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Alphabet Letter Recognition Through Letter Pocket Media in Early Childhood

Hasmiwati & Nova Yenti
Institut Ilmu Al-Quran Jakarta, Indonesia
hasmiwati27@gmail.com; yentinova68@gmail.com

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Abstract

Although early childhood literacy has received increasing scholarly attention, research examining the use of concrete and play-based media to support alphabet letter recognition in natural classroom settings remains limited. This study aims to analyze the implementation of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media in early childhood education, examine children's responses to its use, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its implementation. A qualitative descriptive design was employed involving 15 group B children aged 5–6 years and one classroom teacher at PAUD/TK Aisyiyah 6 Sulit Air, Solok Regency, West Sumatra, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive model comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, with validity ensured through source and technique triangulation. The findings show that alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media was implemented systematically through planning, play-based activities, and evaluation. During the learning process, children actively took letter cards from the pocket, identified letter names and sounds, and matched them with relevant pictures. The use of letter pocket media also increased children's enthusiasm, attention, confidence, and

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active participation. This study concludes that letter pocket media provides an effective and developmentally appropriate approach to supporting early literacy learning by offering concrete, manipulative, and interactive experiences aligned with young children's characteristics. These findings contribute to the strengthening of early literacy practices and imply that teachers and parents should provide consistent literacy stimulation through enjoyable and meaningful learning activities.

Keywords: Alphabet Letter Recognition; Early Childhood Education; Early Literacy; Letter Pocket Media; Play-Based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is one of the forms of preschool education within the formal education pathway, as regulated in Government Regulation No. 27 of 1990 (Sum et al., 2018; Wahyuni, 2021; Yang & Rao, 2023, 2023). As a preschool educational institution, early childhood education has the main responsibility of preparing children by introducing various forms of knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, skills, and intellectual abilities so that they are able to adapt to actual learning activities before entering elementary school. Early Childhood Education plays an important role in building the foundation of children's development, including cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Cedeño-Roldán & Reyes-Meza, 2022; Rojo-Ramos et al., 2022).

One of the basic abilities that needs to be developed during early childhood is early literacy, particularly alphabet letter recognition as an initial step toward reading and writing skills. The ability to recognize letters becomes a fundamental basis for children to understand written language symbols used in everyday life. Letter recognition refers to the ability to identify written letter symbols as part of the alphabet (Bahtiar et al., 2025). This ability is essential because children's mastery of letter symbols can influence their later language and literacy development.

However, recognizing alphabet letters is not an easy task for young children. Several letters have similar shapes, which often makes them difficult to distinguish. In practice, many young children still experience difficulties in recognizing alphabet letters because learning activities are often monotonous and less aligned with their developmental

characteristics. Learning that relies mainly on teacher explanation can make children easily bored and less motivated to participate in early literacy activities.

According to Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, young children are in the preoperational stage, which occurs at approximately 2–7 years of age. At this stage, children begin to develop symbolic thinking, but their understanding remains concrete and egocentric, so they are not yet able to perform abstract logical operations. Therefore, learning activities for early childhood should be designed through play, exploration, and direct interaction with concrete objects in order to align with children's cognitive developmental characteristics (Cankaya et al., 2023; Kamal & Gabr, 2024; Nilsson et al., 2018). Experiential learning is considered more effective in stimulating children's cognitive development than abstract and teacher-centered instruction.

One learning medium that can be used to introduce letters in an enjoyable way is letter pocket media. This medium consists of small pockets containing letter cards made of flannel or thick paper, which children can take, match, and play with. Through activities using letter pockets, children do not only see the shape of letters, but also touch, pronounce, and use them in play-based learning. These activities encourage children to learn actively, creatively, and meaningfully.

Previous studies have shown that simple yet interactive media can improve children's letter recognition ability and learning interest. Handayani & Nurhafizah (2019) found that the use of a magic pocket game improved letter recognition ability among group B children at TK Negeri Pembina Jombang. Similarly, Hayati et al. (2023) revealed that smart pocket media could motivate children to recognize letters more quickly. These findings indicate that manipulative and visually engaging media can help children understand letter concepts more effectively.

