

The Use of the Literacy Tree Media in Improving Early Childhood Literacy Skills

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the low ability of early childhood students to recognize letters at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center, where most children still have difficulty distinguishing the shapes and sounds of letters. This condition is caused by conventional learning activities that do not utilize interesting learning media. Therefore, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of using Literacy Tree media in improving early childhood students' ability to recognize letters. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The research data sources include teachers, students, and observations of learning activities in the classroom. Data collection techniques were carried out through observation, interviews, and documentation. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that there were several forms of application carried out by Darmawan PAUD teachers, namely the creation and arrangement of literacy tree media in the classroom environment, letter recognition activities through literacy tree media, vocabulary development and early reading skills, storytelling and language expression activities for children through literacy trees, exploration of student understanding through letter leaf sticking activities, and elaboration of student understanding in letter and word guessing activities. The implementation has shown results, with the Literacy Tree media significantly improving children's ability to recognize letters. Before implementation, only about 37-40% of children were able to recognize letters, but after the activities, this increased to 87-90%. Children became more active, enthusiastic, and confident in naming and recognizing letters through fun activities such as sticking letter leaves, storytelling, and word guessing.

Keywords: Literacy Tree Media, Letter Recognition Skills, Early Childhood

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education is the cornerstone of the process of shaping children's character, intelligence, and basic skills as they prepare to enter the next level of education (R.P.M. Anom Miftahul, et al., 2026). At this stage, children are in their golden age, a period during which all aspects of their development physical, social, emotional, and cognitive progress at a rapid pace (Ramadhan et al., 2024). One of the key aspects of a child's cognitive development is early literacy skills, particularly the ability to recognize letters as the first step toward reading and writing (Ramadhan, 2025). Ideally, early childhood education institutions should provide enjoyable stimulation that is tailored to children's developmental characteristics so that the process of learning letters is natural, interactive, and meaningful (Suryanti, 2025). In reality, many early childhood education institutions still teach letter recognition using conventional methods, such as repetitive writing, memorization, and worksheets without any variation in teaching materials. This situation causes children to become easily bored, lose interest, and fail to understand letters in context (Solihah et al., 2025).

This phenomenon highlights the gap between the ideals set forth in the early childhood education curriculum and the reality on the ground (Asrarul Mufidah, 2025). Ideally, early childhood education should emphasize the principle of learning through play, be child-centered, and use concrete materials to help children understand abstract concepts such as letters and their sounds (Mandasari et al., 2025). However, the reality is that some teachers still struggle to design and use innovative and engaging learning materials (Syarifuddin et al., 2025). Limited resources, a lack of creativity, and insufficient training for teachers in the creation of educational materials often make basic literacy instruction monotonous (Cucu Cahyati, 2024). Children are more often asked to memorize letters verbally, without visual context and without exploratory activities (Yani et al., 2025). This results in children having difficulty recognizing letter shapes, distinguishing between letters, and associating them with sounds or words (Rostianingsih et al., 2025). This situation indicates that the process of learning the alphabet has not yet achieved its true purpose, which is meaningful learning that fosters children's interest in reading and curiosity from an early age (Ahmad et al., 2024).

The use of engaging, contextual, and interactive learning materials is essential to overcoming these limitations (Nursiamti, 2026). One medium considered effective is the Literacy Tree (Hermansyah et al., 2025). This medium is a visual aid in the shape of a tree, decorated with various letters, pictures, or simple words arranged in an engaging way (Gulo et al., 2025). Children can interact directly with this material, for example by sticking letters onto tree leaves, finding the first letter of their name, or matching pictures with letters (Zulfa & Nugraheni, 2023). The use of the *Pohon Literasi* educational tool not only provides an enjoyable learning experience but also fosters children's motivation and curiosity about letters. This tool encourages children to recognize letters through hands-on activities, games, and exploration tailored to the developmental characteristics of young children (Fudhlah et al., 2023).

