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Exploring Visual Arts as a Medium for Developing Early Childhood Creativity at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Visual arts education provides opportunities for young children to develop imagination, express ideas, and explore different forms of creative expression. This study aims to explore visual arts as a medium for developing early childhood creativity at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh, Indonesia. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine visual arts activities, children's creative expression, and teachers' strategies for facilitating artistic exploration. Data collection involves classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and documentation of learning activities and children's artwork. Data are analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification, with triangulation used to strengthen the credibility of the interpretations. The analysis focuses on two main dimensions: visual arts activities as a medium for stimulating children's imagination and creative expression, and teachers' strategies for fostering creativity through visual arts education. The study is intended to provide a contextual understanding of how drawing, painting, finger painting, and collage-making can create opportunities for children to experiment with materials, develop original ideas, and make independent artistic decisions. It also highlights the importance of intentional instructional planning, diverse learning materials, freedom of expression, and supportive teacher guidance in early childhood visual arts education. The findings are expected to inform the development of child-centered artistic learning experiences that encourage creativity and recognize individual differences in children's expression.

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Introduction

Creativity is an essential aspect of early childhood development because it enables children to explore ideas, express imagination, and discover different ways of understanding their surroundings. During the early years, children develop creative capacities through play, experimentation, observation, and interaction with their

environment. Creativity involves more than producing attractive artwork; it also includes originality, flexibility, curiosity, and the ability to generate alternative solutions. Hardiyanti (2020) emphasizes that creativity is an important competency in early childhood education and can be stimulated through play-based painting activities that allow children to express themselves freely. Early childhood education therefore needs to provide meaningful learning experiences that encourage children to explore their interests, develop independent ideas, and express their imagination through various forms of creative activity.

Visual arts provide an important medium for supporting children's creativity because they enable children to communicate ideas through colors, lines, shapes, textures, and different materials. Drawing, painting, collage-making, and printing allow children to transform their observations and imagination into visual representations. These activities also provide opportunities for children to make decisions about what they want to create and how they want to represent their ideas. Primawati (2023) explains that visual arts activities offer diverse opportunities to develop early childhood creativity through drawing, printing, collage, origami, and other creative practices. Visual arts can consequently be understood as a developmental process that emphasizes exploration, imagination, and personal expression rather than focusing exclusively on the finished product.

Drawing is one of the most accessible visual arts activities for stimulating creativity in kindergarten. Through drawing, children can represent familiar objects, imagine unfamiliar situations, experiment with shapes, and combine visual elements according to their own ideas. The freedom to choose what to draw enables children to make independent decisions and develop different interpretations of a common theme. Risdianty and Pamungkas (2022) explain that drawing-based learning can encourage children to become active learners and produce artworks based on their own inspiration and imagination. These opportunities make drawing a valuable educational medium for supporting originality, independent thinking, and creative expression in early childhood.

Painting also provides opportunities for children to explore colors, textures, and artistic techniques. Activities such as finger painting, brush painting, and painting with alternative materials allow children to experiment with visual effects and discover different ways of producing an image. Children can develop their creativity by combining colors, making spontaneous marks, and creating forms that reflect their imagination. Kurnia (2017) found that the type of painting activity and children's fine motor skills were associated with differences in creativity outcomes among kindergarten children, with finger painting producing higher painting creativity scores than brush painting in the study's comparison. Siregar and Ismet (2021) also discuss the potential of finger painting to support children's imagination, independence, enthusiasm, and the production of varied artistic works. These studies demonstrate the relevance of providing diverse painting experiences that accommodate children's developmental characteristics and creative interests.

The development of creativity through visual arts is closely related to the learning environment provided by teachers. Classrooms that offer varied materials, sufficient time, and opportunities for experimentation can encourage children to explore different ways of expressing their ideas. Open-ended activities are particularly valuable because they allow children to produce different outcomes from the same materials or learning theme. Primawati (2023) emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate materials, equipment, and artistic techniques according to children's developmental abilities. A supportive learning environment should therefore provide accessible artistic resources and allow children to investigate possibilities rather than requiring every child to produce an identical result.