Although several studies have emphasized the importance of letter recognition as a fundamental foundation for early childhood literacy development, empirical findings still show significant variation in children's achievement of this competence across different educational contexts and socio-economic backgrounds. Previous research has largely focused on explicit learning strategies to improve letter recognition, such as phonics and multimodal methods. However, these studies have often been limited to short-term outcome evaluation and have not comprehensively considered family environmental factors, linguistic and cultural differences, and children's individual cognitive readiness.

In addition, existing studies tend to use homogeneous samples and do not sufficiently represent broader populations, particularly in areas with limited educational access or high linguistic heterogeneity. This condition indicates a significant research gap in understanding how contextual variables and the interaction between learning strategies and children's characteristics influence sustainable letter recognition ability. Therefore, educators need to develop and utilize learning media that are appropriate to the needs and developmental characteristics of young children.

Based on this issue, letter pocket media is considered relevant because it provides children with concrete, enjoyable, and participatory learning experiences in recognizing alphabet letters. Therefore, this study focuses on "Alphabet Letter Recognition through Letter Pocket Media in Early Childhood." Specifically, this study aims to analyze the implementation process of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media in early childhood, examine children's responses to the use of letter pocket media in letter recognition activities, and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of letter recognition through letter pocket media.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was selected because the study aimed to describe in depth the process of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media in early childhood within the natural context of classroom learning. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring and understanding phenomena based on participants' experiences, behaviors, and interactions in natural settings (Takona, 2024). A descriptive qualitative design also enables researchers to understand learning practices comprehensively without manipulating variables and to emphasize the meanings that emerge from social interaction during the learning process (Moleong, 2017). The participants of this study were 15 group B children aged 5–6 years at PAUD/TK Aisyiyah 6 Sulit Air, Solok Regency, West Sumatra, and one classroom teacher as the main informant. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because they were at the stage of early literacy development and were involved in learning activities using letter pocket media. Purposive sampling is appropriate when participants are selected based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives (D. Sugiyono, 2019).

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly to examine children's activities, responses, participation, and engagement during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the classroom teacher to obtain information about lesson planning, implementation, evaluation, and challenges in using letter pocket media. Documentation, including lesson plans, photographs of learning activities, and children's work, was used as supporting data to strengthen the findings. The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model of Miles et al. (2014), which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation was conducted by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives, while data display was presented in descriptive narratives. Conclusion drawing was carried out continuously by verifying findings from observation, interviews, and documentation. The validity of the data was maintained through source and technique triangulation to improve the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings (P. Sugiyono, 2015).

RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media in group B at PAUD/TK Aisyiyah 6 Sulit Air was implemented through a structured learning process. The results are presented based on the three main focuses of the study: the implementation process of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media, children's responses to the use of the media, and the supporting and inhibiting factors found during the implementation of the learning activities.

1. Implementation of Alphabet Letter Recognition through Letter Pocket Media

The implementation of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media was carried out through three main stages: planning, implementation, and reflection. In the planning stage, the teacher prepared the learning activities by designing the lesson plan and selecting appropriate media for early childhood learning. The teacher prepared letter cards and placed them inside letter pockets so that children could take, observe, pronounce, and match the letters with relevant pictures or objects. This preparation showed that the learning activity was designed to be concrete, visual, and interactive.

During the implementation stage, the teacher began the activity by introducing the letter pocket media to the children. The children were invited to observe the pockets and

the letter cards placed inside them. After that, each child took turns picking a letter card from the pocket. The child was then asked to mention the name of the letter, pronounce its sound, and match it with a picture or object that had the same initial letter. This activity created a learning process that involved visual, verbal, and motor activities at the same time.

The use of letter pocket media encouraged children to participate actively in the learning process. Children did not only listen to the teacher's explanation, but also interacted directly with the learning media. They touched the letter cards, observed the shape of the letters, pronounced the letters, and connected them with familiar objects. This process made the learning activity more concrete and meaningful because children could connect abstract letter symbols with objects they recognized in their daily lives.

The classroom observation also showed that the activity was conducted in a play-based learning atmosphere. The teacher gave instructions in a simple and encouraging way, while the children participated according to their turn. Some children were able to mention the letters independently, while others still needed guidance from the teacher. When children experienced difficulty, the teacher provided assistance by repeating the letter sound, giving clues, or asking the child to observe the shape of the letter again.

The implementation process can be seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2. These figures show children's activities during the letter recognition process using letter pocket media. The children were involved in taking letter cards, identifying the letters, and participating in the learning activity with teacher guidance.