In addition to its practical importance, the purpose of using the Literacy Tree is to help children understand letters visually and in context, develop language skills, and establish literacy habits from an early age (Dewi et al., 2022). Through this medium, teachers can create a more communicative and interactive learning environment in which students are not merely recipients of information, but also active participants in the learning process (Nisfah & Nurroh, 2020). The uniqueness of the "Literacy Tree" medium lies in its flexibility; it can be adapted to various learning themes, is made from simple materials, and directly involves children in both its creation and use (Dedeh,

2024). This not only fosters creativity in both teachers and children but also strengthens the emotional bond between them. Through this engaging approach, children find it easier to recognize letters, understand their shapes, and associate them with sounds and meanings relevant to their daily lives (Vieira & Tenreiro-Vieira, 2020).

Although various studies on early childhood literacy learning materials have been conducted, research on the use of the Literacy Tree medium still leaves room for further exploration. Some previous studies, such as Nisfah and Nurroh (2020) explains that while it is true that visual media and games can improve letter recognition skills, there is still little research that specifically examines the effectiveness of the Literacy Tree media in a local context, particularly in early childhood education institutions with limited facilities and resources (Gorda et al., 2025). Previous research has largely focused on learning outcomes, while the learning process, student engagement, and the teacher's role in the use of this medium have not yet been studied in depth (Rahayu et al., 2024).

This issue is particularly important to study, especially at the early childhood education level in the Bima region, one example being the Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center (PAUD Darmawan), located in Sape District, Bima Regency. The selection of this school was based on several key considerations, including the fact that PAUD Darmawan is an educational institution actively developing learning innovations based on teacher creativity, yet it still faces challenges in optimizing child-centered learning materials. Preliminary observations indicate that children's ability to recognize letters at this PAUD varies significantly, with the majority of children still unable to distinguish letters accurately. PAUD Darmawan possesses a unique characteristic: the active support of a parent community, which enables collaboration in developing creative learning materials such as the Literacy Tree. This school also represents the general conditions of early childhood education centers in the rural areas of Bima, which have limited facilities but a strong commitment to improving the quality of early childhood education. Therefore, this study holds not only academic value but also high practical value, as its findings are expected to serve as a reference for other early childhood education institutions in similar regions in developing effective and enjoyable literacy learning materials.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. This approach was chosen because the researcher sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of implementing the literacy tree media and its impact on children's ability to recognize letters (Sugiyono, 2022). Qualitative research allows researchers to collect data in a naturalistic manner that is, under natural conditions without manipulation or specific interventions. The research focuses on children's learning activities, interactions between teachers and students, and how the literacy tree is used as a tool to introduce letters (Sudikan, 2023). This study was conducted at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center, located in Sape Subdistrict, Bima Regency, with the research subjects consisting of teachers and children aged 4–6 years. The researcher served as the primary instrument, conducting observations and interacting directly in the field to obtain in-depth and holistic data (Sugiono, 2021).

The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from observations, interviews, and documentation of teachers and children at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center, while secondary data were obtained from supporting documents such as Daily Lesson Plans (RPPH), photos of activities, and children's developmental records (Laksana, 2025). Data

collection methods included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation relevant to the implementation of learning using the literacy tree as a teaching aid. Once the data was collected, analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This analysis process was carried out repeatedly and continuously throughout the study so that the results obtained truly reflected the reality in the field objectively and in depth (Sugiono, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Teachers at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center have adopted the literacy tree as a teaching tool used in daily learning activities to foster an interest in reading and develop letter recognition skills among young children. This tool is designed to resemble a large tree affixed to the classroom wall, with leaves featuring letters, pictures, and simple words. Based on data and information gathered by the researcher including observations of learning activities, in-depth interviews with teachers and students, and other supporting documents there are several systematic ways the literacy tree is applied in early childhood learning activities at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center, as follows:

a. Creating and Arranging Literacy Tree Displays in the Classroom

Based on observations and documentation conducted at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center, the process of creating literacy trees was a collaborative effort between teachers and students, incorporating creativity, independence, and alignment with the learning theme. Teachers designed the trees using thick cardboard and colored paper, shaping the trunks and branches to resemble real trees, which were then mounted on the front wall of the classroom so that children could easily reach them. Each leaf on the tree is made from brightly colored paper featuring uppercase and lowercase letters tailored to the developmental stages of young children. This creation process is not solely carried out by the teacher; the children are also involved in attaching the letter leaves to the tree's branches according to instructions. This activity helps children recognize letter shapes through visual and motor skills, as they observe, name, and attach the letters directly.

