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Improving The Responsibility Of Children Aged 5-6 Years Through Practical Life Skills

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Abstract: Children aged 5–6 are at a crucial stage of social-emotional development, during which responsibility serves as a key foundation for the development of their character and adaptability. This study aims to enhance the sense of responsibility in children aged 5–6 years through practical life skills activities. This research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. The research subjects were 15 children aged 5-6 years in group B at a public early childhood education center in Surakarta. The study was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of the stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and interviews. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation. Data analysis was carried out using interactive analysis and comparative descriptive techniques. The results of the study indicate that implementing practical life skills activities can improve children's sense of responsibility. This improvement is evident in the increase in classical completeness, which was 26.66% in the pre-action stage, rose to 53.33% in Cycle I, and reached 86.66% in Cycle II. The obstacles encountered in this study included differences in children's abilities and characteristics, which affected the speed at which they completed the activities. Efforts to overcome these obstacles included providing gradual guidance and repeating activities to help children focus better and take responsibility for their assigned tasks.

Keywords: **responsibility; practical life skills; children aged 5–6 years**

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INTRODUCTION

Early childhood refers to the period from ages 0 to 8, a crucial phase in the human life cycle. This period is characterized by rapid developmental progress across various dimensions, including the social-emotional domain (Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia, 2014). Optimal social-emotional development is an essential foundation for children's character formation and their capacity to interact constructively with their environment. Children with well-developed social-emotional skills generally demonstrate the ability to regulate their emotions, express care and concern for others, establish healthy interpersonal relationships, and display socially appropriate behaviors. Conversely, difficulties in social-emotional development may lead to various challenges later in life, including difficulties in adaptation, reduced self-confidence, and the emergence of behaviors that deviate from accepted social norms (Santrock, 2011).

The social-emotional domain is one of the six domains of early childhood development. This development is facilitated by learning processes through which children adapt to their environment. These processes occur through observation, imitation, and interaction with individuals in their environment (Fitriya, 2022). Therefore, stimulating social-emotional development during early childhood is crucial, as it establishes a foundation for children's success in their subsequent academic journey and social interactions. Responsibility is a crucial element in the social-emotional development of children aged 5–6 years. Responsibility can be understood as a child's awareness and ability to fulfill basic tasks or obligations appropriate to their developmental stage, as well as to understand the implications of their actions (Hurlock, 2022). Responsibility is an important component of children's social-emotional maturity and should be taught by taking into account children's capacities and developmental stages, as suggested by Mulianingsih (2024). Suryani and Gunawan (2018) explain that responsibility refers to the obligation of every individual to fulfill their duties carefully and to accept the consequences of their actions. For young children, the concept of responsibility extends beyond completing tasks to include awareness of the importance of caring for themselves, their surroundings, and their social relationships (Cairns & Devlin, 2022). Responsibility is an important component of children's social-emotional maturity and should be taught by taking into account their capacities and developmental stages, as stated by Salsabila and Nurmainah (2021). Kurniasih et al. (2020) explain that responsibility refers to the obligation of every individual to fulfill their duties carefully and to accept the consequences of their actions. For young children, responsibility is not limited to task completion but also includes awareness of the importance of caring for themselves, their environment, and their social relationships. Based on research by Mulianingsih (2024), responsibility in early childhood can be categorized into personal, social, and academic responsibility. Personal responsibility includes children's ability to care for themselves and their belongings, such as tidying up toys, maintaining personal hygiene, and dressing independently. Children who can carry out these activities demonstrate an understanding of the functions and responsibilities they are expected to fulfill.

Cahyati (2018) explains that responsibility in children aged 5–6 years can be identified through several indicators, including tidying up equipment after use, taking care of their own belongings and those of others, acknowledging and apologizing for mistakes, taking care of their personal belongings, and carrying out assigned tasks to the best of their ability.