Figure 1. The Process of Letter Recognition Using Letter Pocket Media

Figure 2. Children's Involvement in Letter Recognition Activities

Based on the observation, the use of letter pocket media helped create a learning situation that was more participatory. Children were encouraged to take part in the activity, respond to the teacher's questions, and interact with their peers. The media also helped the teacher explain letters in a more concrete way. As a result, the learning activity was not limited to memorizing letters, but also involved exploration, recognition, pronunciation, and matching activities.

The findings related to the implementation process are summarized in Table 1

Table 1. Implementation of Alphabet Letter Recognition through Letter Pocket Media

Stage	Learning Activity	Empirical Finding
Planning	The teacher prepared lesson plans, letter cards, and letter pocket media.	The learning activity was designed to be concrete, visual, and suitable for early childhood learning.
Implementation	Children took letter cards from the pocket, mentioned the letters, pronounced their sounds, and matched them with pictures or objects.	Children were actively involved in visual, verbal, and motor activities.
Teacher guidance	The teacher provided instructions, examples, and assistance when children experienced difficulty.	Teacher support helped children recognize letters more confidently.
Reflection and evaluation	The teacher observed children's responses and ability to recognize letters during the activity.	The teacher identified children who were able to recognize letters independently and those who still needed guidance.

2. Children's Responses to the Use of Letter Pocket Media

The results of the study showed that most children gave positive responses to the use of letter pocket media. The children appeared enthusiastic when the teacher introduced the

media and explained the learning activity. Their enthusiasm was seen from their willingness to come forward, take the letter cards, and mention the letters in front of their friends. Children who were initially passive became more interested when they were given the opportunity to participate directly in the activity.

Children's attention also increased during the learning process. The use of colorful and concrete letter cards helped attract children's interest. Compared with a learning activity that only relies on verbal explanation, letter pocket media provided children with an object that they could see, touch, and use. This condition made children more focused on the learning process because they were involved directly in manipulating the media.

The children also showed greater confidence in mentioning the names and sounds of letters. Some children were able to identify the letters correctly after taking the cards from the pocket. Other children still needed teacher guidance, but they were willing to try and repeat the letter sounds. This finding indicates that the learning activity encouraged children to practice letter recognition in a supportive atmosphere.

In addition to cognitive responses, the activity also encouraged social interaction among children. During the activity, children observed their friends, listened to their answers, and sometimes helped each other. Some children gave responses when their friends mentioned a letter, while others waited for their turn with interest. This interaction showed that the use of letter pocket media did not only support individual learning, but also created opportunities for children to communicate and interact socially.

Children's responses can be seen in Figure 3 and Figure 4. These figures show children's enthusiasm and active participation during the learning process using letter pocket media.

Figure 3. Children's Enthusiasm during Letter Pocket Activities

Figure 4. Children's Active Participation in Letter Recognition

The findings indicate that letter pocket media created a more enjoyable learning atmosphere. Children were not positioned merely as listeners, but as active participants in the learning process. They learned through direct experience, exploration, and interaction with learning objects. This condition supported children's early literacy development because they were able to recognize letters through activities that were concrete, interactive, and enjoyable. The findings related to children's responses are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Children's Responses to the Use of Letter Pocket Media

Aspect of Response	Observed Indicator	Research Finding
Enthusiasm	Children showed interest when the teacher introduced the letter pocket media.	Most children were eager to participate and take letter cards from the pocket.
Attention	Children focused on the letter cards and teacher instructions.	The concrete and visual media helped children maintain attention during the activity.
Confidence	Children tried to mention the name and sound of letters.	Several children became more confident in recognizing and pronouncing letters.
Participation	Children took turns and joined the activity directly.	The learning process became more active and participatory.
Social interaction	Children observed, responded to, and supported their peers.	The activity encouraged peer interaction and classroom communication.

3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Letter Pocket Media

The study also found several supporting factors in the implementation of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media. The first supporting factor was teacher creativity in designing play-based learning activities. The teacher was able to transform

letter recognition into an enjoyable activity by using letter pockets and letter cards. This creativity made the learning process more interesting and prevented children from feeling pressured during the activity.

The second supporting factor was the use of attractive and concrete learning media. Letter pocket media helped children recognize letters through direct experience. Since young children tend to learn more easily through objects that can be seen and touched, the media supported their understanding of abstract symbols such as letters. The use of letter cards and pictures also helped children connect letters with meaningful objects.