The arrangement of the literacy tree in the classroom is designed with a focus on accessibility, neatness, and integration with the children's learning environment. Teachers place the tree in the designated literacy area in the corner of the classroom so that children can interact with it directly every day. The tree is mounted on the wall at a height adjusted to the children's reach so they can easily attach or remove the letter leaves. This arrangement is designed to create a communicative classroom atmosphere and stimulate children's interest in reading from an early age. Each letter on the leaves is arranged sequentially from A to Z, making it easier for children to recognize the order. The teacher also added the children's name tags around the tree so they would feel a sense of ownership over the activity. Placed beneath the tree is a small container holding additional letter cards that children can use for letter-sorting activities. The engaging layout and bright colors make the children more enthusiastic about interacting with the

literacy tree. Observations show that children often point to or name letters spontaneously when they see them, indicating that this activity effectively stimulates their attention and visual memory regarding letters.

The research findings also show that teachers consistently utilize the literacy tree as a teaching aid in their daily learning activities. Before the activity begins, the teacher invites the children to engage in a letter-recognition activity by pointing to and naming several letters on the tree. This activity has become a routine that reinforces the children's memory of letter shapes. During the core activity, teachers use the literacy tree as a tool to introduce new letters by taking a letter leaf from the tree and linking it to a noun familiar to the children—for example, the teacher takes the letter “M” and says “M for Table” while pointing to the object in the classroom. This activity makes the learning process more contextual and meaningful. Through this systematic application, the literacy tree serves not merely as a display but as an integral part of an active, interactive, and enjoyable learning process at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center.

b. Alphabet Recognition Activities Using the Literacy Tree

Observations and interviews with teachers at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center revealed that letter-learning activities using the literacy tree are conducted in a structured manner and tailored to the developmental stages of young children. Teachers begin the activity by inviting the children to sit in a circle in front of the literacy tree, then show them several letter leaves that have been attached to the tree's branches. The teacher says a letter aloud, for example, “This is the letter A,” while pointing to a red leaf bearing both the uppercase and lowercase letter A. The children are then encouraged to repeat the pronunciation of the letter in unison so that they not only see the letter's shape but also hear its sound repeatedly. After that, the teacher asks the children one by one to find the letter leaf that was mentioned and show it to their classmates. This activity stimulates the children's visual, auditory, and kinesthetic skills simultaneously. The children appear enthusiastic when they find the correct letter, and the teacher offers verbal praise to reinforce their motivation.

In the next stage, the teacher expands the letter-recognition activities by linking them to objects and pictures found around the classroom. After introducing the letter B, the teacher shows a picture of a ball and says, “B for Ball.” The children are then asked to point to real objects in the classroom that begin with the letter B, such as a book or a bench. This process helps children understand the relationship between the letter symbol and the word's meaning, while reinforcing the association between the letter's shape and its sound. The teacher also prepares small games like “Guess the Letter from the Tree,” where children randomly pick a letter leaf from a tree and name a word that begins with that letter. This activity trains quick thinking skills and enriches the children's vocabulary. Observations show that children who initially struggled to distinguish certain letters, such as “b” and “d,” began to recognize them correctly after several interactions with the literacy tree. This activity creates a fun learning environment and fosters the children's curiosity about new letters.

