



Performance Tasks as a Strategy to Enhance Learning Motivation among Kindergarten Children

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to examine the improvement of children's learning motivation through the implementation of performance task activities in Group B at TK Bunga Bangsa. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research involved 22 children (11 boys and 11 girls). Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that prior to the intervention, children's learning motivation was relatively low, with only 9 children (40.9%) demonstrating consistent focus and enthusiasm. After the implementation of various performance tasks—such as reciting short prayers, role-playing with zoo themes, explaining the chicken life cycle, and presenting artwork using banana midrib stamping techniques—children's motivation increased significantly. A total of 17 children (77.3%) showed higher levels of focus, confidence, and active participation. These results suggest that performance task activities provide meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences that effectively enhance early childhood learning motivation. The study implies that performance tasks can serve as an alternative pedagogical strategy to support more engaging and successful early childhood education.

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education plays a critical role in shaping children's lifelong learning attitudes, social behavior, and academic readiness, making research in this area highly significant for society at large (Rumbidzai et al., 2023; Solang et al., 2024). A strong foundation during early years influences children's character formation, emotional regulation, and intrinsic motivation, which are essential for their future educational success (Ginting, 2024; Kalogeratos, 2023; Catalano et al., 2023). According to the Indonesian National Education System

Law No. 20 of 2003, early childhood education serves as a structured developmental effort aimed at providing continuous stimulation from birth to six years old to support children's holistic growth. This legal framework emphasizes the national commitment to ensuring that children receive optimal preparation before entering formal schooling. Contemporary educational challenges, such as declining attention span, limited engagement, and reduced learning motivation among young children, highlight the need for innovative and meaningful learning strategies (Rathnasekara et al., 2025). Therefore, research on learning motivation in early childhood is crucial because motivated children tend to demonstrate better persistence, curiosity, and achievement. By understanding effective approaches to stimulate motivation, educators and policymakers can improve the quality of early childhood education. Ultimately, strengthening children's learning motivation contributes to building a more competent, confident, and resilient future generation.

Despite the recognized importance of motivation in early learning, many early childhood education settings continue to struggle with low student engagement and limited intrinsic motivation (Clanton Harpine, 2024; Kotera, 2023). Young children often experience difficulties maintaining focus, participating actively, and completing tasks, especially when instructional practices do not align with their developmental needs (Robertset al., 2023). According to Sardiman (2012), learning motivation represents the internal energy that drives individuals to participate in learning activities and strive toward educational goals. When this motivation is weak, children tend to show low enthusiasm, reduced persistence, and minimal involvement in classroom tasks. Furthermore, many early childhood classrooms still rely on traditional, teacher-centered approaches that prioritize routine and passive listening rather than active, experiential learning. These conventional methods may fail to stimulate curiosity or provide meaningful opportunities for self-expression, which are critical for fostering learning motivation in young children. As a result, there is an urgent need to address the underlying issues contributing to children's low motivation and identify instructional methods that better support their developmental characteristics. This societal problem forms the foundation for exploring alternative pedagogical strategies that effectively enhance learning motivation in early childhood education.

Field observations conducted in Group B of TK Bunga Bangsa Gresik revealed several indicators of low learning motivation among 22 children aged 5–6 years. Many children appeared easily distracted, showed minimal enthusiasm during lessons, and frequently abandoned tasks before completion. Some children exhibited reluctance to present their work or participate in group activities, indicating low confidence and limited willingness to engage in the

learning process. Additionally, classroom activities were predominantly classical in nature, with limited opportunities for hands-on exploration or performance-based expression. These conditions hindered the development of children's independence, creativity, and active participation. Teachers reported challenges in maintaining children's attention and managing a lively classroom environment, especially when instructional methods did not provide adequate stimulation. Consequently, children's learning outcomes were not optimal because their level of motivation was insufficient to support consistent engagement. This phenomenon illustrates the gap between children's developmental characteristics—who naturally enjoy exploration and direct experiences—and the instructional strategies applied in daily teaching. The mismatch between teaching methods and children's needs underscores the necessity of implementing a learning approach that allows children to demonstrate their abilities, express creativity, and build confidence through authentic learning experiences.

