

The Influence of Rhythmic Gymnastics activities on Gross Motor Development (Children Aged 5-6 Years)

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood is an individual who is experiencing a rapid development process, so that children who are still in preschool need gross motoric development of children and have to do it, one of which is by using rhythmic gymnastics. The aims of this study was to determine the role of rhythmic gymnastics in improving gross motor skills in motor development and to determine gross motoric development of children after doing rhythmic exercise in early childhood. The methodology in this study uses a qualitative approach with literature review research methods on reliable sources such as journal articles, books and the like. Obtained the results of facts and data that the application of rhythmic gymnastics in improving gross motor skills of early childhood means that the more varied and innovative activities there are, the more opportunities to improve gross motor skills in children so that they can develop optimally. The implications of the findings of this paper provide an overview of the application of rhythmic gymnastics in improving gross motor skills in early childhood

Keywords: rhythmic gymnastics; gross motor skills; early childhood

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood refers to children aged 0-6. During this period, children's growth and development progress very rapidly, which is why it is called the golden age. Even young children are said to be unique individuals. Because each child has different abilities. At this stage, children need stimulation to develop optimally. According to Latif et al. (2013:72), child development is an integration of understanding aspects of religious and moral values, physical, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional. Given the numerous aspects of child development that children must possess, the stimulation and stimuli provided by teachers must be appropriate. One aspect of early childhood development that must be nurtured is motor skills. Motor skills development is the development of the elements of maturity and control of body movements related to the motor centers in the brain. Gross motor movements involve the activity of the child's hand, leg, and whole body muscles. These movements rely on the maturity of coordination. Gross motor skills are movements that coordinate the entire body using large muscles. According to Indrijati (2016:32), motor development is one of the important factors in the overall development of an individual. Motor skills are movements performed by the entire body that involve both small and large muscles. Hapsari (2016:7) states that gross motor skills are movements performed using the work of large muscles

and the ability to control those large muscles. Examples of activities at school include running, walking, jumping, kicking, and climbing. Therefore, early childhood education (PAUD) needs to provide various activities that can develop aspects of motor development. The improvement of children's physical motor skills is also closely related to several activities that are the main activities for early childhood. The development of gross motor skills can be stimulated through various activities, one of which is rhythmic gymnastics.

Rhythmic gymnastics is a body movement accompanied by regular music. According to Muhajir (2007:97), rhythmic gymnastics, also known as rhythmic exercise, is a gymnastic movement performed in time with music or free exercises performed rhythmically. Rhythmic gymnastics is one of the physical activities that is easy for children to follow. Rhythmic gymnastics includes music accompaniment that makes children happy, so they are willing to follow the movements of rhythmic gymnastics. In addition, the movements are easy for children to remember, especially the hand swing movements, foot swing movements, coordination movements between hands and feet, and adjusting the precision of movements to the rhythm of the music. Rhythmic gymnastics also has significant benefits for children, such as training balance, body agility, and aiding the motor development of young children. According to Nenggala (2007:82), rhythmic gymnastics is a type of exercise performed in sync with music or singing. Gymnastics also has the potential to develop basic motor skills for kindergarten children.

Based on the observations that have been conducted, especially regarding the physical motor skills of children in Group B at TK DW Gendol, Sine District, Ngawi Regency, they have not developed optimally. In addition, activities that develop children's gross motor skills are rarely conducted; when they are, they only happen once a week, and these activities are neither enjoyable nor optimal. Activities are only focused on fine motor skill development, such as coloring, writing, collaging, and drawing. As a result, children are less active in moving during rhythmic gymnastics activities. This is seen from the lack of gross motor movements in children during physical activities. Like performing jumping movements, tiptoeing, turning the body, swinging the arms sideways to the left and right, in rhythmic gymnastics movements. Conditions like this provide motivation for research on children's gross motor skills. One way to improve children's gross motor skills is through rhythmic gymnastics activities. The exercise that will be used to improve children's gross motor skills is cheerful health gymnastics.

METHOD

The research method used by the researcher is a literature review or literature study, also known as a library study. A library study is a description or explanation of literature relevant to a specific field or topic. Provides a review of what has been discussed

or talked about by researchers or authors, supporting theories and hypotheses, presented or questioned problems, and appropriate methods and methodologies (Setyosari, 2016). This literature review is compiled through the examination of several published journal sources. The journal discusses the development of gross motor skills. The search utilized several sites, namely Google Scholar, ProQuest, Ebsco, Research Gate, NCBI, and Springer

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Rhythmic gymnastics has been identified as an effective approach for enhancing gross motor development in early childhood. At this developmental stage, children exhibit a natural tendency toward movement, particularly when paired with upbeat and rhythmic music that allows them to express themselves freely. Gymnastics, as noted by Yunaika (2020), plays an essential role in optimizing physical activity for child development, fostering endurance, agility, flexibility, coordination, and cooperation.

