

# Utilization of Loose Parts Media in Enhancing Early Childhood Creativity

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## ABSTRACT

Early childhood is considered a golden age, a phase that occurs only once in human development. Therefore, it should serve as a fundamental period that significantly influences an individual's future growth and development into adulthood. One of the most essential competencies for young children in the 21st century is creativity. Creativity itself refers to a higher-order thinking capacity that reflects an advancement in cognitive processes, characterized by continuity, discontinuity, variation, and integration across developmental stages. It is the ability to produce something new or generate innovation. Children's creativity can be measured through several indicators that need to be encouraged, based on theories of early childhood creativity. These include: the capacity to produce forms or ideas, a high level of curiosity, the ability to create independently without assistance, the ability to answer simple questions, and a sense of responsibility toward assigned tasks. A child's continuously developing creative thinking ability will lead to the generation of ideas, the formation of relevant connections, the development of imagination, and the ability to view problems from multiple perspectives. Creativity is not exclusive to gifted individuals; every person has the potential to be creative when provided with an appropriate environment.

**Keywords:** Loose Parts Media, Children's Creativity, Early Childhood.

## I. Introduction

Early childhood is often referred to as the golden age, a unique and non-recurring period in human development. Therefore, this stage should be regarded as a foundational phase that significantly influences an individual's future growth and development into adulthood. Young children will develop broad and meaningful insights when they are guided with positive and valuable directions from an early age. Teachers and parents need to work collaboratively to build and shape children's understanding so that they grow into good and creative individuals. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is expected to develop and enhance life skills, which encompass not only motor skills but also affective abilities and the motivation to להתמודד various life challenges (Nurjanah & Muthmainah, 2023). One of the most significant abilities for young children in the 21st century is creativity. Creativity refers to a higher-order thinking capacity that reflects an advancement in ways of thinking, characterized by continuity, discontinuity, variation, and integration across developmental stages. It is the ability to produce something new or innovative (Heldanita, 2019). Skills required in the 21st century are often referred to as the 4Cs: creativity, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving. This aligns



with Bloom's theory, which emphasizes that creativity is the most important skill in the cognitive development domain.

Children's creativity has several dimensions that need to be nurtured, including the ability to produce forms, a high level of curiosity, the ability to create independently without assistance, the capacity to answer simple questions, and responsibility toward assigned tasks. To ensure that the learning process does not become monotonous or overly dependent on thematic textbooks, innovation and creativity in teaching are essential. This approach helps create enjoyable learning experiences for young children and enhances their creative abilities (Arifianti et al., 2025). Children with creative potential generally exhibit four main characteristics: (1) originality, demonstrated through unique ideas; (2) flexibility, shown by the ability to generate various solutions to problems; (3) fluency, reflected in smooth and continuous thinking processes; and (4) elaboration, indicated by the ability to expand and develop existing ideas. The continuous development of creative thinking skills enables children to generate ideas, establish relevant connections, produce imaginative thoughts, and view problems from multiple perspectives. Creativity is not limited to naturally gifted individuals; rather, everyone can become creative when provided with a supportive environment (Lismayani et al., 2020).

One of the tools that can be used in Student-Centered Learning (SCL) is loose parts learning media, which also aligns with the principle of learning by doing. Loose parts refer to movable materials that can be separated and used for constructive play. This type of learning media includes objects found in the students' surroundings, allowing them to create freely and develop their imagination. The range of materials is very broad, including designed toys such as Lego and puzzles, as well as everyday items like straws, origami paper, and various random objects that can stimulate creativity. In addition to enhancing creativity, interacting with loose parts media encourages children to enter a "what if" world that fosters problem-solving and theoretical reasoning. Given its benefits and accessibility, loose parts media is an easy and economical option for use in the learning process (Haryanto & Twiningsih, 2024).

