbingan Konseling Islam, Fakultas Dakwah dan Komunikasi, Institut Agama Islam Hamzanwadi Pancor, Indonesia

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Abstract
This research aims to analyze the role of PIAUD teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators in enhancing the cognitive abilities of early childhood at RA Batu Rakit, an early childhood education institution in the rural area of North Lombok. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research subjects consisted of 5 people, comprising two classroom teachers, the school principal, and two assisting teachers from groups B1 and B2, selected using a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through observation and interviews, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. The results show that PIAUD teachers at RA Batu Rakit have optimally carried out their three roles. As facilitators, teachers provide media, space, and learning opportunities for children to explore their cognitive abilities. As creators, teachers design educational activities and games that stimulate logical thinking, problem-solving, and the introduction of basic concepts such as numbers, colors, shapes, and cause-and-effect relationships. As motivators, teachers consistently provide encouragement, enthusiasm, praise, and positive reinforcement so that children become more confident and enthusiastic in learning. These three roles are mutually complementary in stimulating children's cognitive abilities, although their implementation still faces resource limitations in the rural area.

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Corresponding Author:
Nurul Hidayah
Program Studi Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini, Fakultas Tarbiyah, Institut Agama Islam Hamzanwadi Pancor, Indonesia
e-mail: nurulhidayah9014@gmail.com

I. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is a crucial stage in an individual's growth and development because it is during this period that brain development occurs rapidly. Various neuroscience studies indicate that approximately 80% of brain development occurs between the ages of 0 and 6, so the stimulation provided during this period significantly determines a child's future learning, emotional, social, and spiritual capacities. The brain acts as a pathway for the stimulation a child receives, where all input is sensed, sorted, prioritized, processed, and stored (Jensen, 2008; Mufidah et al., 2025). Early childhood is a phase that only occurs once in a child's life, so it needs to be supported to develop optimally. Education at this stage lasts from birth to age six (Selomo, Suryanto, & Evita Santi, 2020), and providing appropriate stimulation will encourage children's cognitive,

affective, and motor development, better preparing them for the next stage of their education (Nugrahani, Putro, & Rohmah, 2024).

Cognitive abilities in early childhood are the ability to receive information and reason, which are then actualized through play activities. This aspect needs to be stimulated to improve critical, logical, creative, and symbolic thinking, as well as problem-solving skills, which can be achieved through enjoyable play activities and the use of educational media (Susanti & Novtiar, 2018; Utami et al., 2025). As educators, teachers strive to develop children's cognitive potential, such as the ability to distinguish objects by type, size, group, and shape, as well as to sequence numbers. Teachers use various learning approaches to help children emotionally prepare to interact with their environment and prepare for the next stage of development (Kwartie, Fitriani, & Nuroniah, 2024).

Initial observations and interviews in the field, particularly in rural areas like North Lombok with limited resources, indicate a gap in the quality of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers, who are not yet fully trained to carry out their roles as educators. This condition was also found at RA Batu Rakit, as conveyed by the Head of the RA Batu Rakit Foundation, Seniwati, who stated that PAUD teachers are the main pillars in building the foundation of character and a love of learning in children through their roles as role models, facilitators, creators, and motivators (Seniwati, personal interview, Batu Rakit, June 29, 2026).

Cognitive abilities are the ability to think, such as connecting, evaluating, and considering things, which grow and develop along with physical and nervous system development (Rozana, 2020). Cognitive development allows children to explore the world through their five senses, enabling them to use the knowledge they receive to navigate their lives, including aspects of perception, memory, thinking, symbols, reasoning, and problem-solving (Putra et al., 2023). Genetic, environmental, and parenting factors also influence the rate of cognitive development in each child (A, Erni Tresna, et al., 2024).

In this context, the role of early childhood education (PAUD) teachers is crucial as facilitators and role models for children. Pratiwi (2025) demonstrated that teachers' role as facilitators through the design of play-based learning experiences effectively stimulates cognitive skills. Firman (2022) emphasized that PAUD teachers play a crucial role in stimulating cognitive abilities through guidance and providing a supportive learning environment. Gusmaleni et al. (2026) reinforced these findings, stating that teachers as facilitators play a key role in designing child-centered, play-based learning, for example through stimulating cloth books, which have been shown to improve critical thinking, problem-solving, and memory skills.