Teachers play a central role in determining whether visual arts activities encourage originality or primarily emphasize imitation. Children may have limited opportunities to develop independent ideas when teachers require them to copy a model or follow rigid instructions throughout an activity. A child-centered approach allows children to choose colors, develop their own compositions, experiment with materials, and explain the meanings behind their creations. Nurbaiti et al. (2021) found that teachers generally understood the basic concept of children's drawing creativity, although their understanding was not always sufficiently detailed to support its optimal implementation. Risdianty and Pamungkas (2022) similarly highlight the value of drawing activities that enable children to create artwork from their own inspiration and imagination. These findings underline the importance of strengthening teachers' understanding of creativity and translating that understanding into everyday classroom practices.

Creative exploration also involves children's willingness to experiment, encounter difficulties, and revise their ideas. Visual arts activities provide opportunities for children to discover what happens when they combine colors, rearrange materials, or use tools in different ways. These experiences encourage curiosity and persistence because children can observe the consequences of their choices and consider alternative possibilities. Siregar and Ismet (2021) identify several dimensions of creativity that may be supported through finger painting, including children's personal independence, creative processes, motivation, and the production of varied works. Malika and Pamadhi (2022) also explain that artistic activities such as drawing and coloring can help children express their inner experiences and develop creative ideas. Artistic exploration can therefore support creativity when children are encouraged to experiment and make meaningful choices throughout the learning process.

The variety of materials used in visual arts can further enrich children's creative experiences. Crayons, watercolors, paper, recycled materials, natural objects, and textured surfaces offer different sensory and visual possibilities for exploration. Working with diverse materials encourages children to consider alternative ways of constructing images and representing their experiences. Primawati (2023) identifies drawing, printing, collage, montage, mosaic, paper folding, and other artistic activities as potential approaches to developing visual arts creativity in early childhood. Wibowo and Nugraheni (2021) also describe creative visual arts learning involving painting, collage, recycled materials, and three-dimensional creations in an early childhood education setting. Providing varied materials and techniques can consequently expand children's opportunities to develop original ideas and discover different forms of artistic expression.

Assessment practices are important for understanding and supporting creativity in early childhood education. Evaluating children exclusively on the accuracy, neatness, or similarity of their artwork may overlook originality, flexibility, curiosity, and the ability to explain personal ideas. Teachers can obtain a broader understanding by observing children's decision-making processes, documenting experimentation, and listening to their explanations of completed work. Nurbaiti et al. (2021) highlight the importance of teachers' understanding of drawing creativity, while Risdianty and Pamungkas (2022) discuss drawing as a medium for encouraging children to express ideas and imagination. A process-oriented approach to assessment is therefore appropriate for recognizing creativity as a developing capacity rather than a fixed characteristic measured through a single artistic product.

Visual arts education has been explored in Indonesian research through drawing, painting, finger painting, and other creative learning activities. These studies provide insights into the relationship between artistic experiences, children's imagination, and opportunities for creative expression. Kurnia (2017) examined the relationship between

painting activities and children's creativity, while Siregar and Ismet (2021) reviewed the benefits of finger painting through the four dimensions of creativity: person, process, press, and product. Risdianty and Pamungkas (2022) further examined the application of drawing methods to stimulate creativity in early childhood. Together, these studies provide a foundation for understanding how different visual arts activities can be used to support creative development in kindergarten.

The Indonesian early childhood education context offers opportunities to examine how visual arts activities are implemented within particular institutional and cultural environments. Kindergarten classrooms differ in their available resources, teaching approaches, learning routines, and opportunities for children to explore artistic materials. Children's experiences at home and in the community may also provide ideas and inspiration for their artwork. Wibowo and Nugraheni (2021) illustrate how creative visual arts learning can be organized through a range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional activities, including painting, collage, and the use of recycled materials. Primawati (2023) similarly emphasizes the importance of adapting artistic activities and materials to children's developmental needs. Examining visual arts practices in a specific Indonesian kindergarten can therefore provide contextual insights into how creativity is facilitated through everyday learning experiences.

Aceh offers a distinctive cultural and environmental setting for exploring children's artistic creativity. Familiar objects, local landscapes, plants, traditional patterns, and experiences from the surrounding community can provide starting points for children's drawings and paintings. These contextual resources may help children connect artistic activities with their own experiences while developing individual interpretations and imaginative ideas. Malika and Pamadhi (2022) emphasize the role of artistic activities in supporting children's expression and creative ideas through drawing and coloring. Primawati (2023) also highlights the importance of providing varied artistic activities and developmentally appropriate materials. The relevance of locally connected visual arts activities at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, Aceh Besar Regency, therefore deserves investigation without assuming that all children will express creativity in the same way.