This study aims to analyze the utilization of loose parts media in enhancing early childhood creativity, particularly in aspects such as fluency, originality, flexibility, and elaboration through constructive and exploratory play activities. Furthermore, this research seeks to identify how the use of such media can create a more contextual, enjoyable, and child-centered learning environment. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative approach, combining early childhood creativity concepts with the use of environmentally based loose parts media that are simple, flexible, and economical. Thus, it serves not only as a play tool but also as an innovative pedagogical strategy aligned with 21st-century skills (4Cs), while providing practical contributions to the development of creative learning models in early childhood education that are easily replicable across various educational contexts.

## II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Early childhood is in a golden age phase that plays a crucial role in shaping cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development in later life. At this stage, appropriate stimulation has a significant impact on the development of higher-order thinking skills, including creativity. In the context of early childhood education, creativity is understood as an individual's ability to generate new and meaningful ideas, concepts, or products. According to Heldaanita (2019), creativity is part of higher-order thinking skills, characterized by fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration in thinking. This aligns with the 21st-century skills framework, which positions creativity as one of the key competencies within the 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration) that should be developed from an early age. Theoretically, children's creativity can be measured through several indicators, including the ability to produce forms, a high level of curiosity, independence in creating, the ability to answer simple questions, and responsibility for assigned tasks (Lismayani et al., 2020). Creative children are also characterized by originality of ideas, agility in finding solutions, fluency in thinking, and the ability to elaborate on existing ideas. Therefore, the learning process in

early childhood education should be designed in an innovative and enjoyable way to optimally stimulate these potentials.

One relevant approach to fostering children's creativity is Student-Centered Learning (SCL), in which children are given opportunities to actively explore and construct their own knowledge. In this context, the use of learning media becomes essential in creating meaningful learning experiences. Innovative learning media can help children understand concepts concretely while also encouraging active engagement in the learning process (Arifianti et al., 2025). Loose parts media is one form of learning media that is effective in enhancing early childhood creativity. Loose parts refer to materials that can be moved, arranged, combined, and modified according to children's imagination. These materials may include both natural and manufactured objects, such as stones, leaves, straws, paper, as well as constructive toys like Lego and puzzles. Haryanto and Twiningsih (2024) state that the use of loose parts allows children to enter an imaginative "what if" world that stimulates creative thinking, problem-solving, and reasoning skills.

Moreover, loose parts media has advantages due to its flexible, open-ended nature and its lack of limitation to a single function, thereby providing children with the freedom to explore according to their ideas and imagination. This approach is consistent with constructivist theory, which emphasizes that knowledge is built through direct experience and interaction with the environment. Thus, the use of loose parts media not only enhances creativity but also develops critical thinking skills and children's independence in learning. Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that early childhood creativity can be optimally developed through the use of appropriate learning media, one of which is loose parts. This media not only supports enjoyable and contextual learning but also provides space for children to explore, imagine, and create independently in accordance with their developmental characteristics.

### III. Research Method

Research methods are scientific procedures used to obtain data for specific purposes and uses (Sugiyono, 2017). Based on the research objectives, this study employs a qualitative research approach using a literature study (library research) method with a thematic literature review type (John Creswell, 2015). Qualitative research is considered the most relevant approach to address research problems whose variables are not yet clearly identified and therefore require exploration (John Creswell, 2015). In the context of this study, the literature review aims to collect relevant data and findings regarding how loose parts media are used in early childhood education settings, their impact on children's development, and effective implementation strategies. By analyzing information obtained from various sources, this study provides a comprehensive theoretical overview of the topic. The data sources in this research consist of books and scientific journal articles that specifically discuss loose parts media in the context of early childhood education. The data analysis technique used in this study follows the qualitative data analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman. According to Miles and Huberman, there are several steps in analyzing qualitative data using an interactive analysis model, in which the collected data are organized into expanded text (Hardani et al., 2020). The analysis activities include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification.