Motor development is crucial for cognitive, social, and physical growth. Aye, Oo, Khin, Kuramoto-Ahuja, and Maruyama (2017) emphasized that motor skills serve both diagnostic and developmental purposes, allowing practitioners to identify abnormal development and tailor interventions accordingly. Similarly, Galdi, D'Anna, Pastena, and Paloma (2015) explained that gross motor development involves coordinated movement using large muscle groups and requires the synchronization of multiple body parts.

Rhythmic gymnastics, as defined by Sudarsini (2013), integrates a variety of body movements with rhythm through clapping, tapping, singing, or musical accompaniment. It can consist of both structured and free-form movements, promoting harmony between physical expression and auditory stimuli (Wiradiharja, 2014; Utomo, 2008). Hasibuan, Fauzi, and Novianti (2020) further described rhythmic gymnastics as a fusion of sports movements and dance, where rhythm dictates movement patterns. Ahmad, cited in Zulfahmi (2016), emphasized that movement and rhythm coordination are essential outcomes of rhythmic gymnastics.

Summary of Expert Perspectives on Rhythmic Gymnastics and Gross Motor Development

Author(s)	Contribution
Yunaika (2020)	Gymnastics optimizes physical activity for child development.
Sudarsini (2013)	Rhythmic gymnastics combines movement with musical rhythm.
Aye et al. (2017)	Motor skills aid in diagnosis and developmental improvement.
Galdi et al. (2015)	Gross motor development involves large muscle groups and coordinated movement.

Wiradiharja (2014); Utomo (2008)	Rhythmic gymnastics emphasizes rhythmic movement, structured or free.
Hasibuan et al. (2020)	Gymnastics merges physical exercise with artistic dance.
Zulfahmi (2016)	Movement coordination with rhythm is a core element.
Hartina & Abubakar (2019)	Improved coordination through rhythmic gymnastics.
Sulistiyowati & Sukamti (2018)	Rhythmic movement improves combined arm-leg coordination.
Bakaniene et al. (2018)	Gross motor skills foster self-confidence and peer acceptance.
Saputri et al. (2017)	Rhythmic gymnastics is effective and easy for young children.
Arumnintyas et al. (2017)	Movement with rhythm enhances motor skill acquisition.
Rizkiyah et al. (2018)	Rhythmic exercises stimulate optimal development in early childhood.

Gross motor skills play a fundamental role in early childhood development as they involve large muscle group activities that serve as the foundation for various daily movements. Actions such as running, jumping, walking, and throwing not only support physical fitness but also contribute significantly to children's social, cognitive, and emotional development. Children who regularly engage in gross motor activities tend to exhibit better energy regulation, balanced posture, and greater physical endurance in facing daily challenges (Astari, Suadnyana, & Wiyasa, 2015; Firdaus, Yulianingsih, & Hayati, 2018).

Rhythmic gymnastics, as a structured physical activity that emphasizes synchronized movements with musical rhythm, effectively stimulates all of these developmental domains. By following the beat of the music, children learn to regulate the tempo of their movements, control muscular strength, and synchronize different parts of the body. This activity also encourages children to concentrate, follow instructions, and recognize musical and movement patterns—indirectly strengthening essential cognitive functions.

Furthermore, children who participate in rhythmic gymnastics show not only improved physical traits such as balance and coordination but also enhanced social skills. Through group-based activities, they learn cooperation, patience, turn-taking, and empathy towards peers. These social competencies form a vital foundation for a child's success both in school settings and within their broader community (Febrialismanto, 2017).

Therefore, integrating rhythmic gymnastics into early childhood learning or play activities provides not only physical benefits but also serves as a holistic educational

strategy. It simultaneously nurtures motor, cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of child development. This aligns with the core principles of early childhood education, which emphasize learning through play and active movement as the most developmentally appropriate approach for young learners.

Indicators of Gross Motor Development (Ages 5–6)

No.	Indicator
1	Performing coordinated movements to train balance, flexibility, and agility.
2	Coordinating arms, legs, and head during dance or exercise.
3	Engaging in structured physical games.
4	Using both right and left hands with skill.
5	Independently performing hygiene-related activities.

