

## DESIGN OF A KIDS ART SPACE AS A MEDIUM FOR DEVELOPING EARLY CHILDHOOD CREATIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (PAUD) INSTITUTIONS IN GORONTALO CITY

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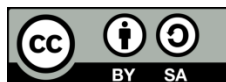
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### ABSTRACT

This research aims to design a Kids Art Space as a medium for stimulating creativity in early childhood education institutions (PAUD) in Gorontalo City. The research background is based on the limited availability of creative space facilities, which results in children's art activities tending to be instructional and rigid. The method used was Research and Development (R&D) with a Design Thinking approach, encompassing the stages of empathy, definition, ideation, prototyping, and testing. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with educators, and a study of child ergonomics. The results of the study yielded a space design model that integrates flexible wet and dry activity zoning and the use of child-friendly modular furniture. The strength of this design lies in the incorporation of local Karawo motifs as ethno-pedagogical visual stimuli. The study's conclusions indicate that thematically designed Kids Art Space significantly enhances children's independence and courage to explore. This space acts as a "third teacher" facilitating fine motor and cognitive development. The implementation of this design is expected to become a standard reference for innovative PAUD facilities in Gorontalo City in supporting the Independent Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Kids Art Space, Creativity, Early Childhood, Gorontalo City, Interior Design

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is the primary foundation of the national education system, focusing on laying the foundation for physical and mental growth and development. This period is known as the Golden Age, when children's brain plasticity is at its peak, absorbing information and forming synaptic connections. Hasanah (2021) emphasized that stimulation provided during this age range will determine the quality of future human resources. However, a major challenge arises when education tends to focus solely on basic literacy and numeracy skills, while the creative aspect is often neglected. Yet, according to a 2023 report by the World Economic Forum, creativity is among the top three most needed skills in the modern industrial era, and its development must begin early in a supportive environment.

Theoretically, creativity in early childhood is not simply the ability to produce works of art, but rather an exploratory thinking process. Sari & Nasution (2022) state that children's creativity is highly dependent on the affordability of their physical environment. If the learning environment is

static and rigid, children's imagination will be stifled. This is where the role of Kids Art Space becomes crucial. A children's art space is more than just a place to draw, but also an integrated sensory-motor stimulation medium. Pratiwi (2023) in her research stated that children's involvement in structured yet free arts activities in a dedicated space can improve problem-solving skills by up to 40% compared to children who only learn in conventional classrooms.

Field conditions, particularly in Gorontalo City, demonstrate a discrepancy between the ideal curriculum and the reality of facilities. According to data from the Gorontalo City Early Childhood Education Working Group (2023), although the number of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) institutions continues to increase, only around 15-20% have a dedicated area for adequate arts development. The majority of PAUD institutions still utilize multipurpose classrooms with static table and chair arrangements that limit children's movement. This is reinforced by Rahman's (2024) study, which captured children's learning behavior in Gorontalo. It found that limited media and space limit arts activities to coloring in patterns, which psychologically limits children's original expression.

In addition to physical limitations, local wisdom in Gorontalo City has not been optimally integrated into learning space design. Yusuf et al. (2022) argue that educational space design must reflect local cultural identity so that children feel an emotional connection to their environment. In the Gorontalo context, elements of the Karawo motif, or the philosophy of "Adat Bersendikan Syara, Syara Bersendikan Kitabullah," can be internalized through visual stimulation and material selection in the Kids Art Space. Without a well-planned design, children miss out on opportunities to explore creativity based on their own cultural roots.

The urgency of this design is even more pressing given the impact of high screen time on children in urban areas, including Gorontalo. Data from the Ministry of Health (2022) shows a trend of increasing gadget use among early childhood children, which has resulted in a decline in fine motor skills. The design of the Kids Art Space presents a concrete solution to shift children's attention from the digital world to the physical world through hands-on exploration activities. This space is designed with the principles of flexibility, safety, and accessibility, so that children from various abilities can actively participate.

Considering the above phenomena, the research on "Designing Kids Art Space as a Medium for Developing Early Childhood Creativity in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in Gorontalo City" is highly relevant. This research goes beyond creating an aesthetic space, but also builds a spatial-based learning ecosystem that can spark curiosity, courage to express oneself, and social collaboration. Through a child-centered design approach, Kids Art Space is expected to be a catalyst for the birth of an innovative and creative generation in Gorontalo in the future.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This research employs a Research and Development (R&D) method with a Design Thinking approach that focuses on user-centered design solutions. The research phase began with an empathize and define process, in which researchers conducted participatory observation and in-depth interviews with early childhood education (PAUD) educators in Gorontalo City to map spatial constraints on children's creativity development. This primary data was supported by a comparative analysis of contemporary literature from the past five years on child ergonomics standards and spatial psychology, in order to formulate design parameters that are safe, inclusive, and optimally stimulate children's fine motor skills within the limited school space.

In the ideation and prototyping phase, researchers translated the synthesized data into an architectural design, a Kids Art Space interior model. This design integrates flexible activity zoning, such as a wet area for paint exploration and a dry area for crafts, and incorporates elements of Gorontalo's local identity through visual stylization of Karawo motifs on walls and furniture. This process was conducted using three-dimensional modeling software to provide precise visualization of the space, taking into account natural lighting, air circulation, and the selection of child-friendly and easy-to-clean materials.

