

Use of Smarts Kids Big Book Media in Stimulating the Cognitive Abilities of 4-5-Year-Old Children at Kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the analysis of the use of Smart Kids Big Book media in stimulating the cognitive abilities of children aged 4-5 years at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten. This study involved 8 children in Group A as participants. The method used was descriptive qualitative with data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the interactive analysis technique of Miles & Huberman. The results of the study showed that the use of this media was able to stimulate children's cognitive abilities optimally, indicated by the success of children in recognizing letters, numbers, colors, and geometry very well. Children also showed very active and enthusiastic participation when doing activities matching pictures and thickening pattern lines. In conclusion, Smart Kids Big Book media has been proven effective as an instrument for children's cognitive stimulation that is interactive, concrete, fun, and supports the principle of learning through play in early childhood education.

Keywords: *Big Book Media, Cognitive Ability, Early Childhood*

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is legally included in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. In chapter 1, article 1, paragraph 14 it is written, "Early childhood education is a development effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through providing educational stimulation to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter further education." Based on the mandate of Law Number 20 of 2003 chapter 1, article 1, paragraph 14, early childhood education is aimed at children aged 0-6 years to help optimize their physical and spiritual growth and development. In the age range of 0-6 years, children grow and develop rapidly, so experts call this period the 'golden age' or known as the 'critical period'. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Culture officially issued Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture Number 137 of 2014 concerning National Standards for Early Childhood Education. In Chapter III Article 5 point 2, it is regulated regarding the Standards for Early Childhood Development Achievement Levels, hereinafter referred to as STPPA. In detail, STPPA regulates 6 aspects of children's abilities, namely: (1) religious and moral values, (2) physical-motor, (3) cognitive, (4) language, (5) social-emotional, and (6) art (Hidayat & Nurlatifah, 2023).

Cognitive development in early childhood plays a fundamental role in shaping the ability to think, comprehend information, and solve problems. Research shows that early childhood cognitive development positively influences their readiness to enter elementary school, so appropriate stimulation during this golden period is crucial for children's academic and social development (Handayani & Rinaldi, 2024). Therefore, teachers, as educators and

instructors, play a crucial role in designing and delivering appropriate cognitive stimulation for children from an early age (Firman & Anhusadar, 2022).

Early childhood is a time when individuals experience rapid and fundamental developmental processes for later life. Early childhood is the age of 0-8 years. During this period, the process of growth and development from various perspectives experiences a rapid period in human life. The learning process as a form of behavior given to children must consider the characteristics of each child. Early childhood is also referred to as the golden age (Islamiah et al., 2019). According to Piaget, the cognitive development stage of 3-5 years is the concrete pre-operational stage. At this stage, children are able to manipulate symbolic objects, children also experience rapid growth and development in terms of personality, character, emotional, intellectual, linguistic, and moral relationships. The growth and development of the brain's nerves begin in the womb until after birth. All neurons in the brain continue to develop until "perfection," including physical and mental development (Chairilisyah, 2018).

Institutionally, early childhood education can also be defined as a form of education that emphasizes laying the foundation for growth and development, including motor coordination (fine and gross), emotional intelligence, multiple intelligences, and spiritual intelligence. Given the unique characteristics and growth of early childhood, early childhood education is tailored to the developmental stages the child is going through (Hulkairiyah, 2020).

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) plays a crucial role in optimizing all aspects of a child's development, including cognitive development. One important cognitive ability that needs to be stimulated early on is logical thinking. Logical thinking skills in early childhood include simple reasoning processes, such as understanding cause-and-effect relationships, grouping objects, recognizing patterns, differentiating sizes, and solving simple problems (Ilhami, 2026). Children's logical thinking skills can be observed through activities such as sorting objects, classifying them based on certain characteristics, and drawing conclusions from observations. These abilities are crucial as a foundation for mastering academic concepts later in life and in children's daily lives (Monika et al., 2023).