Based on the results of an initial observation conducted at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta, the development of responsibility among children aged 5–6 years was still not optimal. Of the 15 children observed, most had not yet demonstrated responsible behaviors, such as tidying up toys after use, taking care of their own belongings and those of others, acknowledging their mistakes, and completing simple tasks independently. This condition indicates that the children had not yet developed adequate awareness of the need to fulfill their responsibilities and maintain the learning environment. If not addressed appropriately, these difficulties may affect children's social adaptability, independence, and character development in later stages. The limited development of responsibility among children aged 5–6 years may be attributed to several factors, including individual differences, insufficient and

inconsistent reinforcement of responsible habits, and teaching methods that remain predominantly focused on cognitive domains, as reported by Leethong-in et al. (2023). Therefore, a learning approach that is connected to children's immediate environment and actively engages them in contextual activities is needed. One approach to address this need is a practical life skills activity (Zănna et al., 2024).

Practical life skills refer to habituation activities related to everyday tasks that are designed to develop children's responsibility, independence, and social-emotional skills (Gutek, 2013). This approach originates from the Montessori Method, which emphasizes learning through direct experience and concrete actions, such as pouring water, organizing materials in the environment, and caring for belongings (Yanti, 2022). Through participation in practical life skill activities, children learn to coordinate their movements, understand the steps involved in completing a task, and develop self-confidence and a sense of responsibility (Saerah, 2024). These findings are consistent with Erikson's theory, which suggests that children aged 5–6 years are in the initiative versus guilt stage, a period during which initiative and a sense of ownership begin to develop (Mokalu & Boangmanalu, 2021).

Theoretically, responsibility is an important component of social-emotional development in early childhood, as it is associated with children's ability to regulate themselves, interact socially, and understand the consequences of their actions (Hurlock, 1999; Santrock, 2011). Therefore, appropriate stimulation is needed through learning experiences that involve direct experiences and habituation. One approach is practical life skills activities, which consist of everyday activities designed to develop children's independence, discipline, and responsibility through active participation in real-life situations (Gutek, 2013).

This study is novel in that it specifically examines the development of responsibility among children aged 5–6 years through practical life skills activities. Unlike previous studies, which generally discuss life skills in a broader context, this study focuses on implementing practical life skills activities as a form of contextual habituation in early childhood education settings. In addition, this study aims to address a gap in learning practices at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta, particularly regarding the implementation of habituation activities aimed at developing children's responsibility, which has not yet been optimally implemented. Therefore, this study is entitled **"Improving the Responsibility of Children Aged 5–6 Years through Practical Life Skill Activities."**

METHODS

This study was conducted in Group B at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta, Central Java, during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research site was selected because practical life skills activities aimed at improving children's responsibility had not previously been implemented, and issues related to social skills, particularly responsibility, among children aged 5–6 years were still observed. In addition, the school provided support for the study's implementation, while the use of practical, life-skill-based learning media remained limited.

The study was conducted over a period of ten months, from April 2025 to January 2026, and consisted of three stages: preparation, implementation, and reporting. The preparation stage included coordination, problem identification, proposal development,

and the preparation of research materials and instruments. The implementation stage comprised the pre-action phase, interventions in Cycles I and II, and data collection. The final stage involved data analysis and the preparation of the research report. Prihantoro and Hidayat (2019) stated that this study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods within a classroom action research (CAR) design. The selection of classroom action research was based on the research objective, which was oriented toward gradually improving and enhancing children's responsibility through concrete actions implemented during the classroom learning process. The study adopted the Kurt Lewin model, which consists of four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. These four stages were carried out cyclically, repeatedly, and continuously until the predetermined success indicators were achieved.

This study included 15 children, comprising 7 boys and 8 girls, aged 5–6 years in Group B. All children participated as research subjects and took part in the entire series of activities through the implementation of practical life skill activities adapted to their developmental stages and needs. The research data consisted of qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected through observations and interviews with the Group B teacher to obtain an overview of the initial condition of children's responsibility at ages 5–6 years and the changes that occurred following the intervention. Meanwhile, quantitative data were obtained from observations of children's responsible behaviors during the pre-action stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II. They were subsequently analyzed to assess improvements in children's responsibility at the classical level.

