

# Enhancing Early Childhood Creativity Through Loose Parts Play Activities Based on Islamic Values

S. Septriany<sup>1</sup>, A. Ahmadi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Institut Studi Islam Muhammadiyah Pacitan, Pacitan, Indonesia.  
Email: [deandara7@gmail.com](mailto:deandara7@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [ahmadi@isimupacitan.ac.id](mailto:ahmadi@isimupacitan.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve early childhood creativity through loose parts play activities based on Islamic values at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan. The research used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design involving 10 children. Data were collected through observation using a creativity assessment sheet covering fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The results showed a significant increase from a pretest mean of 6.8 to a posttest mean of 12.9. The paired sample t-test result ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) indicated a significant effect. Thus, loose parts play based on Islamic values is effective in enhancing early childhood creativity holistically.

**Keywords:** Creativity, Early Childhood, Loose Parts, Islamic Values.

## I. Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) serves as a fundamental foundation in shaping the quality of human resources in the future (Hasanah, 2024). At this stage, children are in a phase often referred to as the golden age, a period of rapid development across cognitive, socio-emotional, language, moral, and creative domains (Uce, 2017). In this context, creativity becomes a crucial aspect that must be nurtured from an early age, as it plays a significant role in developing flexible, innovative, and adaptive thinking skills in response to environmental changes. Creativity is not limited to the ability to produce artistic works but also encompasses problem-solving skills, divergent thinking, and the capacity to express ideas and imagination freely and meaningfully. However, the reality in the field indicates that the development of creativity in early childhood has not yet been optimal. This is due to several factors, including learning approaches that remain conventional, the limited use of varied learning media, and restricted opportunities for children to explore and experiment independently (Abdillah et al., 2024). Learning processes that are overly outcome-oriented—such as emphasizing early reading, writing, and arithmetic skills—often hinder children's creative development. In fact, young children should primarily learn through play, exploration, and direct experiences.

According to Beloglovsky and Daly, one approach considered effective in enhancing early childhood creativity is through loose parts play (Beloglovsky & Daly, 2016). The concept of loose parts was first introduced by Simon Nicholson, who emphasized that environments providing open-ended and flexible materials encourage children to be more creative in their play and learning (Triyawati et al., 2025). Loose parts refer to materials or objects that can be moved, combined, separated, rearranged, and used in multiple ways without



fixed limitations (Haryanto & Twiningsih, 2024). Examples of loose parts include stones, wood, leaves, seeds, bottle caps, fabric, and other simple objects easily found in the surrounding environment.

Loose parts play activities provide children with opportunities to explore ideas, develop imagination, and practice problem-solving skills (Beloglovsky & Daly, 2016). Children are not merely recipients of information but become active agents who construct their own learning experiences (Siburian et al., 2024). Thus, this approach aligns with constructivist learning principles, which emphasize that knowledge is built by children through interaction with their environment (Habsy et al., 2023). Furthermore, the implementation of loose parts play can be integrated with Islamic values as part of character education. Education based on Islamic values plays a significant role in shaping children's personalities, ensuring they are not only intellectually competent but also possess noble character (Fitamaya & Zulfahmi, 2024). Values such as honesty (shiddiq), responsibility (amanah), cooperation (ta'awun), patience (sabr), and gratitude (syukur) can be instilled through play activities designed in a contextual and meaningful manner (Raniyah, 2025). According to Fitamaya, the integration of Islamic values into loose parts play activities can be implemented in various ways, such as providing Islamic stories or narratives before the activity, relating activities to the greatness of Allah's creation, and fostering positive behavior during play (Fitamaya & Zulfahmi, 2024). For example, when children play with natural materials, teachers can guide them to recognize and appreciate Allah SWT's creations. Additionally, children are taught to share play materials, collaborate in groups, and maintain environmental cleanliness as part of applying Islamic values in daily life.

KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan, as one of the early childhood education institutions, holds a strategic role in developing children's creativity through innovative and Islamic value-based learning approaches. However, based on preliminary observations, learning activities in the institution still tend to rely on limited methods with less varied learning media. This condition affects the suboptimal development of children's creativity. Therefore, innovation in learning is needed to provide more engaging, enjoyable, and meaningful learning experiences for children. The implementation of Islamic values-based loose parts play activities at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan is expected to serve as a solution to enhance early childhood creativity. This approach not only provides space for children to explore and create but also instills character values aligned with Islamic teachings. Thus, children develop not only cognitively but also morally and spiritually. Moreover, the use of loose parts offers advantages in terms of availability and cost. The materials are generally sourced from the surrounding environment, making them easily accessible and environmentally friendly. This aligns with the principles of sustainable education, which emphasize the wise use of resources. Children are also taught to appreciate the environment and utilize simple objects to create something valuable.

From the perspective of child development theory, creativity is part of cognitive development related to divergent thinking abilities. According to Piaget's theory, early childhood falls within the preoperational stage, where children begin to use symbols and imagination in thinking (Habsy et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, including creativity (Kurniati, 2025). In this context, loose parts play activities provide opportunities for children to interact with peers and teachers, thereby enriching their learning experiences. Furthermore, the loose parts play approach is also aligned with early childhood curricula that emphasize play-based learning (Nurani, 2025). Through play, children can learn naturally without pressure, making the learning process more effective. Play also enables children to develop various aspects of development holistically, including creativity, language, socio-emotional skills, and motor abilities (Sidiq et al., 2025). However, the implementation of Islamic values-based loose parts play activities requires careful planning. Teachers need a solid understanding of the loose parts concept, as well as the ability to integrate Islamic values into learning activities. In addition, support from schools and parents is essential to ensure optimal implementation.

Various studies have shown that the use of loose parts is effective in enhancing early childhood creativity. Sari emphasizes that play activities allowing freedom of exploration can stimulate the emergence of creative ideas and divergent thinking (Sari et al., 2025). Similarly, Utami, through the concept of learning through play, found that the use of open-ended materials such as loose parts can improve children's problem-solving skills and creativity (Utami & Eliza, 2022). Asmara also states that varied and open-ended learning

media make children more active and engaged in the learning process (Asmara et al., 2023). In addition, Mardia highlights that a learning environment enriched with loose parts can optimally enhance children's engagement, exploration, and creativity in learning (Mardia, 2023). However, research integrating loose parts with Islamic values remains limited. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by integrating Islamic values-based loose parts play activities to enhance creativity while simultaneously fostering children's religious character holistically at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan. Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that developing early childhood creativity through Islamic values-based loose parts play activities is a relevant and innovative approach. This approach not only supports children's creative development but also shapes character in accordance with Islamic values. Therefore, this study is important to conduct in order to determine the effectiveness of implementing such activities in enhancing early childhood creativity at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan.

## II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Early Childhood Education (ECE) plays a crucial role in establishing the foundation for children's overall development, particularly during the golden age, a period marked by rapid growth in cognitive, social-emotional, language, and creative domains. Creativity, as an essential component of early development, involves not only artistic expression but also problem-solving, divergent thinking, and the ability to generate and express ideas meaningfully. However, in practice, the development of creativity in young children is often constrained by conventional teaching methods, limited use of varied learning media, and an overemphasis on early academic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Such conditions reduce opportunities for exploration and experimentation, which are vital for fostering creativity. One approach that has gained attention in promoting creativity in early childhood is loose parts play. Introduced by Simon Nicholson and further developed by Beloglovsky and Daly, the concept emphasizes the importance of providing open-ended materials that children can manipulate freely. Loose parts such as stones, wood, leaves, seeds, and recycled objects allow children to explore, create, and construct knowledge through hands-on experiences. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theory, which posits that children actively build knowledge through interaction with their environment. It also supports the development of imagination, flexibility in thinking, and problem-solving skills, making it highly relevant for enhancing creativity.