Despite the availability of Indonesian research on drawing, painting, and other visual arts activities, further investigation is needed to understand how these practices operate within particular kindergarten settings. Previous studies have examined drawing methods, painting activities, finger painting, teachers' perceptions, and the use of diverse materials to stimulate creativity (Kurnia, 2017; Nurbaiti et al., 2021; Risdianty & Pamungkas, 2022; Siregar & Ismet, 2021). These studies provide useful foundations, but their findings do not automatically explain how visual arts activities are organized and experienced at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten. A context-specific investigation can explore the types of visual arts activities provided, the freedom children have to develop their own ideas, the role of teachers in facilitating exploration, and the ways children's creative processes are recognized. This focus can connect existing Indonesian research with the educational practices and experiences of the selected kindergarten.

This study aims to explore visual arts as a medium for developing early childhood creativity at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh, Indonesia. The investigation focuses on the implementation of visual arts activities, the opportunities provided for children's imagination and creative expression, and the teaching strategies used to facilitate artistic exploration. A descriptive qualitative approach can provide an in-depth understanding of classroom practices, children's participation, and teachers' perspectives within their natural educational setting. The study is expected to contribute contextual knowledge to discussions of early childhood visual arts education and provide practical insights for teachers seeking to create exploratory and child-centered learning

experiences. The findings may also inform the development of visual arts activities that recognize children's individual ideas, encourage experimentation, and support creativity as an integral component of early childhood education.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore visual arts as a medium for developing early childhood creativity at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, Aceh Besar Regency, Aceh, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of classroom practices, children's creative experiences, and teachers' strategies in facilitating visual arts activities within a natural educational setting. The research focused on activities such as drawing, painting, coloring, collage-making, and other age-appropriate visual arts experiences that provide opportunities for children to express imagination, experiment with materials, and develop original ideas. Participants were selected purposively and included kindergarten teachers and children involved in visual arts learning activities. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers, and documentation of relevant learning activities and children's artwork. Observations focused on children's participation, originality of ideas, exploration of colors and materials, independence in making artistic decisions, and teachers' approaches to encouraging creative expression.

Data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis framework developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which involves data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Observation records, interview transcripts, and relevant documentation were organized into themes related to visual arts activities, children's creative expression, the use of artistic materials, and teachers' instructional strategies. The analysis examined patterns in children's imagination, originality, experimentation, flexibility, and independence, while considering the classroom conditions that supported or constrained creative exploration. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing observations, interview findings, and documentation to strengthen the credibility of the interpretations. Ethical considerations included obtaining institutional permission and informed consent from parents or legal guardians, protecting children's identities, and ensuring that participation did not interfere with their well-being or regular learning activities. The findings were interpreted in relation to the specific educational context of Bungong Kupula Kindergarten rather than being generalized to all early childhood education settings.

Results and Discussion

1. Visual Arts Activities as a Medium for Stimulating Children's Imagination and Creative Expression

Visual arts activities provide meaningful opportunities for young children to develop imagination, explore ideas, and express themselves through different visual forms. Drawing, painting, finger painting, and creating pictures from various materials allow children to transform their experiences into visual representations. These activities can encourage children to experiment with colors, lines, shapes, and compositions while developing their own interpretations of familiar objects and situations. Haya et al. (2025), in a case study on finger painting, examined how this artistic activity could support creativity and imagination among young children. Their research provides a relevant basis for understanding visual arts as a learning experience that emphasizes creative exploration rather than merely producing an aesthetically pleasing result.

Free drawing offers children opportunities to express ideas without being restricted to

a predetermined model. Children can choose the objects they want to represent, determine the colors they prefer, and create visual compositions according to their imagination. Such freedom may encourage originality because children are not required to reproduce identical images or follow a single correct answer. Jarmiati et al. (2020) found that free drawing activities were effective in improving vocabulary and creativity among early childhood learners, particularly by encouraging exploration of drawing materials, colors, and imagination. This evidence supports the educational value of providing children with opportunities to develop their own artistic ideas and communicate the meanings behind their creations.