The data sources in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the children and the Group B teacher through observations and interviews conducted during the implementation of practical life skill activities. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from various supporting documents, including the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH), teachers' field notes, learning scenarios, and documentation such as photographs and learning activity records.

Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted directly and systematically using a checklist with a 1–5 Likert scale to record children's responsible behaviors during the practical life skill activities. A five-point Likert scale is widely used as an observational instrument to measure children's behaviors, such as responsibility, independence, and discipline, because qualitative behavioral aspects can be transformed into quantitative data through a scoring system (Sugiyono, 2019). This scale enables researchers to establish clear and structured assessment criteria, allowing observational results to be analyzed more objectively. This view is consistent with Arikunto (2013), who stated that using rating scales in observation facilitates the systematic recording of behavior and reduces assessor subjectivity. Furthermore, Widoyoko (2014) argued that rating scales are effective for assessing affective and behavioral aspects because they can progressively indicate individuals' levels of achievement. The indicators of responsibility were adapted from Cahyati (2018), which include the ability to tidy up equipment or toys after use, take care of one's own belongings and those of others, acknowledge mistakes

and apologize when necessary, participate in caring for school toys, take care of personal belongings, and carry out assigned tasks to the best of one's ability.

Data analysis in this study was conducted using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were analyzed using a descriptive-comparative approach, comparing the levels of responsibility demonstrated by children aged 5–6 years during the pre-action stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II, with each Cycle comprising the planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection stages. The results of the reflection at each Cycle served as the basis for improving and refining actions in subsequent Cycles until the research objectives were achieved. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The study was considered successful when at least 75% of the children achieved mastery of responsibility skills, with a minimum score of 4 and a maximum score of 5. These scores referred to the criteria for children's developmental achievement levels, as measured through indicators of responsibility for children aged 5–6 years developed by Cahyati (2018). Higher scores indicated greater responsibility among the children.

Table 1. Assessment Instrument for Responsibility Indicators

Score	Category	Assessment Rubric
1	Not Yet Developed	The child is not yet able to perform the task.
2	Beginning to Develop	The child is beginning to perform the task.
3	Developing as Expected	The child can perform the task but still requires assistance.
4	Well Developed	The child can perform the task independently without teacher assistance.
5	Very Well Developed	The child can perform the task independently and assist peers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

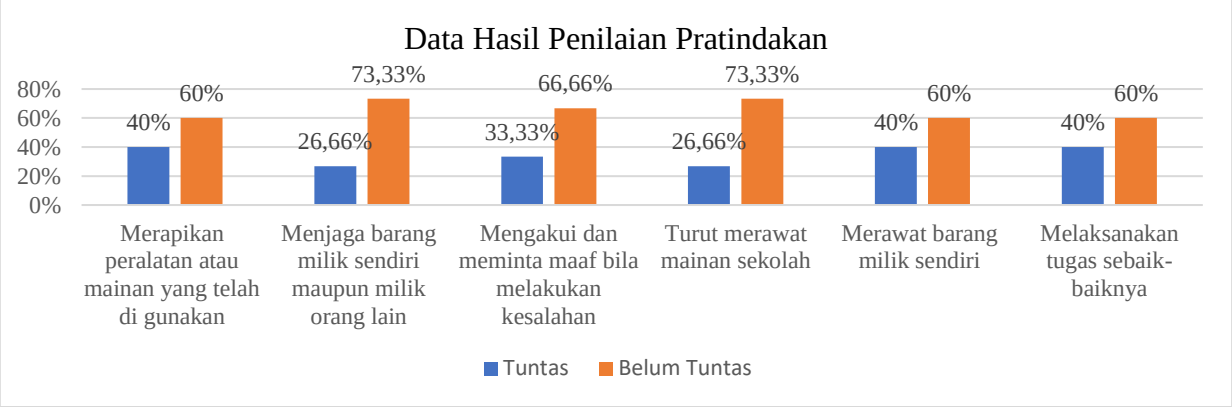
This study was conducted in two cycles, with each Cycle consisting of five meetings. Before the intervention was implemented, the researcher first conducted a pre-action stage to determine the initial level of responsibility among children aged 5–6 years through practical life skill activities. The pre-action stage was conducted in November 2025 and involved 15 children in Group B at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta, consisting of 7 boys and 8 girls. Data at this stage were collected through direct observation of the children's behavior and interviews with the Group B teacher to obtain a comprehensive overview of the children's responsibilities in daily learning activities.