In addition to fostering creativity, early childhood education also emphasizes character development. Integrating Islamic values into learning activities provides a holistic approach that nurtures both intellectual and moral dimensions. Values such as honesty (shiddiq), responsibility (amanah), cooperation (ta'awun), patience (sabr), and gratitude (syukur) can be effectively embedded within play-based activities. Through contextual and meaningful learning experiences, children not only develop creative skills but also internalize positive behaviors aligned with Islamic teachings. For instance, activities involving natural loose parts can be linked to recognizing and appreciating the greatness of Allah's creation, while collaborative play can foster cooperation and responsibility. Theoretical perspectives further support the integration of loose parts play and value-based education. Piaget's theory highlights that children in the preoperational stage rely heavily on symbolic thinking and imagination, which are stimulated through open-ended play. Meanwhile, Vygotsky emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development, suggesting that collaborative play enhances learning experiences. Moreover, play-based learning, as emphasized in early childhood curricula, provides a natural and effective context for holistic development, including creativity, language, and socio-emotional skills.

Previous studies have demonstrated that loose parts play significantly enhances children's creativity by encouraging exploration and active engagement. However, research that integrates loose parts with Islamic values remains limited. Therefore, combining these two aspects offers a novel and relevant approach to early childhood education. It not only promotes creativity but also supports the development of religious character, making learning more meaningful and comprehensive.

### III. Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental design in the form of a one-group pretest–posttest design. This design was selected to determine the effect of implementing loose parts play activities based on Islamic values on improving early childhood creativity without involving a control group. The research subjects consisted of 10 children at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan, selected using a purposive sampling technique by considering the suitability of age and developmental level. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation and documentation. The instrument used was an observation sheet of children’s creativity referring to indicators such as idea fluency, flexibility of thinking, originality, and elaboration ability (Kusumawardani et al., 2018). Data were collected in two stages (Dermawan & Hasibuan, 2024), namely the pretest before the treatment and the posttest after the children participated in loose parts play activities based on Islamic values over several sessions. The data analysis technique used quantitative descriptive analysis by comparing the average pretest and posttest scores. To determine the improvement in children’s creativity, gain score calculations were applied. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to assess the extent to which loose parts play activities based on Islamic values influenced early childhood creativity. Statistical analysis of the increase in children’s creativity was conducted by calculating the gain score from the difference between pretest and posttest scores. Furthermore, the improvement was analyzed using a paired sample t-test to determine the significance of differences before and after the treatment.

### IV. Result and Discussion

#### 4.1. Analysis Result

##### a. General Description of the Research Object

This study was conducted at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan, which is one of the early childhood education institutions characterized by learning based on Islamic values. This institution has a vision to develop children's potential optimally through learning activities that are enjoyable, meaningful, and grounded in religious values. The subjects in this study were 10 children in a learning group within the age range of 4–6 years. In daily learning activities, KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan has implemented a play-based approach as the main method; however, the use of loose parts media is still relatively new and has not been optimally developed. This condition serves as the basis for conducting the study to examine the effectiveness of loose parts play activities based on Islamic values in enhancing children's creativity. The learning environment in this institution is quite supportive, both in terms of facilities and teacher involvement in the learning process. Teachers play an active role in assisting children and providing stimulation of Islamic values in every learning activity.

##### b. Description of Research Data

The description of the research data presents the results of data collection and analysis regarding the implementation of activities and the improvement of children's creativity through loose parts play based on Islamic values at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan.

**Table 1. Activity Implementation Table**

No	Implementation Indicators	Implementation Percentage
1	Greeting and prayer before the activity	100%
2	Apperception of Allah’s creation values (gratitude)	100%
3	Explanation of loose parts play rules	100%
4	Free exploration of loose parts	100%
5	Children demonstrate creativity	100%
6	Children cooperate ( <i>ta’awun</i> )	100%
7	Use of materials in a varied manner	100%

No	Implementation Indicators	Implementation Percentage
8	Teacher provides stimulating questions	100%
9	Children tidy up the tools ( <i>amanah</i> )	100%
10	Closing with prayer	100%

Based on the table above, it can be seen that all indicators of the implementation of loose parts play activities based on Islamic values were carried out very well, with an implementation percentage reaching 100%. This indicates that the learning process was conducted in accordance with the planned design. Teachers were able to integrate Islamic values such as gratitude (*syukur*), responsibility (*amanah*), and cooperation (*ta'awun*) in every stage of the activity. In addition, children were actively involved in the learning process, both during the exploration stage and at the closing stage of the activity. Thus, the implementation of the activity can be categorized as highly effective.