The final stage of the research focused on validation and evaluation using expert judgment and focus group discussions. The design prototype was presented to interior design experts and early childhood education practitioners for assessment based on its functionality, safety, and effectiveness as a medium for developing creativity. Through qualitative descriptive analysis

techniques, all input and criticism were used to revise the design until a final, applicable Kids Art Space model was produced. This model is expected to serve as a standard reference for early childhood education institutions in Gorontalo City in creating a transformative and innovative learning ecosystem.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Analysis of the Existing Conditions of Early Childhood Education (PAUD) in Gorontalo City

Based on observations and data collection at several PAUD institutions in Gorontalo City, it was found that current learning spaces are still multifunctional without specific zoning for arts activities. Limited space often forces arts activities to be conducted on the same desks as other cognitive activities. This limits children's exploration, especially with messy art media such as watercolors or clay.

Table 1. Identification of Spatial Problems in PAUD in Gorontalo City

No	Observation Parameters	Existing Conditions in the Field	Impact on Children's Creativity
1	Room Zoning	There is no separation between quiet (cognitive) and expressive (art) areas.	Children have difficulty focusing and are hesitant to explore freely.
2	Furniture	Tables and chairs are static and heavy.	Social interaction and collaboration between children are hampered.
3	Floor Materials	Slippery ceramics are predominant, with no safety areas.	Gross motor skills during art activities are restricted.
4	Display of Artworks	Children's artwork is often hung high on the walls (at eye level for adults).	Children feel underappreciated because they cannot see their own work up close.

#### Design Transformation: Designing a Kids Art Space

The design results propose an adaptive art space model by dividing areas based on activity load. This concept is called "Active-Creative Flow," where the circulation flow is designed to allow children to move organically from one art medium to another.

Table 2. Technical Specifications for the Design of a Kids Art Space as a Stimulation Medium

Design Elements	Design Specifications	Function as a Development Medium
<b>Wet Zone</b>	Non-slip vinyl flooring with low-slope access (child-sized).	Training fine motor skills and the courage to experiment with liquid media.
<b>Dry Zone</b>	Hexagonal modular countertops that can be combined or separated.	Encouraging collaboration and social communication skills among children.
<b>Gallery Wall</b>	Wall panels 60-100 cm above the floor with a clamping system.	Boosting self-esteem and art appreciation.

Design Elements	Design Specifications	Function as a Development Medium
Open Storage	Doorless shelves with visual labels (pictures/icons).	Training children's independence in selecting and tidying up their own art supplies.

### The Role of Design in Stimulating Creativity

The discussion focused on how spatial elements act as "third teachers." In this design, the integration of Karawo motifs (a traditional Gorontalo embroidery) was applied to interior elements such as room dividers and ceiling patterns. The use of these local motifs not only serves an aesthetic purpose but also serves as a visual stimulus to introduce geometric patterns and local culture to children from an early age.

The analysis showed that with a well-designed Kids Art Space, children at the Gorontalo City Preschool showed increased engagement in art activities. The ergonomically designed space, which meets the body requirements of children (aged 4-6), reduces physical fatigue and improves concentration. Furthermore, the interior color scheme, dominated by neutrals with natural accents (wood and green), creates a calming atmosphere, enabling children to make more creative decisions when applying color to their artwork.

Through this design, the Kids Art Space is no longer simply a complementary facility but also an essential instructional tool. The flexible design allows teachers to change the layout according to the weekly learning theme, which is an important aspect of the independent curriculum currently implemented in Indonesia.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and the design process, it can be concluded that the presence of a Kids Art Space at an early childhood education (PAUD) institution in Gorontalo City is not simply an addition to physical facilities, but rather a crucial necessity in creating a transformative learning ecosystem. This design successfully demonstrates that limited land in urban areas can be overcome through flexible zoning strategies and the selection of adaptive modular furniture. By dividing the space into a wet exploration area, a dry construction area, and an appreciation gallery, children have a clear platform to channel their creative expression without feeling constrained by rigid conventional classroom rules. Furthermore, the integration of local wisdom through the stylization of Karawo motifs provides a new dimension to character education, allowing children to recognize their cultural identity visually and spatially from an early age. Overall, this design positions the space as a "third teacher" capable of independently stimulating fine motor development, courage to experiment, and problem-solving skills in early childhood.

As a follow-up to this research, it is recommended that PAUD institution managers in Gorontalo City begin adopting the concept of an inclusive creative space by utilizing economical local materials while still meeting child safety standards. Educators are expected to optimize the function of this art space by providing children with the freedom to explore without being overly focused on the final product, allowing the creative process to grow naturally. The Gorontalo City Government is advised to develop guidelines for standardizing creative spaces for PAUD as part of efforts to improve the quality of early childhood education in the region. Finally, future researchers are strongly advised to test the effectiveness of this design longitudinally to measure the real impact on improving children's multiple intelligences through more in-depth and broad-scale observations.

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