The research findings also indicate that letter recognition activities using the literacy tree were conducted consistently and varied from week to week. Teachers used

the literacy tree not only during language learning activities but also integrated it into daily thematic activities. During the “Animals” learning theme, teachers replaced the letter leaves with pictures of animals whose names began with a specific letter, such as “K” for “Cat” or “G” for “Elephant.” Children were asked to place the letter leaves on the appropriate branches of the tree corresponding to the words mentioned by the teacher. This activity trains children to think associatively and enhances their ability to remember letters in context. Teachers also used short, rhythmic songs to help children memorize the letter sequence more easily, for example, by singing “A-B-C” while pointing to the leaves on the tree. Observation results and developmental records show an improvement in children’s ability to recognize letters from week to week, in terms of visual, auditory, and meaning comprehension. With a fun, concrete approach that involves hands-on activities, the literacy tree at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center has proven to be an effective tool for instilling early literacy foundations in young children.

c. Vocabulary Development and Early Reading Skills

The research findings indicate that the use of the literacy tree at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center significantly contributes to children’s vocabulary development through interactive and context-based activities. Teachers use the letter leaves on the tree as a medium to introduce new words each week. Each letter leaf is associated with an image or real object familiar to the children’s environment, such as the letter S for Spoon, the letter B for Book, and K for Cat. Children are encouraged to say these words while attaching the corresponding letter leaf to a branch of the tree. This activity helps children not only recognize letter shapes but also understand the relationship between letters and the initial sounds of words. Teachers actively repeat the new words in various daily activity contexts, such as during role-playing or singing. Observations have shown that children demonstrate improved ability to pronounce words clearly and are able to expand the vocabulary they use in daily communication.

Vocabulary-building activities at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center were then expanded to include early reading skills by utilizing a literacy tree as an engaging visual and motor activity. Teachers encouraged the children to combine letters they had already recognized into simple syllables, such as “ba,” “bi,” and “bu,” and then build them into whole words like “book,” “ball,” or “shirt.” The activities were conducted in stages, beginning with the introduction of consonant and vowel sounds, after which the children were asked to place the letter combinations on the tree according to the teacher’s instructions. The teacher also employed game-based methods such as “Find the Letter Pairs” or “Arrange Words on the Literacy Tree” to train the children’s memory and analytical skills regarding letter shapes. Based on interviews with classroom teachers, children who initially could only recognize single letters began to demonstrate the ability to read simple syllables after four weeks of using this medium.

In addition to improving letter recognition and basic reading skills, the literacy tree serves to broaden children’s language skills as a whole. Teachers routinely incorporate storytelling activities using words derived from the letters on the literacy tree. Children are then asked to reattach the letter leaves used in their stories. This activity not only strengthens language skills but also trains children to think logically and

express ideas verbally. Observations show that children have become more confident speaking in front of the class, using a variety of words, and demonstrating a greater interest in reading and writing activities. Teachers assess that learning with the literacy tree provides a concrete and continuous learning experience, as children learn through observation, direct action, and meaningful repetition. Through this systematic application, the literacy tree at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center has proven to be not merely a tool for letter recognition but also a strategic means for fostering strong foundational literacy skills from an early age.

d. Storytelling Activities and Children's Language Expression Through the Literacy Tree

Research findings indicate that storytelling activities using the literacy tree at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center are one of the primary strategies for developing children's language expression skills. Teachers routinely hold storytelling sessions in front of the literacy tree at the end of each session. The activity begins with the teacher selecting several letter leaves from the tree and asking the children what letter they see and what word can be formed from that letter. When the teacher picks the letter K, the children say the word "cat," and then the teacher encourages them to create a simple story about a cat. The teacher guides the children with open-ended questions such as "What is the cat doing?" or "Where is the cat playing?" Through this activity, children are trained to develop ideas, construct simple sentences, and express their thoughts in their own words. Observations show that most children have become more confident speaking in front of their peers, using a more varied vocabulary and displaying facial expressions that match the content of the stories they tell.

Teachers at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center also integrate the "Literacy Tree" activity with group storytelling games to enhance children's social interaction and communication skills. In this activity, teachers divide the children into small groups and give each group three to four random letter cards. Each group is asked to form words from these letters and create a short story based on the resulting words. The group receiving the letters M, B, and S forms the words Table, Book, and School, then crafts a simple story about learning activities at school. The teacher facilitates the children to take turns speaking, listen to their peers, and add ideas based on their imagination. This activity strengthens the children's ability to construct sentences, understand storylines, and develop a spirit of mutual respect when communicating. Observations showed that this activity made the classroom atmosphere dynamic and enjoyable, while the children appeared to speak more fluently and were able to connect words with their real-life experiences.

