

# **Classroom Management of Sartika Mandiri Batu Bara Kindergarten**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to provide an in-depth description of classroom management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten, Batu Bara, within the context of implementing effective early childhood learning in accordance with the principles of the Independent Curriculum. Classroom management is a crucial aspect in creating a safe and comfortable learning environment that stimulates holistic child development. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. The results indicate that classroom management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten is carried out through careful planning, structured yet flexible daily activities, and regular evaluation and reflection. The physical classroom environment is arranged in the form of thematic play corners, positive teacher-child interactions are conducted, and child behavior management is based on positive discipline. The main supporting factors in classroom management are the principal's participatory leadership, collaboration between teachers, and parental involvement. Meanwhile, challenges faced include limited facilities, a less-than-ideal teacher-student ratio, and the need to improve teacher competency in implementing the Independent Curriculum. Overall, classroom management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten demonstrates good practices, but still requires strengthening in terms of training and infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Classroom Management, Classroom Management, Early Childhood Education, Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten, Independent Curriculum

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## Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) serves as a crucial foundation for shaping children's character, intelligence, and social skills. Early childhood is known as the golden age, a period when a child's various potentials develop significantly and require appropriate, directed, and continuous stimulation. In this context, the teacher's role in managing an ECE classroom becomes extremely vital. Effective classroom management not only creates a conducive learning environment but also promotes optimal child development across physical, socio-emotional, language, and cognitive aspects (Suyadi, 2020).

Classroom management in the ECE setting is significantly different from that at other levels of education. Teachers are not merely transmitters of knowledge; they also serve as facilitators, caregivers, observers, and mentors who must skillfully manage the dynamics of highly diverse groups of young children. Therefore, classroom management approaches in ECE must be flexible, inclusive, and emphasize play-based and joyful real-life learning experiences (Roestiyah, N. K., 2019). A classroom atmosphere that is safe, orderly, loving, and well-structured provides a psychological space that encourages exploration, creativity, and children's courage to learn.

In practice, classroom management in ECE encompasses many aspects, including arranging child-friendly classroom environments, selecting educational play tools, managing time, controlling children's behavior, developing daily routines, and applying varied learning methods. The success of all these elements heavily depends on the teacher's capacity to implement managerial principles effectively, which involves planning, implementation, evaluation, and periodic reflection on classroom management (Mulyasa, E., 2013).

Sartika Mandiri kindergarten Batu Bara is one of the ECE institutions that has been operating for more than a decade, located in Desa Sukamaju, Lima Puluh Subdistrict, Batu Bara Regency, North Sumatra. This school is committed to providing quality early childhood education services and has implemented various innovative approaches to classroom management. However, with the implementation of recent education policies such as the Merdeka Curriculum, the school also faces new challenges, particularly regarding the need for more flexible and child-centered classroom management.

Some teachers at Sartika Mandiri kindergarten have demonstrated strong classroom management skills for example, by setting up engaging learning corners, establishing consistent morning routines, and building positive emotional relationships with children. However, variations in classroom management effectiveness among teachers still exist, especially in terms of consistency in organizing daily activities, using instructional media, and handling children's misbehavior.

In addition, external challenges such as limited facilities and infrastructure, an imbalanced teacher-to-child ratio, and low parental involvement in supporting children's learning at home also affect the quality of classroom management. These conditions illustrate that classroom management in ECE is not only about teaching techniques but also reflects the teacher's ability to adapt to the environment and the individual as well as group needs of the children (Isjoni, 2010).

Therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth study on how classroom management is applied at Sartika Mandiri kindergarten Batu Bara, including the strategies used by teachers to manage classroom dynamics, the challenges they face, and the supporting and inhibiting

factors involved. Through this research, the author aims to provide empirical insights and practical recommendations for educators, school principals, and other stakeholders in efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education.

This study is also expected to enrich academic discourse on ECE management, particularly in the context of educational institutions in rural areas that face various limitations yet strive to innovate and enhance the quality of their services. The findings from this research will make a valuable contribution not only to the development of ECE teachers' capacity but also as input for formulating education policies based on real needs in the field.