Previous studies on early childhood learning motivation have highlighted the importance of active, meaningful learning experiences in fostering children's engagement (Covelli, 2024; Revilla Malik, 2023; Lestari et al., 2023). Researchers have shown that performance-based learning, project activities, and role-playing can increase children's enthusiasm, self-confidence, and participation because these activities allow children to express ideas and demonstrate abilities directly (Prabowo et al., 2023; Wiratama et al., 2024, Giménez, 2024). Several studies also indicate that experiential learning supports children's cognitive, social-emotional, and linguistic development more effectively than passive instructional models. However, many existing studies primarily focus on general project-based learning or thematic activities without specifically emphasizing performance tasks as a structured approach to boost motivation. While performance tasks have been widely discussed in primary and secondary education, research addressing their implementation in early childhood settings remains limited. This lack of focused research indicates the need for further exploration on how performance tasks operate within the unique developmental context of young learners. Therefore, synthesizing previous findings suggests that although experiential learning interventions tend to increase motivation, more structured and age-appropriate performance task models tailored for early childhood require deeper investigation.

Another gap observed in existing literature is the limited examination of performance tasks in relation to children's emotional development, particularly confidence and willingness to perform in front of peers. Many studies mainly evaluate cognitive outcomes, overlooking the motivational and affective domains essential for successful early learning. Furthermore, research often fails

to document how performance tasks are implemented step-by-step in early childhood classrooms, resulting in a lack of practical models for teachers. Some studies focus on school-aged children, making their findings less applicable to early childhood education where developmental characteristics differ significantly. Given these limitations, more comprehensive research is needed to investigate how performance tasks can be adapted to young learners through simple, meaningful activities such as role-playing, demonstrations, and creative presentations. These gaps highlight the importance of developing a structured, context-based study that integrates performance tasks within early childhood pedagogy. Addressing these gaps will contribute to a more complete understanding of how performance tasks can foster motivation, confidence, and engagement, thereby strengthening theoretical and practical insights in early childhood educational research.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on implementing performance task activities specifically designed for early childhood learners and evaluating their direct impact on learning motivation. Unlike previous studies that explored general project-based learning, this research operationalizes concrete performance tasks such as reciting short prayers, role-playing thematic scenarios, explaining simple scientific processes, and presenting artwork using child-friendly materials. These activities are structured to align with the developmental needs of 5–6-year-old children, filling the gap in literature that lacks practical guidance for performance-based assessment in early childhood settings. This study also integrates observational data, teacher interviews, and documentation analysis to capture a holistic understanding of children's motivational changes before and after the intervention. By grounding the intervention in national educational regulations and established motivational theory (Sardiman, 2012), the research offers both theoretical reinforcement and methodological innovation. The findings of this study provide a valuable contribution by demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness of performance tasks as a pedagogical model uniquely suited for early childhood education, particularly in Indonesian kindergarten contexts.

Based on the identified issues, literature gaps, and field observations, this study addresses the research problem concerning how performance task activities influence learning motivation among kindergarten children. The central argument proposes that performance tasks provide meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences that align with children's natural preferences for exploration and active participation. By allowing children to demonstrate abilities through concrete actions, performance tasks can strengthen their confidence, persistence, and enthusiasm for learning. This research responds to three key questions: (1) What is the level of learning motivation before the

implementation of performance tasks? (2) How are performance tasks applied within classroom activities? and (3) What impact do these tasks have on children's learning motivation? The study argues that incorporating performance tasks is an effective strategy for improving children's behavioral engagement, emotional readiness, and willingness to participate. The expected contribution of this research is to provide an evidence-based model for early childhood educators, enrich theoretical discussion on performance-based learning, and support schools in adopting more creative and meaningful instructional practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore the implementation of performance task activities and their influence on children's learning motivation in a natural classroom setting. A case study approach was selected because it allows an in-depth investigation of real-life phenomena, particularly children's behavioral responses and classroom interactions that cannot be separated from their learning environment. The design is appropriate for early childhood education research, which prioritizes understanding children's experiences, developmental behaviors, and spontaneous learning actions holistically. The study was conducted at TK Bunga Bangsa Gresik during the first semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. This school was chosen because it presents diverse learner characteristics and had reported issues related to low learning motivation, making it a relevant and strategic site for examining the effectiveness of performance task activities.