Based on the results of the initial observations and interviews, it was found that the sense of responsibility in children aged 5–6 years had not yet developed optimally. The classroom teacher reported that most of the children were not yet able to independently demonstrate responsible behavior during classroom activities, particularly those involving practical life skills. The children still required teacher assistance when buttoning clothes, folding fabric, tidying tables, putting away toys after use, washing and eating utensils, and demonstrating socially responsible behaviors,

such as acknowledging their mistakes and apologizing when they made mistakes. These conditions indicate that the children had not yet fully developed an awareness of their responsibilities in completing tasks and maintaining the learning environment. To improve the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years through practical life skill activities, the researcher implemented the intervention over two cycles, with each Cycle consisting of five meetings. The activities included pouring water, transferring water, tidying tables, folding clothes, buttoning clothes, ironing clothes, and hanging clothes to dry. After four days of intervention in each Cycle, the researcher assessed the children during the fifth meeting of that Cycle using the indicators developed by Cahyati (2018). These indicators included tidying up equipment or toys after use, taking care of their own belongings and those of others, acknowledging mistakes and apologizing when necessary, participating in the care of school toys, taking care of their own belongings, and carrying out assigned tasks to the best of their ability.

The researcher conducted a pre-action assessment to compare the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years through practical life skills activities before and after the intervention. The results of the pre-action assessment were obtained as follows.

Table 2. Percentage of Classical Mastery of Responsibility among Children Aged 5–6 Years in the Pre-Action Stage

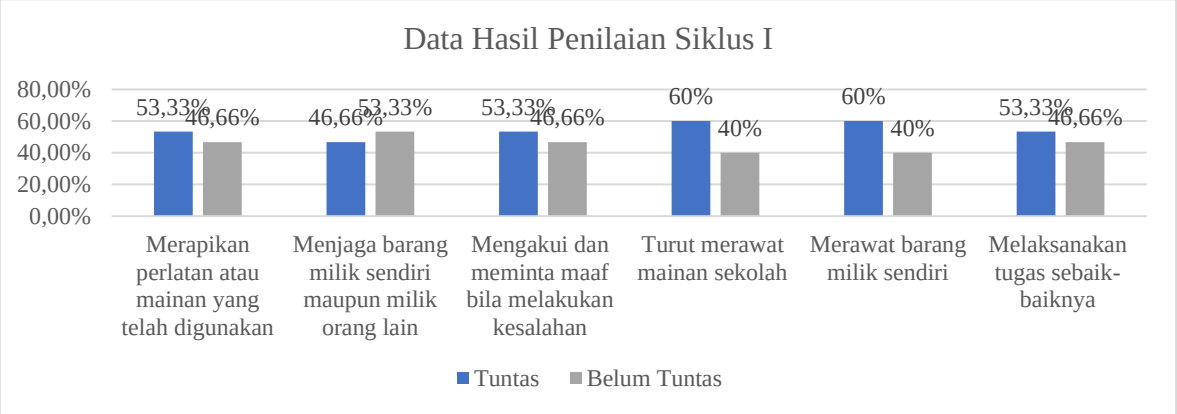


The pre-action results indicated that the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years in practical life skills activities still needed improvement, as the level of classical mastery remained below 75%. Therefore, further action was required in Cycle I through the planned implementation of practical life skill activities in the classroom. The activities included pouring water, transferring water, tidying tables, folding clothes, buttoning clothes, ironing clothes, and hanging clothes to dry. These activities were expected to gradually and continuously improve the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years.