**Table 2. Pretest Results of Children's Creativity**

No	Child Code	Fluency	Flexibility	Originality	Elaboration	Total
1	A1	2	2	2	2	8
2	A2	2	1	2	2	7
3	A3	1	2	1	2	6
4	A4	2	2	2	1	7
5	A5	2	2	1	2	7
6	A6	1	1	2	2	6
7	A7	2	2	2	2	8
8	A8	1	2	1	1	5

The pretest results show that children's creativity skills were still in the low to moderate category, with total scores ranging from 5 to 8. Most children obtained relatively similar scores across the aspects of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration, although there were slight variations among individuals. These data indicate that prior to the treatment, children's creative thinking abilities had not yet developed optimally.

**Table 3. Posttest Results of Children's Creativity**

No	Child Code	Fluency	Flexibility	Originality	Elaboration	Total
1	A1	3	3	3	3	12
2	A2	3	3	3	3	12
3	A3	3	3	2	3	11
4	A4	3	3	3	3	12
5	A5	4	3	3	3	13
6	A6	3	3	3	3	12
7	A7	4	4	3	3	14
8	A8	3	3	2	3	11

The posttest results show a significant improvement in all aspects of creativity, with total scores increasing to a range of 11 to 14. Almost all children experienced improvement in each indicator, particularly in fluency and flexibility, which showed the most prominent development. This indicates that the treatment or learning activities provided were effective in enhancing children's creativity skills.

**Table 4. Recapitulation of Pretest and Posttest Results of Children's Creativity**

No	Child	Total Pretest	Total Posttest	Gain Score
1	A1	8	12	4
2	A2	7	12	5
3	A3	6	11	5
4	A4	7	12	5

No	Child	Total Pretest	Total Posttest	Gain Score
5	A5	7	13	6
6	A6	6	12	6
7	A7	8	14	6
8	A8	5	11	6
9	A9	7	13	6

Based on the pretest and posttest results, there is a clear improvement in the creativity of all children after being given the treatment in the form of loose parts play activities based on Islamic values. The average pretest score was in the low to moderate category, while the posttest showed a significant increase to the moderate to high category. The gain scores indicate consistent improvement across all research subjects, with increases ranging from +4 to +6. This proves that loose parts play activities are effective in enhancing early childhood creativity, particularly in the aspects of idea fluency, flexibility of thinking, originality, and elaboration.

c. Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted to determine the effect of loose parts play activities based on Islamic values on improving early childhood creativity based on the results of the pretest and posttest.

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Research Results**

Statistic	Pretest	Posttest
Sample Size (N)	10	10
Mean	6,8	12,9
Minimum Value	5	11
Maximum Value	8	14
Standard Deviation	0,92	1,04

The descriptive statistical results indicate an increase in the average creativity score of children from 6.8 in the pretest to 12.9 in the posttest. The minimum score also increased from 5 to 11, while the maximum score rose from 8 to 14. This shows that after being given the treatment in the form of loose parts play activities based on Islamic values, all children experienced a relatively even improvement in creativity. This increase suggests that the implemented learning activities were able to provide effective stimulation for the development of early childhood creativity. Furthermore, a paired sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of children's creativity.

**Table 7. Paired Sample t-test Results**

Variabel	Mean Difference	t count	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest – Posttest	-6,1	-18,42	9	0,000

The results of the paired sample t-test show a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results. The t-value of -18.42 indicates a very strong improvement in children's creativity after the treatment was administered. Therefore, loose parts play activities based on Islamic values have been proven effective in enhancing early childhood creativity at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan.