Data were collected from 22 children in Group B, consisting of 11 boys and 11 girls, through three techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to record children's engagement, focus, confidence, and persistence before and after the implementation of performance tasks. Interviews were conducted with classroom teachers to gather detailed insights regarding instructional practices and perceived changes in children's motivation. Documentation included photographs of learning activities, samples of children's artwork, teacher journals, and classroom notes that supported the observational findings. These multiple sources of data enabled the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the motivational shifts occurring throughout the intervention.

Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing relevant information related to children's motivational indicators. The data display phase consisted of presenting the findings in descriptive narrative form to facilitate

interpretation. Verification was carried out by reviewing the emerging patterns, comparing evidence across data sources, and drawing conclusions based on the consistency of the findings. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, the researcher employed triangulation of techniques (observation, interview, documentation), extended engagement in the field, and member checking with teachers to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. These steps strengthened the credibility and dependability of the results, ensuring that the findings reflect the authentic learning experiences of the children.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Initial Condition of Children's Learning Motivation

The initial observations revealed that the learning motivation of children in Group B at TK Bunga Bangsa was generally low. Among 22 children, only 9 (40.9%) demonstrated consistent focus, enthusiasm, and active engagement during learning activities, while 13 children (59.1%) showed passive participation, low attention span, and limited willingness to interact in class. This condition reflects a clear imbalance in classroom engagement and indicates that many children still require stronger external stimuli to maintain their interest in learning. The predominance of disengagement suggested that existing learning strategies had not yet met the developmental needs of the group.

Children who displayed higher motivation typically exhibited behaviors such as asking questions, responding to teachers' prompts, and participating enthusiastically in activities. In contrast, those with lower motivation tended to become easily distracted, avoided participating in discussions, and preferred solitary play. These behavioral differences highlight the varying levels of self-regulation, confidence, and task persistence among the children. The data show that motivation at this age is highly influenced by learning experiences that provide recognition, movement, and opportunities for expression.

The findings indicate the need for instructional strategies that stimulate children both cognitively and emotionally. Since early childhood learners thrive in environments that are interactive, play-based, and expressive, the traditional classroom approach used previously may not have adequately captured their attention. The children's passive behavior is consistent with existing studies showing that young learners often disengage when learning lacks concrete experiences or opportunities for direct involvement. Thus, the initial condition underscores a mismatch between instructional methods and children's learning preferences.

Overall, the baseline data justified the necessity to introduce a more dynamic and performance-based instructional strategy. The low motivation level served as a critical starting point for implementing performance tasks that emphasize active participation and self-expression. The contrast between

motivated and unmotivated children provided a clear benchmark for evaluating subsequent improvements. Consequently, the initial results established a strong rationale for exploring performance tasks as a potential solution to enhance learning motivation in early childhood settings.

Implementation of Performance Task Activities

Performance task activities were implemented over four sessions, each designed to align with the classroom theme and developmental domains. The activities were structured to provide children with opportunities to demonstrate skills, perform tasks independently, and express themselves in front of peers. Activities included reciting short prayers, role-playing zoo scenarios, explaining the chicken life cycle, and presenting artwork created using banana-midrib stamping techniques. These varied formats allowed children to engage in linguistic, artistic, and social-emotional experiences that are essential for early development.

During the prayer-recitation session, children practiced memorization and oral expression, which required confidence and focus. The role-play activity invited children to adopt zoo-related characters, encouraging imaginative thinking, collaboration, and verbal communication. Meanwhile, explaining the chicken life cycle offered cognitive and linguistic engagement as children narrated sequences of events. The stamping-art activity allowed children to work creatively using natural materials, tapping into sensory learning and fine motor skills. Together, these tasks represented a balanced integration of performance-based learning experiences.