One important aspect of early childhood cognitive development is numeracy. This ability forms the basis for the development of logical and systematic thinking skills, as well as the ability to solve simple problems in everyday life (Yusup, 2025). According to Piaget, children aged 2-7 years are in the preoperational stage, where they begin to understand concepts through concrete experiences and symbolic representations. Therefore, numeracy learning at an early age must be carried out through activities involving real objects, images, and story contexts so that children can understand the relationship between numbers and quantities meaningfully (Marinda, 2020). Numeracy skills at an early age include various indicators, such as naming number sequences, recognizing number symbols, counting objects, and performing simple addition and subtraction operations, including counting backward. However, in practice, children are still found to have difficulty understanding the concept of backward number sequence. Based on observations at Kurnia Kindergarten in Wonorejo, some children still need teacher guidance to correctly order numbers from ten to one. This shows the need for innovation in learning media that is interesting, interactive, and appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood learning (Latifah et al., 2025).

Teachers are required to be more creative in preparing the media and learning resources needed by children. Innovation using various materials found in the natural environment is crucial to supporting the sustainability of teaching and learning activities. The role of teachers as facilitators in early childhood education must be able to facilitate children's learning in various aspects of their environment. As we know, young children have a strong curiosity and enthusiasm for everything, as well as an adventurous attitude and a strong interest in observing their surroundings. They possess a strong sense of adventure. Exploring the surrounding environment is a positive experience for developing scientific interests in young children.

Every lesson given to children must be able to stimulate various aspects of their development. Of course, this learning cannot be separated from the use of media. Media are

tools or materials used to convey the content and learning messages. Media is very important for early childhood, because they are not yet able to understand something abstract or something that cannot be captured by their five senses. The presence of media can help make learning more tangible, making it easier for children to digest. Media has influenced all aspects of life, albeit to varying degrees. In developed countries, media has influenced life almost throughout waking hours, meaning more media exposure than sleep time. Media, the plural form of intermediary (medium), is a communication tool, derived from the Latin medium (between), this term refers to anything that carries information between a source and a receiver (Lailan, 2023).

One way to create enjoyable learning for children is by choosing the right media to use in learning. Media used in early childhood learning must meet educational standards (education), technical standards (steps and procedures for making), and aesthetic standards (beauty). A big book is a reading book that is large in size, with large writing and images. Big books have special characteristics that are enlarged, both text and images, thus enabling shared reading activities between teachers and students. Big books for beginning readers show teachers how to use big books to enhance the reading experience, errors and correctness of large writing and illustrations, ideas for displaying books (book packaging appearance), and activities using big books (Sulaiman, 2017).

Interactive and concrete learning media are believed to help children develop better logical reasoning. Learning media function as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor stimulants that create a more optimal and enjoyable learning experience. One innovative media for early childhood is the Big Book. Big Books are large books with attractive illustrations and simple materials, specifically designed for early childhood learning. The use of Big Books in learning concrete concepts is expected to increase children's interest and understanding, thereby developing their logical thinking skills (Daniyati et al., 2023). Big Book media has a positive influence on children's understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in the context of disaster mitigation and increases self-confidence (Khotima, 2025). Similarly, Big Books can improve the speaking skills of children aged 5-6 years through the presentation of interesting illustrated stories (Ananda et al., 2024).

A large book is a reading book with large dimensions, writing, and images. Large books have the special characteristic of being enlarged, both in terms of text and images, thus enabling collaborative reading activities between teachers and students. Large book sizes can vary, for example, A3, A4, A5, or the size of a newspaper. The size of the large book must consider the readability of all students in the class. Large books can be used in early grades because they have characteristics that suit student needs. Teachers can choose large books whose content and topics align with student interests or match the lesson theme. In fact, teachers can create their own large books according to the characteristics and needs of students. With its large size and attractive pictures, Big Book has several advantages, including providing an opportunity for students to engage in reading activities in a way that is not intimidating, allowing all students to see the same writing when the teacher reads the writing, allowing students to collectively give meaning to each writing in the Big Book, providing an opportunity for students who are slow readers to recognize the writing with the help of the teacher and other friends, being liked by students, including students who are late readers, and by reading Big Book together, courage and confidence appear in students that they can already read.

Given the importance of Big Books for early grade students, teachers should create several of these books to prepare for learning. Creating these books requires several considerations, such as writing style. The alphabet font used must be appropriate, as it will serve as a model for students. Furthermore, the number of words or sentences per page must be considered, according to the students' characteristics (Mu'awwanah, 2018). Therefore, media is crucial for the learning process, especially in early childhood education. Educators are required to use media when delivering material or during the learning process. However, when using media during learning, teachers must be careful in selecting them, for example, considering the usefulness or benefits of the media to be used, considering the safety of the

media (preferably not made of sharp materials) to avoid unwanted incidents and ensuring children feel comfortable when using the media (Triana & Rahman, 2020).