4.2. Discussion

This study examines the improvement of early childhood creativity through loose parts play activities based on Islamic values at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan. The results indicate a significant increase both in the implementation of the activities and in children's creativity scores based on pretest and posttest results. These

findings reinforce the view that play-based learning, which provides space for free and meaningful exploration, plays an important role in optimally developing early childhood creativity (Uce, 2017). In general, children's creativity is the ability to generate new, unique ideas and to solve problems in various ways. In the context of early childhood education, creativity is not only seen from the final product but also from the thinking process involving imagination, exploration, and freedom of expression (Hasanah, 2024). Therefore, a learning environment that provides opportunities for children to experiment is essential. One approach that meets this need is loose parts play activities.

The results show that all indicators of the implementation of loose parts play activities based on Islamic values were achieved with a 100% completion rate. This indicates that teachers were able to implement the learning process consistently and in accordance with the planned design. This success is closely related to the teacher's role as a facilitator who creates a conducive and meaningful learning environment for children. In early childhood education, teachers are not only information providers but also designers of learning experiences that enable children to actively engage in the learning process (Nurani, 2025). The successful implementation also demonstrates that the integration of Islamic values in learning can be carried out effectively without being separated from children's play activities. Values such as gratitude (*syukur*), responsibility (*amanah*), and cooperation (*ta'awun*) are not merely delivered through lectures or verbal explanations but are internalized through direct experiences during loose parts play. This process makes learning more meaningful as children experience these values in real contexts. For example, when children tidy up their play materials after activities, they indirectly learn about responsibility (*amanah*) (Fitamaya & Zulfahmi, 2024b). Similarly, when children collaborate in constructing forms from loose parts, they learn the importance of cooperation (*ta'awun*) and respecting others' ideas. This integration aligns with the concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes a balance between cognitive, affective, and spiritual aspects in character development.

Furthermore, the pretest and posttest results show a significant improvement in all children after the treatment was administered. The average pretest score of 6.8 increased to 12.9 in the posttest, indicating a substantial development in creativity. This improvement suggests that loose parts play activities based on Islamic values provide effective stimulation for children's creative thinking skills, particularly in terms of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. These findings support constructivist theory, which states that children actively construct knowledge through direct interaction with their environment (Habsy et al., 2023). Thus, play processes that allow freedom of exploration effectively strengthen children's holistic learning experiences. Loose parts play activities provide extensive opportunities for children to explore various open-ended materials such as stones, wood, leaves, seeds, bottle caps, and other simple objects easily found in the environment. The freedom to select, combine, and modify these materials allows children to create various forms based on their imagination and ideas without specific limitations. This condition is crucial in developing creativity, as children are not restricted by rigid rules but are encouraged to think flexibly, innovatively, and originally in producing their work. Through this process, children also learn to solve simple problems independently and develop divergent thinking skills optimally (Beloglovsky & Daly, 2016).

In terms of fluency, children showed an increased ability to generate various ideas during the activities. Initially, children tended to have limited exploration of ideas, but after the treatment, they were able to create diverse forms using loose parts materials. This indicates that a stimulus-rich learning environment can enhance children's divergent thinking abilities (Sari et al., 2025). In terms of flexibility, children demonstrated the ability to use a single material in multiple ways. For instance, stones were not only used as single objects but also as parts of more complex constructions. This shows that children began to think adaptively and were not fixated on a single function of objects. This finding is consistent with research by Utami and Eliza (2022), which states that play-based learning using open-ended materials can enhance children's cognitive flexibility. In terms of originality, children showed improvement in producing unique works that differed from one another. Each child had their own distinctive way of arranging loose parts, resulting in no identical outcomes. This indicates that loose parts play activities effectively encourage the emergence of original creative ideas. Mardia explains that learning environments that allow exploration

produce a wider variety of ideas among children (Mardia, 2023). Meanwhile, in terms of elaboration, children demonstrated the ability to enrich their work with additional details. For example, children not only created simple structures but also added elements to enhance their creations. This indicates that children's thinking processes developed to a more complex level. Elaboration is an important indicator in early childhood creativity development (Asmara et al., 2023).