The teacher played a crucial role as facilitator by modeling tasks, providing guidance, and offering positive reinforcement throughout the activities. Encouragement in the form of praise, applause, and reward stickers helped reinforce children's confidence and fostered a sense of accomplishment. The consistent use of supportive feedback aligns with motivational theories stating that recognition is a key factor in strengthening children's internal drive to engage in learning activities. The teacher's facilitative role ensured that each child felt supported and valued during the process.

The implementation phase revealed that children responded positively to activities that involved movement, creativity, and opportunities to speak. Their increasing willingness to try new tasks and to perform in front of peers demonstrated a shift in confidence and motivation. Performance tasks successfully created a classroom atmosphere that was more active, joyful, and developmentally appropriate. Overall, the implementation phase laid the groundwork for measurable changes in children's motivation, which were evident in the subsequent observations.

Changes in Learning Motivation After Performance Tasks

The results showed a substantial improvement in children’s learning motivation following the performance task activities. The number of children categorized as focused and enthusiastic increased from 9 children (40.9%) before the intervention to 17 children (77.3%) afterward. Conversely, the proportion of children who showed low motivation decreased from 13 children (59.1%) to only 5 children (22.7%). This shift demonstrates that the intervention successfully addressed the motivational gap observed in the initial condition.

The table below summarizes the change in overall motivation levels:

Learning Motivation Category	Before Performance Tasks	After Performance Tasks
Focused and Enthusiastic	9 children (40.9%)	17 children (77.3%)
Less Focused	13 children (59.1%)	5 children (22.7%)

These figures show that performance tasks contributed to children’s increased engagement and attentiveness. The majority of children who initially struggled with focus showed marked improvement, suggesting that hands-on, expressive activities are more suitable for sustaining attention among early learners.

Additional indicators also showed significant enhancement in children’s motivation:

Observed Aspect	Before Performance Tasks	After Performance Tasks
Willingness to Perform in Front	6 children	18 children
Enthusiasm During Activities	8 children	20 children
Focus and Concentration	±10 minutes	±25 minutes
Independence in Completing Tasks	7 children	17 children

These improvements indicate growth not only in motivation but also in confidence, persistence, and self-regulation. The increase in concentration span from approximately 10 minutes to 25 minutes is particularly noteworthy, reflecting higher cognitive engagement and emotional investment in learning.

The overall change suggests that performance tasks effectively activated children’s intrinsic motivation by enabling them to experience success, express their abilities, and receive recognition. Children began to anticipate learning activities more positively and showed pride in demonstrating their skills. The significant behavioral shifts underscore the potential of performance-based learning as an instructional strategy that aligns with children’s developmental characteristics and psychological needs.

Interview Findings with the Teacher

Interviews with the classroom teacher revealed that performance tasks had a notable positive impact on classroom dynamics and individual children's behaviors. The teacher observed that children who were previously shy or reluctant began initiating participation voluntarily. This behavioral shift suggests that performance tasks helped reduce performance anxiety by normalizing peer demonstrations and offering repeated exposure to public speaking opportunities.

The teacher emphasized that activities such as reciting short prayers or role-playing made learning more joyful and interactive. Children became more eager to take turns performing, demonstrating increased social confidence. According to the teacher, "Even the children who used to hesitate are now coming forward without being asked," indicating a significant change in children's self-efficacy. Joyful learning experiences strengthen emotional readiness, a key factor in early childhood motivation.

The teacher further explained that creative activities like making fish prints using banana midribs improved children's creativity and pride in their work. Positive feedback in the form of applause or praise encouraged children to persevere and repeat tasks. The teacher's observations align with Sardiman (2012), who notes that motivation serves as internal energy that sustains learning activities and directs behavior toward achieving educational goals.

Overall, the interview findings highlight that the teacher perceived performance tasks as highly beneficial for improving motivation, creativity, and confidence. The teacher also noted that the classroom atmosphere became more conducive to learning, with children showing stronger peer interaction and collaboration. These qualitative insights strengthen the quantitative findings and demonstrate the transformative effect of performance tasks on children's motivation and school readiness.