The intervention in Cycle I was conducted over five meetings involving 15 children aged 5–6 years at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta. The intervention followed the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection, with practical life-skills activities implemented to improve children's sense of responsibility. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (*RPPH*), assessment instruments, observation sheets, and learning materials and equipment consisting of concrete objects familiar to the children. The learning activities were conducted using an area-based learning model, with practical

life skill activities including pouring and transferring water, buttoning clothes, folding, hanging clothes to dry, and ironing clothes. In the initial meeting, the activities began with an explanation of the rules and demonstrations. In contrast, in subsequent meetings, the children were given opportunities to carry out the activities with greater responsibility. Throughout the learning process, the children demonstrated high enthusiasm, although several challenges were still observed, including spilling water, difficulty folding clothes, and difficulty buttoning clothes properly.

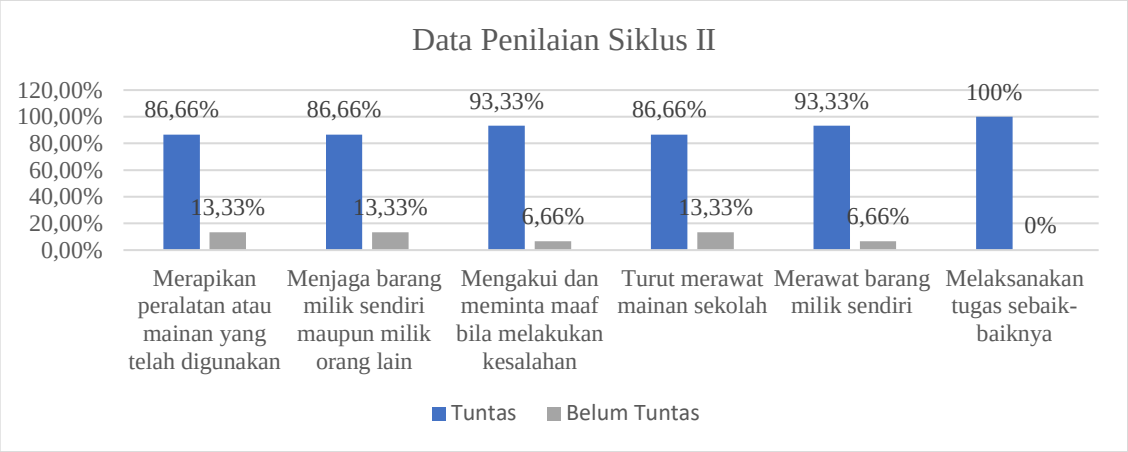
Table 3. Percentage of Classical Mastery of Responsibility among Children Aged 5–6 Years in Cycle I



The improvement observed in Cycle I was influenced by the intervention implemented to improve the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years through practical life skill activities. The children began to demonstrate greater care, follow the activity rules, and take the initiative to tidy up the equipment after use. The results of observations of children's responsibility in practical life skills activities, particularly the indicator of tidying up equipment or toys after use, showed that several children were able to perform the activity well. Children who were able to tidy up the equipment or toys were also able to assist their peers when they experienced difficulties in doing so. The reflection results indicated that practical life skill activities were effective in stimulating responsibility among children aged 5–6 years. However, improvements were still needed in the implementation of the intervention, particularly in delivering more structured rules for play and practical life skill activities, as well as providing consistent practice. Therefore, the study was continued through Cycle II, with improvements to the learning strategies to achieve the predetermined success indicators.

Based on the Cycle I assessment table, the classical mastery of responsibility among the children reached 53.33% (8 out of 15), representing an increase of 26.67% compared with the pre-action stage. Improvements were observed across all indicators, although the results had not yet reached the research success target of 75%. Therefore, Cycle II was necessary to improve further the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years through practical life skills activities. Following the implementation of the intervention in Cycle II, the researcher observed a significant improvement. The following table presents the level of classical mastery of responsibility among children aged 5–6 years, as measured through practical life skills activities.