In addition to group activities, the teacher also gave the children the opportunity to express themselves individually through the "My Story Tree" activity. Each child was assigned the task of choosing three letter leaves from the tree and asked to create a story based on those letters. One child chose the letters A, P, and B, and then told a story about "Dad Going to Work." The teacher gave each child time to present in front of the class and tell their story in their own storytelling style. The teacher assessed the children's abilities in terms of speaking confidence, clarity of pronunciation, and the ability to construct

meaningful sentences. The research findings indicate that this activity helps children develop self-confidence, expand their logical thinking skills, and enhance their phonological awareness of letters and word sounds. Children who were initially passive began to show greater engagement, spoke more extensively, and used appropriate intonation when telling their stories.

Teachers also use storytelling activities through the literacy tree to strengthen the connection between children's oral language skills and their readiness to read. After a child finishes telling a story, the teacher writes the main words from the story on the whiteboard and then invites the children to read them together. After the story is over, the teacher writes a word and then asks the children to find the same letters on the literacy tree. This activity helps children understand that the words they speak have written forms that can be read and recognized. Through this approach, children not only learn to speak but also concretely grasp the basic concepts of early literacy. Teachers noted that children increasingly quickly recognize letters from words they frequently use in stories and are able to imitate letter shapes more accurately. Based on the results of observations and interviews, storytelling activities using the literacy tree have proven to improve language expression skills, enrich vocabulary, and foster a love of reading among children at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center.

e. Exploring Students' Understanding Through the Activity of Sticking Letter Shapes

The research findings indicate that the activity of attaching letter leaves to the literacy tree is one of the most effective ways for young children at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center to explore their understanding. Teachers designed this activity as part of active learning, in which each child is given the opportunity to choose a letter leaf and attach it to a branch of the tree according to instructions. Before attaching the leaf, the teacher says the sound of the letter, and the children are asked to repeat it aloud. The teacher says, "This is the letter D; its sound is 'de,'" and then the child finds the letter D leaf and sticks it in the designated spot. This activity trains children's visual skills in recognizing letter shapes while also developing their auditory skills in remembering the sounds. The activity also enhances children's fine motor coordination as they must place the leaves in the correct positions.

The teacher uses this letter-leaf activity as a way to assess each child's understanding of the letters that have been taught. To carry out the activity, the teacher prepares various letter leaves in different colors and sizes, then asks the children to select the letter that matches the word the teacher says. When the teacher says the word "apple," the children are asked to find the letter A and stick it on the topmost branch. Teachers record the children's speed and accuracy in selecting letters as an indicator of their understanding. Children who are still unsure are usually guided through prompting questions such as, "What letter sounds like 'a' at the beginning of the word 'apple'?" Based on observations, children who frequently engage in this activity demonstrate improved ability to recognize letters quickly and accurately. This activity has proven effective in fostering long-term memory of letter shapes and sounds through direct and enjoyable experiences.

The results of the teacher's documentation and observations indicate that the activity of sticking letter-shaped leaves has a positive impact on children's early literacy development. The teacher noted that the children became quicker to recognize letters they frequently stuck, such as the first letter of their names. One child named Rina quickly recognized the letter R because she often stuck it on the tree during the activity. Teachers also used this activity to strengthen social interaction by having children work in pairs, where one child called out a letter and their partner stuck it on the tree. This collaborative activity fosters a spirit of mutual assistance and positive communication among the children. Overall, the letter-leaf sticking activity has proven to enhance children's comprehensive understanding of letters, encompassing cognitive, motor, and social-emotional aspects. At Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center, this activity serves as a symbol of early literacy learning that is enjoyable, concrete, and meaningful for every child.

f. Assessing Students' Understanding in Letter and Word Guessing Activities

The research findings indicate that letter and word guessing activities using the literacy tree as a medium are one form of comprehension elaboration designed by teachers to deepen children's mastery of letters and their sounds. This activity is conducted after the children have become familiar with most of the letters of the alphabet. The teacher begins by taking several letter leaves from the literacy tree and hiding them behind a piece of paper. The teacher then says the sound of the letter, while the children are asked to guess which letter it is. The teacher says the sound "mmm," and the children quickly answer the letter M. Children who answer correctly are given the opportunity to reattach the letter leaf to a branch of the tree. This activity sharpens children's sensitivity to letter sounds and their ability to listen actively.