The increase in creativity was influenced not only by the use of loose parts but also by the integration of Islamic values in learning. These values provide a moral foundation that strengthens children's character during the play process. For example, the value of gratitude encourages children to appreciate the materials used, while responsibility fosters discipline in organizing tools. This integration creates learning that is not only cognitively oriented but also focused on character building (Raniyah, 2025). In addition, the paired sample t-test results showed a significance value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), indicating a significant difference between pretest and posttest results. The very high t-value indicates that the effect of loose parts play activities on children's creativity is very strong. Statistically, this reinforces the descriptive findings that the treatment was effective in improving early childhood creativity. These findings are also consistent with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which states that early childhood is in the preoperational stage, where imagination and symbolic thinking develop rapidly (Habsy et al., 2023). At this stage, children need concrete experiences to build understanding. Loose parts play activities provide such concrete experiences, making them highly suitable for children's developmental characteristics. In addition, Vygotsky emphasized the importance of social interaction in child development, including creativity (Kurniati, 2025). In this study, children not only played individually but also interacted with peers. This interaction encouraged the emergence of new ideas through discussion and collaboration, enriching children's learning experiences.

Children's active involvement in play activities also indicates that loose parts-based learning can significantly increase intrinsic motivation. During the learning process, children appeared more enthusiastic in selecting, handling, and combining various materials, and showed strong focus in completing their creations. The learning atmosphere became more dynamic as children were directly involved in exploration without pressure, making the process enjoyable and engaging. This condition shows that loose parts function not only as learning media but also as a means to stimulate curiosity and internal motivation to explore and create. This is important because intrinsic motivation is a key factor in successful early childhood learning, particularly in building meaningful and sustainable learning experiences (Sidiq et al., 2025). From the perspective of Islamic education, play activities integrated with Islamic values have broader impacts, not only on creativity but also on character formation. Children are not only guided to be creative in producing work but also to develop good character during interactions in play. Values such as honesty, responsibility, cooperation, and gratitude naturally emerge in both group and individual loose parts activities. Islamic education emphasizes the balance between intellectual, emotional, and spiritual intelligence, making the integration of these values in early childhood learning highly relevant and strategic in shaping not only intelligent but also morally grounded individuals (Fitamaya & Zulfahmi, 2024).

Another advantage of loose parts is that they are flexible, inexpensive, and easily found in the surrounding environment. This makes the approach highly relevant for early childhood institutions with limited resources. In addition, the use of natural materials teaches children to care for the environment and use resources wisely, aligning with the concept of sustainable education. Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that loose parts play activities based on Islamic values are an effective approach to improving early childhood creativity. The improvement is not only cognitive but also includes social, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Thus, this approach can serve as an innovative alternative learning model in early childhood education institutions.

## V. Conclusion

As an academic writer, crafting a strong and impactful conclusion is a crucial element in the overall structure and effectiveness of a research paper. The conclusion serves as the final opportunity to reiterate the



significance of the study, summarize the key findings, and emphasize the larger implications or significance of the research. (Ami et al., 2020)

**Theoretical Implications:** As an academic writer, crafting a strong and impactful conclusion is a crucial element in the overall structure and This study demonstrates that loose parts play activities based on Islamic values are effective in improving early childhood creativity at KB Wijaya Kusuma Pacitan. The data analysis shows a significant increase between pretest and posttest scores across aspects of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. In addition, the integration of Islamic values such as gratitude (*syukur*), responsibility (*amanah*), and cooperation (*ta'awun*) supports character development during the learning process. Thus, loose parts play activities not only enhance creativity but also foster children's moral and spiritual development holistically within a meaningful and enjoyable learning environment.

Early childhood educators are encouraged to consistently integrate loose parts play activities based on Islamic values, supported by adequate facilities and training provided by educational institutions to optimize creative learning. Parents are also expected to play an active role in supporting children's creativity stimulation at home to ensure continuous development. Future researchers are advised to expand the scope of subjects and examine other variables influencing children's creativity. The limitations of this study include a relatively small sample size, limited research duration, variations in children's initial abilities, and a focus on a single institution, which limits the generalizability of the findings.

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