Another role of PIAUD teachers is as creators, namely educators who can create or spark ideas in the teaching and learning process, developing a free atmosphere for children to explore and express their ideas and creativity, through approaches, methods, and innovations that are new to the institution (Iki Farini & Rohita, 2023). Teachers are required to always create new and enjoyable learning experiences (Yanti, 2024). Ardiana (2022) proves that a variety of creative learning methods are effective in stimulating the curiosity and cognitive abilities of early childhood, reinforced by Pratiwi (2025), who highlights the creativity of teachers in utilizing local resources to develop children's problem-solving and logical thinking skills.

The role of early childhood education teachers as motivators is also very strategic, namely creating a conducive learning atmosphere, arousing children's interest, and encouraging active participation through praise, rewards, challenging tasks, and positive communication (Najoan et al., 2023; Amiruddin, 2022; Yunistisa et al., 2023). Wildiana and Al Baqi (2025) showed that providing motivation and learning stimuli effectively

fosters problem-solving skills, logical thinking, and conceptual understanding in early childhood. This is reinforced by Istiqomah (2021), who highlighted the steps teachers take in providing encouragement, enthusiasm, and rewards that arouse children's curiosity about numbers and patterns.

PAUD teachers thus play a key role as facilitators (providers of learning environments), creators (designers of interesting play methods), and motivators (givers of encouragement), which complement each other in stimulating children's curiosity, problem-solving, and optimal cognitive growth.

Based on the description, this study is directed to analyze in depth the role of PIAUD teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators in improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood children in RA Batu Rakit, with the problem formulation: (1) what is the condition of the cognitive abilities of PAUD children in RA Batu Rakit; (2) what is the role of teachers as facilitators in improving children's cognitive abilities; (3) what is the role of teachers as creators in improving children's cognitive abilities; and (4) what is the role of teachers as motivators in improving children's cognitive abilities. This study aims to determine the condition of children's cognitive abilities and the role of teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators in improving the cognitive abilities of PAUD children in RA Batu Rakit.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, which aims to obtain an in-depth overview of the role of ECD teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators in improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood. Qualitative research is a research method used to examine the conditions of natural objects, where the researcher acts as a key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Fiantika et al., 2022). A case study is a research strategy used to carefully and in-depth investigate a program, event, activity, process, or group of individuals by involving various data sources to obtain a complete understanding of the case (Poltak & Widjaja, 2024).

The research was conducted at RA Batu Rakit, a pre-school (PAUD) institution in rural North Lombok facing limited resources. The number of students at RA Batu Rakit is 57 children divided into two grade levels, namely group A and group B. Group A consists of 25 children, while Group B consists of 32 children who are further divided into two study groups, namely Group B1 (16 children) and Group B2 (16 children). Group B1, which is the focus of this research, consists of 16 children.

The subjects in this study were 2 class teachers, the principal of RA Batu Rakit, and 2 accompanying teachers for classes B1 and B2 at RA Batu Rakit, who were selected using the technique of *purposive sampling*. *Purposive sampling is* a sampling technique with certain considerations, namely, researchers deliberately select participants who are considered to best understand and have direct experience with the phenomenon being studied so that they are able to provide maximum data (Sugiyono, 2022).

In the initial observation, the criteria set were class teachers or educators who had experience in early childhood care. The researcher's role in this study was as a passive participant (*observer-as-participant).* This means that the researcher conducts direct observations in the field and is involved in limited learning activities, but maintains a distance to avoid influencing the situation being observed. This position allows the researcher to gain an objective understanding while maintaining the authenticity of the behavior and interactions occurring in the PIAUD environment at RA Batu Rakit.

Data were collected through three techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe activities and interactions occurring in the field. Interviews were conducted to gather in-depth information from sources. Meanwhile, documentation was used to collect written or archival data to support the results of the observations and interviews (Ardiansyah, Risnita, & Jailani, 2023).

Observations were conducted to observe the cognitive abilities of children while the classroom teacher provided guidance. The focus was on the role of the early childhood teacher as a facilitator, creator, and motivator in improving children's cognitive abilities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the classroom teacher, principal, and assistant teacher to explore their strategies and views. Documentation in the form of daily journals, activity photos, and progress notes was used to support the data. The data analysis technique in this study refers to the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. This model consists of three main components, namely: (1) data reduction, (2) data presentation, and (3) drawing conclusions or verification. These three components are interrelated and must be continuously compared to determine the direction and content of conclusions as the final result of the research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted at RA Batu Rakit, an early childhood education institution located in Batu Rakit Hamlet, Batu Rakit Village, Bayan District, North Lombok Regency. This research was conducted to deepen the role of PIAUD teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators in improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood. In improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood, the roles of teachers at RA Batu Rakit are threefold, namely as facilitators, creators, and motivators. As facilitators, teachers provide learning media, organize the classroom environment, provide direction, and provide opportunities for children to explore. As creators, teachers design interesting play activities and educational games to introduce numbers, colors, shapes, patterns, and grouping. As motivators, teachers provide encouragement, praise, positive reinforcement, and opportunities for children to try again when they experience difficulties.