Painting activities also create opportunities for children to explore different visual possibilities through direct experimentation. When children combine colors, change the direction of brushstrokes, or use their fingers to create patterns, they can discover artistic effects that differ from their initial expectations. These experiences encourage curiosity and allow children to learn through trial and error. Nisa and Mukminin (2014) investigated batik painting activities adapted to the developmental characteristics of kindergarten children and reported positive effects on children's creativity. Their findings suggest that culturally relevant painting activities can provide opportunities for children to experiment with patterns and artistic techniques while developing creative expression.

The use of diverse artistic materials can further stimulate children's imagination and encourage alternative ways of creating visual representations. Paper, crayons, watercolors, natural objects, recycled materials, and textured surfaces provide different possibilities for combining shapes, colors, and forms. Children can explore these materials individually or combine them to produce artwork that reflects their personal ideas. Hardiyanti et al. (2025), in their study of fine arts learning in kindergarten, examined activities including drawing, coloring, painting, mosaics, montage, and collaborative construction using blocks and Lego. Their research highlights the variety of artistic experiences that can be incorporated into early childhood learning to support children's creative exploration.

Finger painting is particularly relevant because it allows children to interact directly with colors and textures through sensory experiences. Children can use their fingers to make dots, lines, patterns, and images, giving them opportunities to explore movement and visual effects without relying exclusively on conventional drawing tools. This activity may also encourage children who are hesitant to use pencils or brushes to participate in artistic exploration. Haya et al. (2025) examined finger painting as a medium for fostering early childhood creativity and emphasized its relevance to children's imaginative and artistic development. The educational value of finger painting therefore lies not only in the artwork produced but also in the process through which children explore materials, make decisions, and develop individual forms of expression.

Children's creative expression can also be observed through the variety and originality of their drawings. Some children may represent familiar objects realistically, while others may combine imagined elements or produce unusual color arrangements. These differences should be understood as potential expressions of individual imagination rather than automatically interpreted as evidence of stronger or weaker artistic ability. Prayitno et al. (2025), in their analysis of visual artworks produced through free drawing by children aged five to seven, found that children's drawing processes involved imagination, creativity, and storytelling. Their findings demonstrate that children's artwork can provide insights into how they interpret visual experiences and communicate ideas through images.

Visual arts activities can additionally encourage children to explain their ideas and reflect on their creative decisions. After completing a drawing or painting, children may describe the objects they have created, explain their color choices, or tell a story connected to their artwork. These conversations can help teachers understand the meanings children

attach to their creations and identify the ideas that inspired their work. Jarmiati et al. (2020) reported that free drawing activities supported children's vocabulary alongside creativity, illustrating the potential relationship between artistic expression and verbal communication. Inviting children to explain their artwork can therefore help educators recognize creative thinking that may not be apparent from the finished image alone.

The relationship between visual arts and creativity can also be understood through the connection between artistic processes and children's independence. When children select their own materials, decide how to arrange visual elements, and determine when their work is complete, they have opportunities to practise independent decision-making. Teachers can support this process by providing guidance when needed while avoiding unnecessary restrictions on children's ideas. Veryawan et al. (2026) developed visual arts worksheets based on Acehnese local wisdom to enhance creativity among children aged four to six, highlighting the relevance of culturally responsive artistic learning. This research is particularly relevant to the Aceh context because it demonstrates how local cultural resources can be incorporated into visual arts education to provide meaningful opportunities for creative expression.

Visual arts activities can consequently be understood as a flexible learning medium through which children explore imagination, experiment with materials, and communicate individual ideas. Free drawing, painting, finger painting, and culturally relevant artistic activities offer different pathways for children to develop creative expression, although their experiences may vary according to individual interests and learning conditions. Research by Haya et al. (2025), Jarmiati et al. (2020), Prayitno et al. (2025), and Veryawan et al. (2026) provides a foundation for examining these processes in early childhood education. At Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, the analysis should identify the artistic activities actually implemented, the ways children develop and express their ideas, and the opportunities provided for experimentation and independent decision-making. Classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation of children's artwork are necessary to establish how visual arts activities support creativity in this specific educational setting.