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Nature of Classroom Management in Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

Classroom management in ECE refers to the process of planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling learning activities conducted by teachers to create a conducive, safe, and enjoyable learning environment for young children (Risma Dwi Aini, 2020). Classroom management at the ECE level differs significantly from that of higher educational levels, as the teacher serves not only as an educator but also as a facilitator, child development observer, caregiver, and guide (Aini, R. D., 2020). According to Ardhi Hidayat (2021), effective classroom management establishes optimal learning conditions by utilizing human resources, facilities, methods, and materials to manage and reduce children's disruptive behaviors effectively.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model explains that a child's development is influenced by interactions between the individual and their environment, including the classroom as a microsystem, and connections with the family, school, and community as part of the mesosystem. A well-managed ECE classroom becomes the primary learning ecosystem that supports the holistic development of children (Hidayat, 2021). The Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) approach (Bredekamp, 1997) emphasizes learning activities tailored to the child's developmental stage, individual needs, and cultural context. Teachers are expected to design physical environments, interactions, and activities that are both challenging and achievable for children within their zone of proximal development (Kader, H. B., 2020).

Learning through play is the primary strategy in ECE. This method allows children to develop creativity, socio-emotional skills, language, and cognition in a joyful, stress-free atmosphere. Modern teachers are expected to create educational games and provide space for exploration (Bronfenbrenner, U., 1979).

### **2.2 Classroom Management Strategies in ECE**

Some effective classroom management strategies in ECE include:

1. Responsive and flexible classroom arrangement: Dividing the classroom into specific areas such as play corners, reading, and art helps children focus on activities without distraction.
2. Consistent and child-friendly daily schedule: A clear routine (morning circle, core activities, closing) fosters stability and psychological security.
3. Positive discipline: Teachers promote desirable behavior using praise, reinforcement, and persuasive communication rather than punishment.

4. Effective communication: With both children and parents, including conveying expectations simply and encouraging family involvement in learning (Sri Wulan & Lara Fridani, 2021).

A study at PAUD Melati III found that a well-organized classroom layout can enhance children's independence, decision-making skills, and responsibility for educational materials. Meanwhile, at PAUD Al Furqan Jember, teachers were found to apply classroom management functions systematically beginning with planning (*via RPPM and RPPH documents*), organizing activities, modeling leadership as role models, and maintaining a conducive classroom environment.

To address issues like bullying or interactional challenges, a child-friendly classroom management approach has been developed. This strategy emphasizes inclusive environments, teacher training on responsive interaction, and early childhood-safe classroom management guidelines. Furthermore, some modern ECE institutions have started utilizing educational technology (e.g., tablets, interactive apps, multimedia) to facilitate classroom management, document child development, and enhance children's engagement through visual and interactive tools.

## Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a case study design (Moleong, L. J., 2017). The purpose is to provide an in-depth description of classroom management practices implemented by teachers at Sartika Mandiri kindergarten Batu Bara, as well as to understand the influencing factors (Sugiyono, 2016). The research was conducted at Sartika Mandiri kindergarten, located in Lima Puluh Subdistrict, Batu Bara Regency, North Sumatra. This school was purposively selected due to its implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* and its experience in managing early childhood classrooms.

### 3.1 Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques used include (Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M., 1994):

1. Direct observation of classroom activities, including classroom layout, children's activities, and teacher-child interactions.
2. Semi-structured interviews with the school principal, teachers, and students' parents.
3. Documentation review, such as daily and weekly lesson plans (RPPH, RPPM), classroom photos, and daily activity schedules.

### 3.2 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model, which includes:

1. Data reduction: filtering important information obtained from observations and interviews.
2. Data display: organizing data into thematic narratives.
3. Conclusion drawing and verification: interpreting findings and continuously verifying them to ensure accuracy.

Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation, as well as member checking to confirm the truthfulness of the information from key informants (Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G., 1985).

## Result and Discussion

This study was conducted at TK Sartika Mandiri, located in Lima Puluh Subdistrict, Batu Bara Regency, North Sumatra. The school is a private kindergarten actively implementing the *Merdeka Curriculum* and committed to improving the quality of early childhood education, particularly in classroom management that supports holistic learning for young children.

### Implementation of Classroom Management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten, Batu Bara

The implementation of classroom management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten is generally considered effective. Based on observations and interviews, the teachers demonstrated an understanding that classroom management should not only focus on physical order but also foster social interaction, emotional development, and a joyful learning environment.

#### 1. Classroom Planning

Planning is carried out through the preparation of Weekly Lesson Plans (RPPM) and Daily Lesson Plans (RPPH), aligned with the principles of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, especially the play-based and project-based learning approach. Teachers regularly evaluate the readiness of learning tools, the division of play zones, and daily routines for the children.

#### 2. Physical Environment Arrangement

Classrooms are arranged with multiple activity centers, such as:

- a. Art and Creativity Corner
- b. Block Play Corner
- c. Literacy and Numeracy Corner
- d. Imaginative Play Corner

These arrangements allow children to freely explore and move according to their interests under teacher supervision. The physical setup is also rotated thematically to match the learning topics.