Previous studies on Big Book media for early childhood still focused on one aspect of ability separately, for example to improve speaking skills (Ananda et al., 2024), understanding cause-and-effect relationships in the context of disaster mitigation (Khotima, 2025), or alphabet recognition alone (Triana & Rahman, 2020). As far as the researcher's search, no studies have been found that develop and apply Big Book media in an integrated manner to stimulate several aspects of basic cognitive abilities at once, namely the recognition of letters, numbers, colors, and geometric shapes, in the same learning medium. This gap is further reinforced by conditions in the field, where the cognitive abilities of Group A children aged 4-5 years at Aisiyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten still need to be developed, especially in the recognition of letters, numbers, colors, and geometric shapes, while the Smart Kids Big Book media itself has never been used in cognitive learning activities at the school. Based on the description, this study aims to describe and analyze the use of Smart Kids Big Book media in stimulating the cognitive abilities of children aged 4-5 years at Aisiyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten.

METHOD

The research approach used in this study is qualitative, where the results are described holistically in narrative or verbal form. The type of research chosen is descriptive qualitative, a research method that aims to explain, depict, and analyze actual phenomena or conditions related to the learning process in the field as they are without any manipulation.

Respondents

The participants or subjects in this study were 8 children in Group A, aged 4-5 years, at Aisiyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten. Participants were selected based on the following criteria: actively registered in Group A during the current school year, aged 4-5 years, and attending all learning activities using Smart Kids Big Book media. Group A was chosen because it is a class with an age range that matches the focus of cognitive stimulation in this study. In addition to the children in Group A as the main subjects, this study also involved Group A's class teacher as an additional informant to provide assessments and responses to the use of the media applied. This study was conducted at Aisiyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten for one week, covering the media introduction stage, implementation of learning using Smart Kids Big Book, daily observations of children's activities, and interviews with the class teacher at the end of the study period.

Instrument

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher himself who acts as the creator of the Smart Kids Big Book media in the field. The Smart Kids Big Book media itself is designed as a large cognitive learning instrument containing material on the introduction of the alphabet letters AZ (accompanied by animal pictures), numbers 1-20 (with written line patterns), nine basic colors (My First Colors), geometric shapes, line pattern thickening activities, and fruit picture matching activities. In addition to the media, supporting instruments used include a guide to observing children's activities, an interview guide for class teachers, and a documentation tool in the form of a camera to take photos of activities.

Procedures

The procedure for implementing this research began with the preparation stage where the researcher designed and created the interactive learning media Smart Kids Big Book. Next, in the implementation stage, the media was introduced and used by the researcher together with the teacher in real learning activities in front of class A of Aisiyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten. During the learning process from beginning to end, the researcher conducted direct observations of the children's focus and cognitive abilities, which was then continued

with an interview session with the class teacher to ask for feedback and collect photo documentation as supporting evidence for the activity.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study used the technique (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which consists of three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, all data obtained from observations, interviews, and photo documentation were sorted according to the cognitive aspects studied. Next, the sorted data were summarized and systematically arranged for easier understanding. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn from the compiled data to determine the extent to which the media used were effective in stimulating children's cognitive abilities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Smart Media Kids Big Book

The media used in this study is the Smart Kids Big Book, a large-sized book-shaped learning media specifically designed for early childhood. This media was created by researchers as a cognitive learning aid for children aged 4-5 years at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, group A.



Figure 1. Media Smart Kids Big Book

The Smart Kids Big Book has an attractive appearance with brightly colored pictures and the material is presented in a simple yet comprehensive manner so that it is easy for children aged 4-5 years to understand. The Smart Kids Big Book media contains several basic cognitive learning materials that are interrelated. First, the alphabet introduction page AZ is presented with pictures of cute animals such as A for Chicken, B for Duck, C for Worm, and so on up to Z for Zebra. Second, the number introduction page 1-20 is presented with pictures of objects whose numbers correspond to the numbers and is equipped with a number writing pattern that children can follow. Third, the color introduction page entitled My First Color contains nine basic colors: red, blue, yellow, green, orange, purple, pink, black, and white, each presented with pictures of real objects that correspond to their colors. Fourth, the geometric

shape introduction page contains various shapes such as circles, triangles, squares, rectangles, rhombuses, ovals, pentagons, hearts, and stars. Fifth, the line thickening activity page contains various line patterns ranging from straight lines, zigzags, waves, to more complex patterns with pictures of vehicles as decoration. Sixth, the fruit matching activity page invites children to pair pictures of the same fruit from both sides of the page. With this complete material, Smart Kids Big Book is a comprehensive media in supporting the cognitive development of children aged 4-5 years.