The teacher expanded the letter-guessing activity into a word-guessing activity as a way to further develop the children's understanding. In this activity, the teacher says a simple word and then asks the children to guess its first letter. When the teacher says "banana," the children answer "B." The teacher then points to the letter "B" on the literacy tree and invites the children to say the word together. This activity helps children understand the relationship between word sounds and letter symbols in a concrete way. The teacher also adds game elements such as "First Come, First Served," where children compete to find the named letter faster. From the observations, it is evident that children are beginning to identify the initial letters of various words without the teacher's assistance. They are not merely memorizing letters but are starting to understand the function of letters as word builders.

The teacher also varied the letter and word guessing activities by incorporating additional visual aids to reinforce the children's understanding. The teacher posted pictures of objects around the literacy tree, then asked the children to guess the first letter of each picture. When the teacher showed a picture of an apple, the children all answered "A" in unison. After that, the teacher asked them to find the letter "A" leaf and stick it next to the picture of the apple. This activity integrates the children's visual, auditory, and motor skills simultaneously, thereby deepening their understanding of letters. The teacher observed that the children began to connect letter symbols, sounds, and word

meanings more quickly. Additionally, this activity encourages children to think logically and analytically, as they need to match the correct letter with the picture.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it was found that the letter and word guessing activities at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center have a positive impact on children's early literacy development. Teachers noted that children became more confident when naming letters in front of their peers and began to demonstrate the ability to read simple syllables without direct instruction. When the teacher displayed the letter B and a picture of a ball, some children spontaneously said the entire word correctly. This activity trains children to listen carefully to instructions, pay attention to the visual form of letters, and remember letter sounds accurately.

Teachers at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center have so far demonstrated their creativity in implementing engaging and enjoyable learning activities. One example of this creativity is the use of a "literacy tree" as a tool to improve early childhood students' letter recognition skills at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center. The effective and optimal use of the literacy tree has successfully improved early childhood students' letter recognition skills at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center. This is illustrated in the table below:

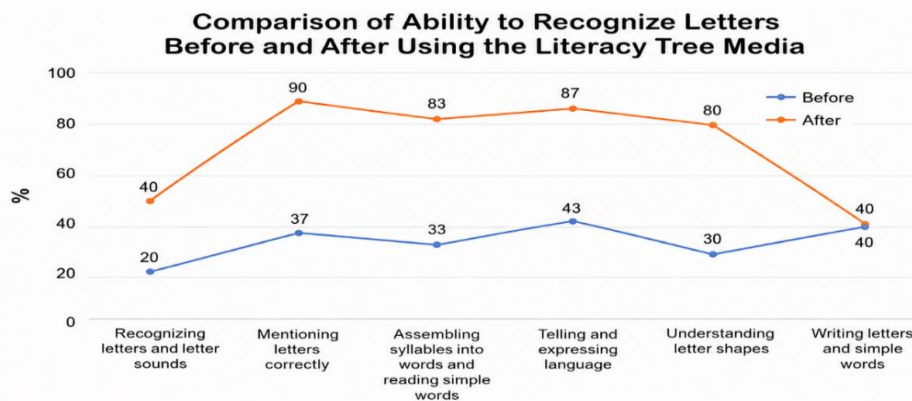


Figure 1. Graph Comparing Letter Recognition Skills

Source: Processed research data, 2026.