The third supporting factor was a conducive classroom atmosphere. The classroom environment allowed children to participate in the learning activity comfortably. The teacher gave children opportunities to take turns, encouraged them to answer, and provided assistance when needed. This positive classroom situation helped children become more willing to try, even when they were not fully confident in recognizing letters.

However, the implementation of letter pocket media also faced several inhibiting factors. One of the main inhibiting factors was the difference in children's initial ability to recognize letters. Some children were already familiar with several letters, while others still had difficulty distinguishing similar letter shapes. This difference made the teacher need to provide different levels of guidance during the learning process.

Another inhibiting factor was the variation in literacy stimulation in the family environment. Children who received more exposure to letters at home tended to recognize letters more easily during classroom activities. In contrast, children who had limited literacy stimulation at home needed more support and repetition. This finding shows that early literacy development is not only influenced by learning activities at school, but also by the support and stimulation children receive in their family environment.

The supporting and inhibiting factors found in this study are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Use of Letter Pocket Media

Category	Factor	Description
Supporting factor	Teacher creativity	The teacher designed letter recognition activities in the form of play-based learning.
Supporting factor	Attractive learning media	Letter pocket media attracted children's attention and supported concrete learning.
Supporting factor	Conducive classroom atmosphere	Children felt comfortable, supported, and encouraged to participate.
Inhibiting	Differences in children's	Some children recognized letters more easily, while

Category	Factor	Description
factor	initial ability	others still needed repeated guidance.
Inhibiting factor	Variation in family literacy stimulation	Children with more literacy exposure at home showed faster development in recognizing letters.

Overall, the results show that the use of letter pocket media supported alphabet letter recognition in early childhood by providing concrete, enjoyable, and participatory learning experiences. The media helped children recognize letters through seeing, touching, pronouncing, and matching activities. Children's responses were generally positive, as shown by their enthusiasm, attention, confidence, and active participation. Nevertheless, the success of the learning process was influenced by teacher creativity, the availability of suitable media, classroom conditions, children's initial abilities, and literacy stimulation from the family environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media provides a concrete, interactive, and enjoyable learning experience for early childhood children. The implementation process was carried out through planning, play-based learning activities, and reflection. This shows that letter recognition is not only introduced through verbal explanation, but also through direct interaction with learning media. Children were given the opportunity to take letter cards from the pocket, mention the name and sound of the letters, and match them with relevant pictures or objects. This activity helped children understand alphabet symbols in a more meaningful way because the learning process involved visual, verbal, and motor experiences.

The implementation of letter pocket media is closely related to the developmental characteristics of children aged 5–6 years. At this age, children still need concrete objects to understand abstract concepts, including letter symbols. The findings support Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which explains that children in the preoperational stage learn more effectively through concrete objects, symbolic representation, and direct experience (Piaget, 1952). Letter pocket media functions as a manipulative learning tool that enables children to observe, touch, pronounce, and connect letters with familiar objects. Therefore, the use of this media is appropriate for early childhood learning because it transforms abstract letter symbols into concrete and accessible learning experiences.

Children's positive responses to the use of letter pocket media show that learning activities designed through play can increase children's enthusiasm, attention, and confidence. The children appeared more active when they were directly involved in taking letter cards and mentioning the letters in front of their peers. This finding is consistent with the principle of developmentally appropriate practice, which emphasizes that early childhood learning should be active, meaningful, enjoyable, and suitable for children's developmental stages (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). The positive responses also indicate that children are more motivated when learning activities provide opportunities for exploration and participation, rather than merely listening to teacher explanations.

The findings also align with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and teacher support in children's cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, the teacher provided assistance when children experienced difficulties in recognizing or pronouncing letters. This support can be understood as scaffolding, in which the teacher helps children achieve a higher level of understanding through guidance, repetition, and encouragement. Peer interaction also appeared during the activity, as children observed and responded to their friends' answers. Thus, the use of letter pocket media not only supported individual letter recognition, but also encouraged social communication and collaborative learning in the classroom.