Letter Recognition

Based on the results of observations conducted during learning activities at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten Group A, all children showed high interest and enthusiasm since the Smart Kids Big Book media was first introduced in front of the class. The children immediately paid attention with focus when the teacher began to show each page of the media. The classroom atmosphere looked fun and enthusiastic from the beginning to the end of the activity. In the letter recognition section, the children were able to name the letters AZ shown through the Smart Kids Big Book media. Although there were some children who did not immediately make sounds during the group activity, when the researcher directly asked the children individually, the children were immediately able to name the letters in question correctly. This shows that the children's ability to recognize letters has actually developed, it's just that some children need more encouragement to be willing to express their abilities. The children were also able to connect letters with animal pictures in the Big Book media well, such as the letter A for Chicken, the letter B for Duck, and so on, so that children can more easily remember each letter through interesting pictures.

Number Recognition

In the number recognition section, children are able to name the numbers 1-20 displayed in the Smart Kids Big Book. In addition to naming the numbers, children are also able to follow the number writing patterns provided in the media. The simultaneous activity of seeing, naming, and writing numbers helps children more easily grasp the concept of numbers concretely. This aligns with Piaget's theory that young children learn best through concrete and direct experiences, making learning more meaningful for them.

Color Recognition

In the color recognition section, children are able to name the colors on the My First Colors page, such as red, blue, yellow, green, orange, purple, pink, black, and white. They are also able to correctly point to the colors named by the teacher and are able to distinguish one color from another without significant difficulty. This ability develops well because each color in the Smart Kids Big Book is presented in a clear and attractive display and accompanied by real-life images that make it easier for children to remember and distinguish each color.

Introduction to Geometric Shapes

In the geometric shape recognition section, the children were able to name several familiar shapes, such as circles, triangles, and squares. For shapes they didn't yet know the names of, such as rhombuses, ovals, and pentagons, the researcher called out the names, and the children repeated them. In this way, the children gradually began to recognize and remember the names of new geometric shapes.

Matching Pictures and Thickening Lines Activity

In the fruit matching and line-thinning activities, the children showed the highest enthusiasm compared to other activities. The children were able to correctly match the fruit images and thicken the lines according to the available patterns, ranging from straight lines, waves, zigzags, to more complex patterns. The children's enthusiasm in completing these two activities was very visible because the activities directly involved their hands, so it felt

like play for them. Throughout the learning activities from beginning to end, the children were also able to answer every question asked by the teacher well and continued to show joy and comfort throughout the learning process.

This was also reinforced by the statement of the class teacher of group A in an interview: "In my opinion, what the children are most stimulated and like most is the part about matching and thickening the lines, because in that part the children are the ones who do it directly or use it."



Figure 2. Children Get to Know the Contents of the Smart Kids Big Book Media.



Figure 3. Children's Activities Using the Smart Children's Big Book Media

Interview Results with Teachers

Based on the results of interviews with class teachers of group A, it was stated that the Smart Kids Big Book media is a very good and creative media because it contains various basic cognitive introduction materials such as the introduction of numbers, colors, letters, and other materials that are very much needed by children aged 4-5 years. He also said that this media is very suitable for the cognitive learning needs of group A children, because at that age children are still learning through play so that interesting and colorful media really helps the learning process. This is in line with the opinion of experts who state that the Big Book media is a large book with attractive illustrations specifically designed for early childhood learning to increase children's interest and understanding in learning. He also said that children are very happy and enthusiastic when learning using the Smart Kids Big Book media because of its colorful and attractive appearance.

This is reinforced by the direct statement of the class teacher of group A during the interview, "This media is very good, children can recognize colors, shapes, letters, numbers, and this is already included in children's learning. This media is appropriate for the age of children in Group A, because children in Group A are not yet too focused on learning, so they are still in the period of playing while learning. And the children really like and enjoy this media."