Documentation Findings

Documentation in the form of photographs, videos, children's artwork, and teacher journals supported the observational and interview data. The visual evidence consistently showed children engaging enthusiastically in learning activities. Their facial expressions—smiling, laughing, and showing excitement—reflected genuine enjoyment and emotional engagement. These expressions are key indicators of intrinsic motivation in early childhood.

Photographs of the role-play session demonstrated active cooperation among children. They interacted with peers, negotiated roles, and used props confidently. Such documentation illustrates the social-emotional benefits of

performance tasks, including improved communication skills and teamwork. Similarly, images of children presenting artwork captured their pride and willingness to speak in front of the class.

Teacher notes revealed that children increasingly anticipated performance task sessions. Several entries described moments when children reminded the teacher about upcoming activities or asked when they could present again. This behavioral pattern is consistent with increased motivation and a positive shift in learning attitudes. Documentation also noted fewer incidents of distraction or off-task behavior as the intervention progressed.

Collectively, the documentation reveals a learning environment that became more dynamic, interactive, and joyful. The consistency between documented evidence and observational results strengthens the validity of the findings. The visual and written records demonstrate how performance tasks successfully created meaningful and engaging learning experiences that foster children's motivation and participation.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that performance task activities significantly enhanced children's motivation, aligning with Sardiman's (2012) theory that motivation is an internal force driving engagement and persistence in learning. The structured opportunities to perform allowed children to experience success, thereby increasing their confidence and intrinsic motivation. The improvement in children's willingness to participate and concentration levels suggests that performance tasks meet essential psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and recognition.

Performance-based learning emphasizes active participation, which is especially effective for early childhood education. Hosnan (2014) argues that performance-based instruction enhances students' engagement and strengthens learning outcomes through experiential processes. The increase in children's independence and enthusiasm supports this claim, demonstrating that young learners benefit from tasks that allow them to create, demonstrate, and reflect on their own learning. The intervention bridged the gap between passive learning and hands-on, meaningful experiences.

The study's results also indicate that performance tasks foster essential developmental domains, including language, social-emotional competence, and creativity. Children who were initially hesitant became more confident in presenting ideas, while others developed stronger persistence in completing tasks. This multidimensional impact highlights that motivation is not merely a psychological construct but an interplay of cognitive, emotional, and social factors. Performance tasks effectively mobilized these interconnected aspects.

In conclusion, the integration of performance task activities proved to be an effective strategy for enhancing learning motivation among early childhood learners. The results align with established theories and contribute new empirical evidence supporting performance-based learning in kindergarten contexts. Given the significant improvements in focus, enthusiasm, confidence, and independence, performance tasks should be considered a viable instructional model in early childhood education. The study reinforces the idea that meaningful, engaging, and expressive learning experiences are essential for cultivating motivation in young children.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that performance-task activities meaningfully enhance young children's learning motivation by providing engaging, concrete, and confidence-building learning experiences. Through varied tasks—such as reciting short prayers, role-playing zoo themes, explaining the chicken life cycle, and presenting banana-midrib stamping artwork—children showed marked improvements in focus, enthusiasm, independence, and willingness to perform in front of peers. This highlights an important insight: early childhood motivation develops strongly when learning environments validate children's efforts, provide opportunities for self-expression, and create emotional safety. The study thus offers a key pedagogical lesson that performance-based learning can serve as a powerful tool to nurture intrinsic motivation in early childhood settings.

Scholarly contributions of this study lie in reinforcing theoretical perspectives on motivation (e.g., Sardiman, 2012) and performance-based learning (Hosnan, 2014), while providing empirical evidence within an early childhood education context—an area often underrepresented in qualitative performance-task research. However, this study is limited by its single-site case design, short implementation duration, and small sample size, which may restrict transferability to other preschool settings. Future studies are recommended to conduct longitudinal observations, involve comparative groups, and explore the influence of performance tasks on other developmental domains such as language, socio-emotional skills, and creativity, thereby expanding the scope and depth of research on performance-based learning in early childhood education.

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