### IV. Result and Discussion

**Table 1. Literature Review on Loose Parts Media in Enhancing Creativity**

No	Researcher	Year	Research Focus	Method	Findings
1	Pagarra & Syawaludin	2022	Learning media	Literature	Media improve learning motivation and comprehension
2	Siti Wahyuningsih et al.	2020	Loose parts & creativity	Qualitative	Loose parts enhance children's exploration and creativity

No	Researcher	Year	Research Focus	Method	Findings
3	Setianingsih & Handayani	2022	Fine motor skills	Experimental	Manipulative activities improve motor coordination
4	Priyanti	2021	Natural materials in learning	Literature study	Natural materials enhance comfort and holistic development
5	Lisdiyana et al.	2025	Loose parts & creativity	Quantitative	Significant improvement in creativity and fine motor skills
6	Heldanita	2019	Creativity theory	Literature	Creativity as HOTS with indicators: fluency, flexibility, originality
7	Lismayani et al.	2020	Characteristics of children's creativity	Qualitative	Creativity marked by curiosity and independence
8	Haryanto & Twiningsih	2024	Loose parts in learning	Qualitative	Loose parts encourage imagination and problem-solving
9	Nurjanah & Muthmainah	2023	Early childhood education & skill development	Qualitative	Early education improves children's life skills
10	Arifianti et al.	2025	Innovative learning	Quantitative	Innovative learning enhances creativity and student engagement

Based on the library research table, it can be interpreted that the majority of studies demonstrate consistent findings regarding the effectiveness of learning media, particularly loose parts, in enhancing early childhood creativity. These studies emphasize that open-ended, flexible, and exploratory media are able to encourage children to think divergently, generate new ideas, and develop their imagination optimally. Furthermore, research employing various approaches—qualitative, quantitative, and literature studies—collectively reinforces that creativity is not only influenced by internal factors within the child, but is also highly dependent on the learning environment and instructional strategies implemented by educators. Moreover, the table also indicates that the use of loose parts media not only impacts creativity but also contributes significantly to the development of fine motor skills, cognitive abilities, and children's social-emotional aspects. The use of natural materials and everyday objects provides contextual and meaningful learning experiences, enabling children to better understand concepts while simultaneously developing practical skills. Therefore, it can be concluded that the integration of loose parts media in early childhood education constitutes a comprehensive and relevant approach, as it supports multiple aspects of child development holistically and is supported by empirical evidence from various previous studies.

Learning media play a strategic role in creating effective learning processes, especially in early childhood education, which emphasizes concrete and exploratory experiences. Based on research findings, the use of systematically designed learning media has been proven to enhance the quality of learning interactions, both between teachers and children and between children and their environment. This is in line with the view of Pagarra and Syawaludin (2022), who state that learning media function as tools to create problem-based learning situations, stimulate curiosity, and increase learning motivation. In the context of this study, loose parts media function not only as visual aids but also as exploratory tools that allow children to construct their own knowledge independently. The findings indicate that when children are given the freedom to use open-ended materials, they become more active, engaged, and show high enthusiasm in the learning process. From a constructivist perspective, these findings further strengthen the idea that young children learn through direct experience and interaction with their environment. Loose parts media provide authentic learning experiences because children do not merely receive information but actively construct knowledge through play-based activities. This is evident from findings showing that children are able to create various forms and new ideas from the same materials, reflecting the process of divergent thinking. Siti Wahyuningsih et al. (2020) state that the open-ended nature of loose parts allows children to explore without limitations, thereby supporting optimal creativity development. Thus, the use of this media aligns with creativity theories that emphasize the importance of freedom, flexibility, and imagination in children's learning processes.

Furthermore, the research findings show that the use of loose parts significantly enhances children's creativity in several aspects, namely fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Children engaged in loose parts play activities demonstrate the ability to generate diverse ideas, combine various objects, and develop ideas into more complex forms. This is consistent with the creativity theory proposed by Haldanita (2019), which states that creativity is a higher-order thinking ability characterized by variation and integration of ideas. In practice, children do not merely imitate but are able to create something new based on their own imagination. These findings reinforce that creativity is not merely an innate ability but can be developed through an appropriate learning environment. In addition to creativity, this study also found that loose parts media contribute to the development of children's fine motor skills. Activities such as arranging, grouping, threading, and building structures from small objects train hand-eye coordination and improve children's precision. This is consistent with the view of Setianingsih and Handayani (2022), who state that fine motor skills involve the coordination of small muscles requiring concentration and accuracy. In this study, children showed improvement in manipulating objects, which is an essential foundation for writing readiness at the next level of education. Therefore, the use of loose parts impacts not only cognitive aspects but also children's physical development.