The class teacher of group A also added that the children's favorite activities were matching pictures and thickening lines because both activities directly involved the children and felt like playing for them. He also emphasized that this media is very suitable for group A children who are still in the stage of learning while playing so that learning feels fun and does not burden the children. He also gave suggestions that in the future the Smart Kids Big Book media can be expanded and added more materials that can further stimulate children's cognitive abilities. This suggestion is very valuable input for researchers to continue to

develop and refine the Smart Kids Big Book media to be more complete and useful for early childhood learning, especially group A.

Discussion

The findings show that the Smart Kids Big Book successfully attracted children's attention and encouraged active participation during learning activities. The children demonstrated high enthusiasm, focused attention, and willingness to respond when the media was introduced. This finding is consistent with Hidi and Renninger's (2006) Four-Phase Model of Interest Development, which explains that interest can initially emerge from external stimuli and develop through sustained engagement with meaningful activities. The colorful illustrations, large format, and familiar objects presented in the Smart Kids Big Book provided visual stimuli that helped attract children's attention and maintain their involvement in learning. This finding is also consistent with the principles of early childhood education, in which learning experiences should be appropriate to children's developmental characteristics and encourage active participation. In this context, the Smart Kids Big Book did not function merely as a visual aid but also as a stimulus that encouraged children to observe, respond, and interact with learning content. The teacher's interview further supported this finding, as the teacher reported that children enjoyed using the media because its colorful and attractive presentation made learning feel like playing.

The findings also indicate that the Smart Kids Big Book supported children's cognitive development through concrete and meaningful learning experiences. Children were able to recognize letters, numbers, colors, and geometric shapes, while also associating letters with animal pictures and colors with familiar objects. In number activities, children could identify numbers from 1 to 20 and practice writing them by following the provided patterns. These findings support Piaget's theory of cognitive development, particularly the characteristics of children in the preoperational stage, who learn more effectively through concrete objects, visual representations, and direct experiences (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). The results are also consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective, which emphasizes the importance of interaction and guidance in children's learning. During the activities, the teacher and researcher guided children by introducing unfamiliar geometric shapes and encouraging them to repeat the names. Such interaction allowed children to gradually develop their understanding through supported learning experiences. Therefore, the Smart Kids Big Book provided opportunities for children to construct and reinforce cognitive concepts through seeing, naming, repeating, matching, and practicing.

The strongest engagement was observed in the picture-matching and line-thickening activities, which the children perceived as enjoyable because they involved direct physical participation. This finding supports the view that play-based and hands-on activities are important components of early childhood learning because they allow children to learn while actively manipulating and exploring materials. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2020), developmentally appropriate learning experiences should provide children with opportunities to engage actively, interact with materials, and learn through play. The findings also suggest that cognitive learning can be integrated with fine-motor activities, as demonstrated when children matched fruit pictures and followed different line patterns. This combination made the learning process less formal and more enjoyable, which was also confirmed by the teacher's statement that these activities were the children's favorite. Thus, the findings extend previous perspectives on Big Book media by showing that its effectiveness for early childhood learning is not only related to its size and attractive illustrations but also to its ability to combine visual representation, repetition, teacher guidance, and hands-on activities. However, the teacher's recommendation to add more cognitive activities indicates that future development of the Smart Kids Big Book should provide greater content variation while maintaining its play-based and interactive characteristics.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal Kindergarten, the use of Smart Kids Big Book media was found to effectively stimulate the cognitive abilities of eight Group A children aged 4–5 years through enjoyable play-based learning activities. The media supported children in recognizing letters, numbers, colors, and geometric shapes, as well as matching pictures and thickening pattern lines. The class teacher also gave a positive assessment, stating that the media was appropriate for the characteristics of early childhood learning, which emphasizes play, interaction, and concrete experiences. The findings theoretically support Piaget's view that children in the pre-operational stage learn effectively through concrete objects, visual representations, and direct experiences. Therefore, Big Book media can provide meaningful stimulation across multiple cognitive aspects. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for early childhood teachers and school administrators in selecting or developing interactive Big Book-based learning media. Future researchers are encouraged to examine its effectiveness with larger samples and different age groups.

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