The graph above shows a significant improvement in children's ability to recognize letters following the implementation of the Literacy Tree learning tool. The indicator for the ability to recognize letter shapes and sounds showed an increase from 40% to 87%. The implementation involved creating and arranging colorful and engaging Literacy Tree materials within the classroom environment. The methods used were demonstration and direct observation, while the strategy applied was visual learning. The children were actively engaged in recognizing letters through the shapes and colors visualized on the letter leaves. This approach was effective because it utilized the power of visuals to capture the children's attention and made it easier for them to distinguish letter shapes and recognize their sounds. This activity also helped develop the children's perceptual skills through enjoyable, concrete learning experiences.

The indicator of children's ability to correctly identify letters showed an increase from 37% to 90%. The approach implemented by teachers at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center involves letter recognition activities using flashcards and letter-shaped leaves on the "Literacy Tree" display. The method used is play-based learning, incorporating question-and-answer strategies and repetition. This approach is effective because it combines play with formal learning, so children do not feel overwhelmed. The activity is conducted interactively, with the teacher introducing letters one by one while the children say them aloud. The repetition strategy plays a crucial role in reinforcing children's memory of letter shapes and sounds. As a result, children's participation has increased, and their verbal skills have been further honed.

In the next indicator the ability to develop vocabulary and early reading skills there was an increase from 33% to 83%. This was implemented through activities such as matching letters with pictures, using phonics, and small-group discussions. This approach helps children associate letter symbols with the concrete meanings of words. For example, the letter A is linked to a picture of an apple, so that children understand the relationship between sound, letters, and meaning. Small-group activities allow children to learn to help and discuss with one another, fostering a collaborative atmosphere that supports language development. The phonetic method strengthens early reading skills by training children to recognize letter sounds (phonemes) and combine them into simple words, so that basic literacy skills develop naturally.

For indicators four through six, significant improvements were also evident. The percentage of children actively telling stories and expressing themselves through language increased from 43% to 87% through storytelling and role-play strategies. For the indicator of understanding letter shapes through pasting and matching activities, the rate increased from 30% to 80% using hands-on practice and simple experiments. The ability to guess letters and simple words rose from 40% to 90% through educational games and cooperative group strategies. All of these applications demonstrate that learning based on direct experience, social interaction, and a playful atmosphere is highly effective in fostering interest and literacy skills in early childhood.

Discussion

The research findings indicate that the use of the literacy tree medium at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center has a positive impact on improving young children's ability to recognize letters. An overview of the findings shows that children demonstrated improvements in their ability to recognize letter shapes and sounds, correctly name letters, expand their vocabulary, engage in early reading, and tell stories. The analysis of the research focus indicates that this success occurred because the literacy tree media was systematically implemented through visual activities, play-based learning, letter-leaf pasting, and educational games. These findings are interrelated because improved letter recognition skills support children's reading and speaking development. The results of this study align with Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, which explains that children learn through concrete experiences and visual media (Sulaiman, 2024). In addition, Riza's research indicates that concrete materials can improve early literacy skills in young children (Riza, 2024). Factors supporting the research include teacher

creativity and engaging media, while the obstacles include differences in children's abilities.

The activity of introducing letters through the literacy tree medium shows that children are more active and find it easier to understand letters when learning is conducted in an interactive and enjoyable manner. Analysis of the research results shows that the use of colored letter leaves, letter-pointing activities, and letter-guessing games can improve children's visual and auditory skills. The interconnection among the findings is evident in the relationship between letter recognition ability and children's improved ability to name words and understand word initial sounds. These results align with Lev Vygotsky's constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and teacher guidance in children's language development (Sihombing et al., 2024). Fatimah's research also shows that educational games can boost young children's interest in learning and language skills (Fatimah et al., 2023). The factors contributing to the success of this activity include an engaging learning environment and active teacher involvement, while the limiting factor is the varying levels of concentration among the children. As for the impact, the children become more confident and enthusiastic about learning the alphabet (Syofiyanti et al., 2025).