Table 4. Percentage of Classical Mastery of Responsibility among Children Aged 5–6 Years in Cycle II



Based on the data presented in Table 4, the implementation of Cycle II was a continuation of Cycle I, which had not yet met the predetermined success indicators. Cycle II was conducted over five meetings involving 15 children aged 5–6 years at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta, following the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. During the planning stage, the researcher prepared the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH), assessment instruments, and practical life skills learning materials and instructional aids adapted to the children's needs, and refined the materials to make them more standardized and easier for the children to use.

The implementation stage was conducted through whole-class instruction based on practical life skill activities. The children appeared more orderly, focused, and responsible in completing their tasks and tidying up the equipment after use. The observation results showed an improvement in children's sense of responsibility across meetings in Cycle II. The children began to demonstrate the ability to follow activity rules, complete tasks more neatly, and take responsibility for the equipment and learning environment. Although differences in the children's pace and abilities were still observed, the learning environment was more conducive than in the previous Cycle.

Based on the Cycle II assessment results, the classical mastery level reached 86.66%, or 13 out of 15 children were classified as having achieved mastery. This improvement represented a 33.33% increase over Cycle I and exceeded the predetermined success criterion of 75%. Therefore, practical life skills activities can be considered effective in improving the sense of responsibility of children aged 5–6 years. During the reflection stage, two children were still found to have not achieved mastery due to limited concentration and emotional factors. Nevertheless, the overall results of Cycle II indicated that the research objectives had been achieved; therefore, the intervention did not need to be continued to a subsequent cycle. These findings can serve as a reference for teachers to continue implementing area-based learning with concrete materials to develop children's sense of responsibility, while providing more intensive guidance to children who require additional attention.

This study was conducted through three stages: the pre-action stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II, involving children aged 5–6 years at a public early childhood education institution in Surakarta. The study aimed to enhance children's sense of responsibility through practical life skills activities. The results showed differences in children's responsibility achievement across each intervention stage, as presented in Table 4.

Based on these data, children's responsibility demonstrated a gradual improvement from the pre-action stage through Cycle II. This improvement was further supported by interview results with the teacher, who reported that children's sense of responsibility through practical life skills activities had developed significantly. During Cycle II, the children appeared more enthusiastic in participating in the learning activities and were able to complete tasks more effectively than in the previous meetings. In addition, classical mastery in Cycle II reached the predetermined success criterion, with a percentage of 86.66%. Therefore, it can be concluded that implementing practical life skills activities was effective in improving the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years. The following table presents the levels of classical mastery across the different intervention stages of children's responsibility through practical life skill activities.

Table 5. Percentage of Classical Mastery: Comparison of Responsibility Outcomes Across Intervention Stages among Children Aged 5–6 Years

No	Indicators	Pre-Action	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
1	Tidying up equipment or toys after use	40%	53,33%	86,66%
2	Taking care of their own belongings and those of others	26,66%	46,66%	86,66%
3	Acknowledging mistakes and apologizing when necessary	33,33%	53,33%	93.33%
4	Participating in caring for school toys	26,66%	60%	86,66%
5	Taking care of their own belongings	40%	60%	93.33%
6	Carrying out assigned tasks to the best of their ability	40%	53,33%	100%
	Classical Mastery	**26,66%**	**53,33%**	**86,66%**

The results of the study showed that implementing practical life skills activities improved the sense of responsibility of children aged 5–6 years across all indicators, as adapted from Cahyati (2018). Regarding the indicator of tidying up equipment or toys after use, the pre-action results showed that most children were not yet able to perform this activity independently and still required guidance from the teacher. However, from Cycle I to Cycle II, a significant improvement was observed, as indicated by the children's ability to tidy up the equipment independently and consistently during the final meetings. This finding is consistent with the views of Montessori as cited in Lillard (2017) and Hurlock (2011), who stated that the habit of tidying up serves as a foundation for developing orderliness, self-discipline, and responsibility among children aged 5–6 years.