#### 3. Activity Implementation

Teachers implement daily activities consistently from morning welcome routines, core learning activities, breaks, to closing sessions. Interactions between teachers and students are warm and empathetic. Children are given freedom but are still guided in completing their tasks.

### 4.1 Key Aspects of Classroom Management

Classroom management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten involves three primary aspects:

#### a. Physical Management

Teachers maintain daily classroom cleanliness and order. Visual aids such as name tags, color-coded areas, and activity boards help children recognize their space and responsibilities. Educational toys and storage shelves are provided and managed jointly by teachers and children.

#### b. Child Behavior Management

Positive discipline is consistently applied. Children are not subject to physical or verbal punishment; instead, teachers reinforce good behavior through praise, reward stars, and motivational storytelling. An individualized approach is used for children with special needs or adaptation challenges.

c. Time and Activity Management

Daily schedules are simple and easy for children to follow, creating a sense of security. Playtime is not strictly limited but adjusted to the classroom's rhythm and needs.

#### 4.2 Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

a. Supporting Factors

1. Participative leadership by the principal that encourages teacher innovation.
2. Strong teamwork among teachers in classroom management.
3. Parental involvement through parenting programs and monthly discussions.
4. Adequate physical facilities supporting thematic learning.

b. Inhibiting Factors

1. Overcrowded classes, limiting individual supervision.
2. Lack of regular training on classroom management strategies aligned with the *Merdeka Curriculum*.
3. Adjustment period for new students, especially at the start of the semester, which demands extra attention from teachers.

During the research, it was observed that teachers at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten were highly proactive in creating creative methods, such as the implementation of a "Daily Emotion Board" where children choose a picture that represents their feelings each morning. This innovation helps teachers monitor children's emotions and learning readiness effectively.

The findings indicate that classroom management at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten is quite effective, though some challenges remain. The management process includes planning, implementation, and evaluation, all designed to be child-friendly and aligned with early childhood developmental needs.

##### *Classroom Management Planning*

The planning aligns with holistic-integrative learning principles and the *Merdeka Curriculum*. Teachers prepare RPPM and RPPH based on children's needs and interests, and design a learning environment that encourages exploration, independence, and creativity. This supports Suyadi's (2020) argument that a well-structured environment influences children's active engagement.

##### *Classroom Management Implementation*

Teachers conduct daily activities systematically yet flexibly. Learning is based on play and thematic activities, with classrooms divided into activity centers, reflecting the learning center model commonly recommended in ECE. Teacher-child interaction is two-way, with the teacher acting as both facilitator and active guide. Child behavior is managed through positive discipline, emphasizing communication, reinforcement of good behavior, and simple responsibilities aligned with modern pedagogical principles that children learn more effectively through habit, not coercion (Nugraheni, 2021).

##### *Evaluation and Reflection*

Teachers at Sartika Mandiri conduct weekly reflections on classroom management. Evaluation is done collaboratively among teaching staff, focusing on improving classroom

layout, teaching strategies, and handling classroom challenges. This reflects a participatory and collaborative management approach essential for sustaining classroom quality.

Supporting factors include the school principal's supportive leadership, strong teacher collaboration, and parental engagement. Meanwhile, challenges such as limited space, non-ideal class sizes, and lack of intensive training in the *Merdeka Curriculum* remain significant obstacles.

Overall, these findings support Woolfolk's (2016) theory that effective classroom management depends on the synergy between the physical environment, social interactions, and the teacher's role in fostering a conducive learning atmosphere.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of research conducted at Sartika Mandiri Kindergarten Batu Bara, it can be concluded that classroom management has been implemented quite well and reflects the principles of early childhood education. Teachers are able to design an engaging learning environment that supports children's holistic development, with thematic classroom layouts and play-based learning.

Child behavior management is carried out through a positive discipline approach, where interactions between teachers and children are warm, communicative, and child-centered. Furthermore, teachers and the principal regularly evaluate and reflect on classroom management to improve the implementation of activities that align with student dynamics. Supporting factors for successful classroom management include the principal's open leadership, strong teacher collaboration, and parental involvement. However, challenges such as limited facilities, a suboptimal student population, and a lack of teacher training on the Independent Curriculum remain obstacles that need to be addressed immediately. Overall, classroom management at this kindergarten has been effective but still requires ongoing support to optimize the quality of early childhood education.

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