The indicators listed above reflect the core competencies expected in children aged 5 to 6 as part of their gross motor development milestones. Each of these indicators plays a significant role in ensuring children acquire the necessary physical readiness and autonomy for school and daily life.

Indicator 1 emphasizes the importance of movement coordination, particularly for developing balance, flexibility, and agility. These attributes not only support physical performance but also enhance postural control, reduce the risk of injury, and prepare children for more complex physical tasks in the future.

Indicator 2, which involves the coordination of multiple body parts simultaneously, reflects an advanced stage of neuromuscular development. This ability is crucial in activities such as dancing, sports, or even everyday tasks like dressing or climbing stairs. Rhythmic gymnastics effectively promotes this ability by encouraging children to synchronize their upper and lower body movements in time with rhythm or music.

Indicator 3—participation in structured physical games—fosters not only motor skills but also discipline, rule-following, and teamwork. These social behaviors are essential as children begin interacting more deeply with their peers and engaging in more complex group settings.

Indicator 4, the use of both right and left hands, highlights the importance of **bilateral coordination**. This is not only relevant to motor development but also supports cognitive growth and brain lateralization. Activities in rhythmic gymnastics that involve symmetrical and asymmetrical arm movements help train both sides of the body equally.

Indicator 5, the ability to independently perform hygiene-related tasks, demonstrates the practical application of gross motor development in everyday life. Actions such as brushing teeth, dressing, or using the toilet require strength, coordination, and body awareness—skills that are strengthened through regular physical activity.

Collectively, these indicators point to the necessity of intentional and consistent movement-based learning experiences. Rhythmic gymnastics, as a joyful and structured activity, aligns perfectly with these developmental goals. Its integration into early

childhood routines ensures that children not only meet developmental benchmarks but also gain the confidence and motivation to lead active, healthy lifestyles.

Extended Discussion

The effectiveness of rhythmic gymnastics in enhancing gross motor development is not only rooted in physical activity but also in the psychological and emotional responses elicited during participation. Children who engage in rhythmic movement experience heightened mood, increased focus, and a sense of enjoyment, which are crucial factors for sustained engagement and long-term developmental benefits. Rhythmic activities activate the vestibular and proprioceptive systems, which are central to body awareness and spatial orientation, further improving a child's balance and coordination.

Moreover, rhythmic gymnastics is inherently inclusive. It allows children of different ability levels to participate and progress at their own pace. For children with developmental delays or disabilities, rhythmic gymnastics serves as an adaptive physical education method, promoting integration and fostering confidence through achievable movement tasks. This inclusivity also strengthens social skills, as group activities encourage teamwork, communication, and empathy among peers.

Another significant contribution of rhythmic gymnastics is in the development of executive function skills. When children memorize sequences, follow musical cues, and synchronize their movements with others, they are not only building motor skills but also enhancing cognitive functions such as working memory, inhibitory control, and cognitive flexibility. This relationship between movement and cognition is supported by growing evidence in developmental neuroscience, showing that physical movement stimulates brain areas associated with learning and memory.

To maximize the impact of rhythmic gymnastics, structured programs should be integrated into early childhood education curricula. These programs should include a progression of activities tailored to different developmental stages, starting with basic rhythm games and gradually introducing more complex sequences and coordination tasks. Music selection is also critical—using culturally familiar and age-appropriate songs helps maintain engagement and reinforces rhythm recognition.

In addition, teachers and caregivers must be adequately trained to facilitate rhythmic gymnastics effectively. Professional development workshops and resource materials can support educators in delivering structured lessons, observing motor progress, and making necessary adaptations for individual learners. Parental involvement should also be encouraged through at-home activity guides and interactive family events that highlight the benefits of gross motor development.

Sample Weekly Rhythmic Gymnastics Plan for Preschool Children

Day	Activity Focus	Movement Example
Monday	Basic Rhythm Recognition	Clapping, tapping to a beat
Tuesday	Balance and Coordination	Walking on a line, tiptoeing
Wednesday	Locomotor Skills	Hopping, skipping to music
Thursday	Upper-Limb Coordination	Arm swings with scarves or ribbons
Friday	Full-Body Integration	Dance routine combining all skills

CONCLUSION

Through rhythmic gymnastics, the basic movements of the body will be trained expressively and will bring significant changes to children with gross motor delays. One way to improve gross motor skills in early childhood is by inviting them to participate in rhythmic gymnastics activities. Rhythmic gymnastics is one of the enjoyable activities for children at school, and with simple movements, it can be easily followed by them.

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