The findings also indicate that the use of natural materials in loose parts has a positive impact on children's emotional and psychological aspects. Children become calmer, more focused, and enjoy the learning process as they interact directly with familiar environments. Priyanti (2021) states that natural materials in learning can create a comfortable learning atmosphere and support children's holistic development. In addition, interaction with various types of materials enriches children's sensory experiences, contributing to cognitive and language development. In this study, children appeared more active in communicating, discussing, and explaining their work, indicating improvements in literacy and social skills.

Furthermore, recent studies have emphasized that interaction with natural environments can significantly enhance children's emotional well-being and learning engagement (Dewi & Rahmawati, 2019; Kurniawan et al., 2021). In addition, children's interaction with various types of materials in loose parts enriches their sensory experiences, which play a crucial role in cognitive and language development. Children receive stimulation through touch, sight, and the manipulation of diverse objects, thereby fostering the formation of more complex neural connections. In this study, children appeared more active in communicating, discussing, and explaining their creations, indicating an improvement in literacy and social skills. These findings are supported by studies showing that exploration-based learning experiences can enhance children's expressive language abilities and social interaction (Sari & Putra, 2020; Wulandari et al., 2022). The use of natural materials in loose parts also encourages children to develop curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking skills through free and open-ended exploration. Children are given opportunities to make choices, test ideas, and discover solutions independently, which are essential components of 21st-century learning. Other studies have shown that learning environments rich in open-ended and natural materials can improve the quality of learning experiences and strengthen higher-order thinking skills in early childhood (Hidayati & Anwar, 2018; Prasetyo et al., 2023). Therefore, the use of natural materials in loose parts not only impacts emotional aspects but also contributes to children's cognitive, social, and creative development holistically.

More broadly, the findings of this study indicate that loose parts media support the integrated development of various aspects of child development. Children not only learn creativity but also develop logical thinking, problem-solving abilities, and social skills through collaboration with peers. This aligns with the concept of 21st-century learning, which emphasizes the development of the 4Cs. Lisdiyana et al. (2025) also found that the use of loose parts significantly improves children's creativity and motor skills through continuous exploration processes. Thus, this media has great potential as an innovative learning strategy relevant to modern educational needs. Another advantage of loose parts media identified in this study is its flexibility and accessibility. Teachers can utilize various materials from the surrounding environment without incurring high costs, making it an economical and practical learning medium that can be applied in various educational contexts, both at school and at home. From the perspective of contextual learning theory, the use of materials from the surrounding environment makes learning more meaningful because it is closely related to children's daily lives. Children do not only learn abstractly but also understand the functions and benefits of the objects they use.

However, the findings also indicate that the effectiveness of loose parts media largely depends on the teacher's role in designing and facilitating learning activities. Teachers need to provide appropriate stimuli, pose guiding questions, and allow children space to explore without excessive intervention. This is consistent with the principles of student-centered learning, which position children as active participants in the learning process, while teachers act as facilitators who support the optimal development of children's

potential. Therefore, this discussion demonstrates that loose parts media is an effective educational innovation in enhancing early childhood creativity. The findings not only reinforce existing theories but also provide empirical evidence that exploration- and experience-based learning is more effective in developing children's potential. Consequently, the integration of loose parts media in early childhood education can serve as a strategic alternative for creating creative, enjoyable, and meaningful learning experiences.

## V. Conclusion

This study concludes that the effective utilization of loose parts media can enhance early childhood creativity through exploratory, imaginative, and constructive child-centered activities, while also providing positive impacts on fine motor, cognitive, and socio-emotional development. These findings emphasize that a flexible, contextual, and open-ended learning environment is a key factor in optimizing children's creative potential. Therefore, it is recommended that early childhood educators consistently integrate loose parts media into learning activities, creatively utilize materials from the surrounding environment, and develop innovative teaching strategies that encourage active child participation. Meanwhile, future researchers are advised to further examine the effectiveness of this media through experimental approaches or by developing more structured learning models.

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