Improvement was also observed in the indicator of taking care of their own belongings and those of others. Before the intervention, children often forgot to take care of their belongings and still needed reminders from the teacher. Following the repeated implementation of practical life skill activities, the children demonstrated greater care when using classroom equipment and facilities. This finding indicates the development of children’s understanding of ownership and social responsibility, as explained by Erikson in Santrock (2011), Bandura in Novia et al. (2023), and Vygotsky in Kurniati (2025), who suggested that responsible behavior can be developed through habituation and social interaction.

Regarding the indicator of acknowledging and apologizing when making mistakes, a gradual improvement was observed from the pre-action stage through Cycle II. The children began to demonstrate the ability to acknowledge their mistakes and take the initiative to correct them without coercion. This finding reflects the development of children's emotional and moral regulation. According to Kohlberg in Ibda (2023) and Widayati and Yuwaningsih (2018), such abilities develop through direct experience and social guidance within a supportive learning environment.

The indicator of participating in caring for school toys also showed significant improvement. The children began to demonstrate greater concern for the cleanliness and condition of learning materials, such as cleaning up spilled water and tidying the tables. This improvement supports Montessori's theory, as cited in Ningsih et al. (2022), which states that practical life skill activities help children understand the concept of environmental care in a concrete and meaningful manner.

Furthermore, regarding the indicator of taking care of their own belongings, the children increasingly demonstrated the ability to care for their personal belongings responsibly. This behavior reflects the development of children's sense of autonomy and initiative, as explained by Montessori in Wulandari et al. (2024) and Erikson in Kuswardani (2025). The children began to recognize the consequences of failing to take proper care of their personal belongings; therefore, this indicator reflects an improvement in personal responsibility.

The indicator of carrying out assigned tasks to the best of their ability showed the most notable improvement. The children were able to complete various practical life skill activities, such as pouring water, buttoning clothes, folding clothes, hanging clothes to dry, and ironing, with greater focus and perseverance. This finding indicates that concrete activities with clear, structured steps can enhance children's concentration and persistence, as reported by Halimatussadiah et al. (2018).

Nevertheless, two children had not yet achieved mastery. The main difficulties encountered were related to concentration and emotional regulation. This finding is consistent with Blair and Ursache (2011), who stated that the development of emotional regulation greatly influences children's engagement in learning activities. Therefore, support through a conducive learning environment and more engaging activities is needed.

Overall, this study had several limitations, including a relatively small sample size and its being conducted at only one early childhood education institution, which limited the generalizability of the findings. In addition, differences in children's characteristics and abilities influenced the rate at which they achieved the expected outcomes. Therefore, future studies are recommended to involve larger samples and more diverse contexts in order to obtain more comprehensive findings. The results of this study demonstrate that practical life skills activities were effective in improving the sense of responsibility of children aged 5–6 years at an early childhood education institution in Surakarta. Concrete activities that are closely connected to children's daily lives and implemented repeatedly can encourage children to engage actively in learning while supporting their social-emotional development. Thus, practical life skills activities can serve as an effective alternative approach to learning in early childhood education for fostering children's sense of responsibility.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that implementing *practical life skill*s activities effectively improved the responsibility of children aged 5–6 years in early childhood education. The improvement was observed gradually from the initial condition to the end of the intervention, with most children achieving the predetermined mastery criteria. This finding indicates that activities involving direct experience, habituation, and tasks closely related to children's daily lives can encourage children to become more independent, disciplined, and responsible in completing tasks and maintaining their learning environment.

These findings further support the notion that *practical life skill*s activities can serve as an effective learning strategy for fostering children's social-emotional development, particularly responsibility, among children aged 5–6 years. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to integrate these activities consistently and systematically into the learning process. Furthermore, future research is expected to explore the implementation of *practical life skill* activities in broader contexts, incorporating variations in activities and other developmental domains to obtain more comprehensive findings.

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