With a focus on vocabulary development and early reading skills, the research results indicate an improvement in children's ability to associate letters with words and read simple syllables. Analysis of the findings shows that activities such as matching letters with pictures, word-building games, and phonetic methods help children understand the relationship between letter symbols and word meanings. Interpretation of these findings suggests that early literacy learning is more effective when linked to concrete objects familiar to children's daily lives. The interconnection among the findings is evident in children's increasing ability to name words after they recognize letter sounds and understand their meanings. These research results align with B.F. Skinner's behaviorist theory, which explains that repetition and positive reinforcement can enhance children's learning abilities. (Darmadi, 2023). Previous research by Sari also indicates that language stimulation through visual media can enrich the vocabulary and reading skills of young children (Sari et al., 2025). The factors supporting this activity include the use of engaging media and a play-based learning strategy, while the obstacle is that some children still have difficulty distinguishing certain letter shapes (Mawarni et al., 2025).

Research findings on storytelling activities and language expression indicate that the literacy tree medium can boost children's confidence in speaking and expressing ideas. The analysis reveals that storytelling activities using letters and words from the literacy tree encourage children to be more active in constructing simple sentences and communicating with peers and teachers. The interrelationship among the findings is evident in the connection between letter recognition, vocabulary mastery, and children's speaking skills, which develop simultaneously. These results align with Tarigan's theory of language development, which states that speaking skills develop through active and meaningful communication practice. (Hindra Kurniawan et al., 2024). Previous research by Khotimah & Al-qolam, (2025) It also explains that storytelling activities can improve

young children's language skills and self-confidence. Factors that support these activities include a communicative classroom atmosphere and the teacher's creativity in guiding the children, while a limiting factor is that some children are still shy about speaking in front of the class. Meanwhile, the impact is that children become more self-confident and develop better communication skills (Nova Afriani, 2025).

In the exploration of understanding through letter-shaped leaf pasting activities and letter- and word-guessing games, the research results indicate that children demonstrated improved ability to recognize letters quickly and accurately. Analysis of the findings reveals that hands-on activities, educational games, and group work helped children understand the relationship between letter shapes, sounds, and words more deeply. Interpretation of these findings suggests that learning based on direct experience is highly effective in enhancing early literacy understanding in young children. The interconnection among the findings is evident in the children's improved ability to recognize letters, which subsequently impacts their basic reading skills and social interactions. These research results align with Jerome Bruner's learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through active experience and direct exploration. (Abdurrahman, 2024). Previous research by Priyanti, (2025) It also explains that educational play activities can significantly improve early childhood reading skills. Factors that support these activities include engaging materials, collaborative activities, and direct child involvement, while barriers include limited learning time and differences in children's learning speeds (Zulianingsih et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the use of the Literacy Tree media has proven effective in improving children's letter recognition skills at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center. The implementation of this media successfully created an active, enjoyable, and meaningful learning environment for young children. Formative assessment results indicate that before the implementation of the Literacy Tree media, most children still struggled to recognize the shapes and sounds of letters. Out of 30 children, only about 11–13 children (37–43%) were able to recognize letters well. However, after participating in a series of Literacy Tree-based learning activities over several weeks, there was a very significant improvement. Summative assessment results show that on average, 26–27 children (87–90%) were able to correctly recognize, name, and understand letters both vowels and consonants. This improvement was evident not only in cognitive aspects but also in the children's social and emotional development, as they became more confident, communicative, and active in every activity.

The results of this study confirm that the success in improving children's letter recognition skills at Darmawan Early Childhood Education Center was not only due to the use of the literacy tree media itself, but also to a combination of appropriate learning strategies, active teacher involvement, and the systematic implementation of formative and summative assessments. Teachers play a crucial role as facilitators who guide, motivate, and continuously assess children's development. Formative assessments are

used to monitor children's daily progress during the learning process, while summative assessments are used to. The Literacy Tree media has also proven effective in fostering children's reading interest and learning motivation because it is visually engaging and allows children to actively participate in learning activities. Therefore, the use of this media can be recommended as an innovative and contextual literacy learning model for other early childhood education institutions. This media not only helps teachers introduce letters effectively but also instills literacy habits from an early age, which serve as a crucial foundation for children's future reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

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