These findings are consistent with previous studies showing that interactive and manipulative media can improve children's early literacy abilities. (Handayani & Nurhafizah, 2019) found that magic pocket games improved letter recognition ability among kindergarten children. Similarly, (Hayati et al., 2023) showed that smart pocket media could increase children's motivation in recognizing letters. The present study strengthens these findings by showing that letter pocket media is not only useful for helping children recognize letters, but also for increasing children's participation, confidence, and classroom interaction. This means that the effectiveness of letter pocket media is not limited to cognitive outcomes, but also includes affective and social aspects of learning.

The results also support early literacy research stating that children's mastery of letter names and letter sounds is an important predictor of later reading ability. Piasta & Wagner (2010) explain that alphabet knowledge in early childhood contributes significantly to reading development in elementary school. Similarly, Justice & Ezell (2004) emphasize

that activities involving direct interaction with print can strengthen children's print awareness and letter knowledge. In this study, children's direct manipulation of letter cards provided them with opportunities to recognize letter shapes, pronounce letter sounds, and associate letters with meaningful objects. This process contributed to the development of children's early literacy foundation.

The supporting factors found in this study show that the success of letter recognition activities depends on teacher creativity, attractive learning media, and a conducive classroom atmosphere. Teacher creativity plays an important role because the teacher must be able to design learning activities that are enjoyable and appropriate for children's developmental needs. The use of concrete and visually attractive media helped children focus on the activity and understand the learning material more easily. A supportive classroom atmosphere also encouraged children to participate without fear of making mistakes. These findings imply that early literacy learning requires not only appropriate media, but also effective teacher facilitation and positive classroom management.

However, the study also found inhibiting factors, particularly differences in children's initial letter recognition abilities and variations in literacy stimulation in the family environment. Some children were able to recognize letters more quickly because they had already received literacy stimulation at home, while others required more repetition and teacher guidance. This finding indicates that children's early literacy development is influenced by both school-based learning and family support. Therefore, collaboration between teachers and parents is needed to strengthen children's literacy experiences. Parents can support children by introducing letters through simple activities at home, such as reading picture books, naming objects around the house, or playing letter-based games.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of early childhood literacy learning by reinforcing the importance of concrete, manipulative, and play-based media in introducing alphabet letters. The findings show that letter pocket media can bridge children's need for concrete experiences with the goal of developing symbolic understanding. Practically, this study provides an alternative learning strategy for early childhood teachers, especially in introducing alphabet letters in a more engaging and meaningful way. Letter pocket media can be made from simple and accessible materials,

making it suitable for use in various early childhood education settings, including schools with limited learning resources.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the study involved a limited number of participants, namely 15 children and one classroom teacher in one early childhood education institution. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all early childhood education contexts. Second, the study used a qualitative descriptive approach, so it did not measure the statistical effectiveness of letter pocket media on children's letter recognition ability. Third, the findings were based on observation, interviews, and documentation within a specific classroom context, so differences in teacher competence, school environment, and family literacy support may influence the results. Future research may use experimental or mixed-method designs with larger samples to measure the effectiveness of letter pocket media more comprehensively and to compare it with other early literacy learning media.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the implementation of alphabet letter recognition through letter pocket media among group B children aged 5–6 years at PAUD/TK Aisyiyah 6 Sulit Air was conducted systematically and in accordance with the principles of early childhood learning. The learning process was carried out through integrated stages of planning, play-based implementation, and evaluation. Letter pocket media provided children with concrete, participatory, and enjoyable learning experiences, enabling them to recognize alphabet symbols gradually and meaningfully. Children's responses to the use of letter pocket media were positive, as reflected in their enthusiasm, increased attention, confidence in mentioning letters, and active involvement during the learning process. The manipulative and interactive characteristics of the media encouraged children to learn through direct exploration, making the internalization of letter symbols more effective.

This study contributes to the development of early childhood literacy learning by emphasizing the importance of concrete and play-based media in supporting alphabet recognition. Practically, letter pocket media can be used as an alternative strategy for teachers to create more engaging and developmentally appropriate literacy activities. The success of its implementation is supported by teacher creativity, attractive media, and a

conducive classroom atmosphere, while the inhibiting factors include differences in children's initial abilities and variations in literacy stimulation in the family environment. Therefore, teachers and parents need to collaborate in providing consistent literacy stimulation both at school and at home. Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants, different early childhood education settings, and quantitative or mixed-method designs to further examine the effectiveness of letter pocket media in improving children's early literacy skills.

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