a. The Role of Teachers as Facilitators

Interviews conducted to determine the role of teachers as facilitators in improving children's cognitive abilities revealed that teachers play a key role in providing various facilities, media, and learning resources appropriate to the children's needs and developmental stage. Teachers provide engaging learning activities, such as educational games, grouping objects, puzzles, recognizing numbers and letters, and simple exploration activities.

According to Mrs. PH, as the class B1 teacher, she explained, "*The role of preschool teachers in improving early childhood cognitive abilities is to provide a variety of engaging learning media, such as puzzles, blocks, and other educational play tools. I also strive to be a facilitator by giving children the opportunity to explore and find answers themselves, rather than simply providing them with answers.* (Pupa Handayani, personal interview, Batu Rakit, August 18, 2026).

Mr. J, as the class B2 teacher, added, "*The teacher's role as a facilitator is demonstrated through activities that help children classify objects by color, shape, and size, and introduce the concept of cause and effect through simple activities. Through these activities, children are expected to develop logical thinking skills appropriate to their developmental stage.* (Jamiludin, personal interview, Batu Rakit, August 18, 2026).

This finding aligns with Handoko's (2025) research, which found that teachers act as facilitators, prompting questions, providing guidance, and guiding discussions without taking over children's problem-solving processes, within a dynamic, child-centered learning environment. This is further supported by research by Rhema, Aunurrahman, Amalia, Halida, & Miranda (2024), which found that teachers, as facilitators, prepare various learning facilities such as teaching modules, RPH (lesson plans), and a comfortable classroom atmosphere.

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that teachers act as facilitators by providing media, space, and learning opportunities for children to explore their cognitive abilities. Teachers provide a variety of play equipment, organize the learning environment to support exploration, and provide space for children to find their own answers to simple problems.

b. The Role of Teachers as Creators

Interviews conducted to determine the role of teachers as creators in improving children's cognitive abilities revealed that teachers play a key role in creating a variety of creative, engaging, and developmentally appropriate learning activities. Teachers strive to develop new ideas in the learning process by using a variety of methods, media, and activities to keep children engaged and engaged in the learning process.

Based on the statement of Mrs. LN, the principal at RA Batu Rakit, she explained, "*We have two class teachers and two assistant teachers, each responsible for guiding the children in their respective groups. Regarding their role in improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood, I see both teachers performing their roles quite well, both as facilitators, creators, and motivators. As facilitators, the teachers here provide various educational games and learning media that can stimulate children's thinking and provide space for children to explore on their own. As creators, they also actively design varied learning activities every day, so that children do not get bored and their thinking skills continue to develop. Meanwhile, as motivators, teachers constantly provide encouragement and praise to children to be more confident in learning and develop their cognitive abilities. As the principal, I also constantly monitor and provide direction to the teachers so that they can carry out these roles consistently, because cognitive abilities are one of the important aspects that must be developed from an early age.* (Liva Nurprayatni, personal interview, Batu Rakit, August 18, 2026).

This finding is in line with the research of Dewi, Priyanti, & Rahayu (2025), which shows the role of teachers as creators, namely helping to form logical and analytical thinking patterns in early childhood by providing constructive feedback and stimulating discussion through simple and flexible media (Dewi, Priyanti, & Rahayu, 2025). Another study confirmed that the role of teachers as creators with the learning-by-play method has proven effective in stimulating children's cognitive, language, social-emotional, moral, and creative development in a balanced manner (Salimah et al., 2026).

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the teacher's role as a creator is to design educational activities and games that stimulate logical thinking, problem-solving, and the introduction of basic concepts such as numbers, colors, shapes, and cause-and-effect relationships. These activity designs are tailored to the cognitive developmental stage of children in Group B1 of RA Batu Rakit.

c. The Role of Teachers as Motivators

Interviews conducted to determine the role of teachers as motivators in improving children's cognitive abilities indicate that teachers play a crucial role in providing encouragement, enthusiasm, and stimulation to children during the learning process. Teachers strive to create a fun learning environment through play-based learning activities,

offering praise or recognition for children's efforts, and asking questions that stimulate children's thinking skills.

Based on the results of mentoring in class B1 with Mrs. RA, it was revealed that "*The class teacher acts as a motivator by creating a fun learning atmosphere through various interesting learning media, such as number cards, puzzles, and other teaching aids, so that children feel interested and enthusiastic about learning. The class teacher also always provides encouragement and encouragement to children to dare to try and find the answers themselves before being given help, so that children grow in confidence and courage in critical thinking.* (Robiatul Adawiyah, personal interview, Batu Rakit, August 18, 2026).

Mrs. AS, based on the results of observations in class B2 that "*Class teachers play a role as motivators in improving children's cognitive abilities. Class teachers consistently provide encouragement and praise to children who successfully complete assignments or games, thereby increasing their confidence and motivation to continue learning. This consistent support also encourages children to be more daring in trying and developing their thinking skills.* (Ari Suniati, personal interview, Batu Rakit, August 18, 2026).

This finding aligns with research by Aziz, Napitupulu, & Harahap (2025), which shows that early childhood education teachers act as motivators by creating a conducive learning environment, providing emotional support, and offering praise and appreciation to children to encourage their enthusiasm for learning. This is further supported by research by Dari, Junita, Ramadani, & Aulia (2025), which confirms that teachers' appreciation, personal approaches, and the application of innovative learning methods contribute to fostering children's self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning.

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the teacher's role as a motivator involves consistently providing encouragement, enthusiasm, praise, and positive reinforcement to children throughout the learning process, as well as creating a fun learning environment through engaging media and activities. Through this support, children grow to be more confident, willing to try, and motivated to continue developing their thinking skills.

The role of early childhood teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators in improving children's cognitive abilities includes providing encouragement, praise, and reinforcement so that children are confident and active thinkers. The form of reinforcement given is in the form of words of encouragement, verbal praise, and providing opportunities for children to try again when experiencing difficulties. This finding is in line with other studies. Research at Kindergarten Gembala Baik Pontianak found that teachers motivate hesitant children by providing examples of how to do it, giving children the opportunity to try it themselves, and giving praise through words of encouragement and positive sentences after the child completes their task (Putri, 2024).

Based on the discussion above, it can be understood that the role of PIAUD teachers as facilitators, creators, and motivators is very important in improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood. The importance of the teacher's role as a facilitator lies in their ability to provide an environment and learning experiences that allow children to construct their own knowledge through active exploration, so that children do not only receive information passively but also participate in discovering and understanding the concepts being learned (Firman, 2022). The importance of the teacher's role as a creator is seen in their ability to present a variety of innovative learning activities and media, so that children remain interested, do not get bored easily, and are encouraged to think flexibly in finding various ways to solve problems (Husnah, Rohmah, & Hibana, 2026). The importance of the teacher's role as a motivator is evident in their ability to create a conducive learning

atmosphere and provide emotional support, praise, and consistent appreciation, so that children grow into individuals who are confident, brave to try, and motivated to continue developing their thinking skills (Aziz, Napitupulu, & Harahap, 2025). These three roles are complementary; without adequate facilitation, teacher creativity is difficult to realize, and without consistent motivation, the facilities and creative activities that have been designed will not be optimal in stimulating children's cognitive abilities.

The findings of this study provide important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, these results support constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes students' active role in the learning process. When children at RA Batu Rakit engage in fun and collaborative activities, they learn not only academic content but also important social skills. From a practical perspective, these results suggest that the development of diverse and interactive teaching methods should be prioritized at RA Batu Rakit. The implementation of innovative learning strategies and the provision of better facilities can improve the quality of education.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the PIAUD teachers at RA Batu Rakit have carried out their roles as facilitators, creators, and motivators in improving the cognitive abilities of early childhood. As facilitators, teachers provide media, space, and learning opportunities that support children to explore their cognitive abilities independently. As creators, teachers design educational activities and games that stimulate logical thinking skills, problem-solving, and the introduction of basic concepts such as numbers, colors, shapes, and cause-and-effect relationships. As motivators, teachers provide encouragement, enthusiasm, praise, and positive reinforcement consistently so that children become more confident and enthusiastic in learning. These three roles complement each other and contribute to improving the cognitive abilities of children in group B1 RA Batu Rakit, although implementation still faces limited resources in rural areas. Therefore, it is recommended that the foundation and school continue to provide training and mentoring to teachers to strengthen these three roles, as well as provide more adequate learning facilities and media. For future researchers, it is recommended to expand the scope of the research to other age groups or other PAUD institutions to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the role of teachers in stimulating the cognitive abilities of early childhood.

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