2. Teachers' Strategies in Fostering Early Childhood Creativity through Visual Arts Education

Teachers play a central role in developing children's creativity through visual arts education because they determine how artistic activities are planned, implemented, and evaluated. Effective teaching strategies should provide opportunities for children to explore materials, express individual ideas, and create artwork without being restricted to a single expected outcome. Yani and Qadafi (2026), in their case study of drawing activities at TK IT NW Sugian, examined teachers' roles in supporting creativity through classroom instruction, motivation, and the provision of opportunities for artistic expression. Their research highlights the importance of teachers' involvement in creating learning experiences that encourage children to develop their own ideas. In the context of Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, this perspective provides a basis for examining how teachers facilitate visual arts activities and support children's creative independence.

Careful planning is an important strategy for integrating visual arts into early childhood learning. Teachers need to select activities that correspond to children's developmental characteristics, prepare appropriate materials, and establish learning objectives that encourage imagination and experimentation. Planning may include drawing familiar objects, painting with different tools, creating collages, or using recycled materials to construct visual representations. Erwihas and Nurhasanah (2026) examined strategies for integrating teachers' approaches to artistic creativity into early childhood school programs. Their research emphasizes the importance of organizing arts activities within broader

educational planning rather than treating them as isolated classroom exercises. Intentional planning can therefore help teachers create consistent opportunities for children to explore and develop their creative potential.

The selection of artistic media is another important component of teachers' strategies. A variety of materials can stimulate curiosity and encourage children to discover different ways of representing their ideas. Teachers may introduce crayons, watercolors, leaves, twigs, paper scraps, and other accessible materials to broaden children's artistic experiences. Aisyiah and Pamungkas (2023) investigated the use of natural materials in visual arts learning for young children, including activities such as printing, stamping, and creating patterns with natural objects. Their study illustrates how the surrounding environment can provide meaningful resources for creative learning. At Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, the availability and use of locally accessible materials could be examined to understand how teachers support artistic exploration within their particular educational context.

Providing freedom of expression is essential when teachers aim to develop creativity rather than simply train children to reproduce examples. Children benefit from opportunities to choose colors, determine compositions, and create images according to their imagination. Teachers can introduce basic techniques without requiring every child to produce an identical artwork. Anisah and Hijriyani (2022) examined the role of teachers in improving early childhood creativity and discussed strategies such as stimulating imagination, allowing children to create freely, providing encouragement, and demonstrating artistic activities. Their research reinforces the importance of balancing instructional guidance with children's independence. Such an approach allows teachers to provide structure while preserving opportunities for originality and individual expression.

Teacher guidance is most effective when it supports children's learning without taking control of the creative process. Demonstrations can help children understand how to use brushes, apply glue, arrange collage materials, or combine different colors. Assistance should be adjusted to children's needs, allowing them to complete tasks independently whenever possible. Pauweni et al. (2025) examined teachers' roles in developing creativity through collage activities at TK Negeri Raudhatul Jannah in Gorontalo. Their findings describe teachers' practices in preparing materials, demonstrating basic techniques, assisting children who experience difficulties, and allowing children to choose materials and colors. These practices illustrate how teachers can combine practical guidance with opportunities for independent artistic decision-making.

Positive reinforcement can also encourage children to participate confidently in visual arts activities. Teachers can recognize children's effort, persistence, originality, and willingness to experiment rather than praising only technically accurate or visually attractive products. Constructive feedback may help children feel comfortable sharing their ideas and trying unfamiliar techniques. Muqorrobin and Fathoni (2023) examined teachers' roles in developing early childhood creativity through handicraft activities and identified facilitation and motivation as important aspects of the teaching process. Their study highlights the relevance of preparing appropriate tools and materials, stimulating children's interest, and encouraging them to participate actively. Positive reinforcement can therefore become part of a supportive learning environment that values the creative process as well as the completed artwork.

The classroom environment also influences the effectiveness of visual arts teaching strategies. Accessible materials, sufficient working space, flexible activity arrangements, and opportunities to display children's work can encourage exploration and participation. Teachers can further enrich learning by connecting artistic activities with children's everyday experiences and familiar cultural surroundings. Oktaviani et al. (2024) analyzed

teachers' roles in developing artistic creativity at PAUD Telaga Woyo and identified limitations in the implementation of arts learning, including the need to strengthen teachers' understanding and expand learning beyond classroom-based activities. Their findings suggest that creativity development depends not only on the activities selected but also on the educational conditions that support them. Examining the resources and classroom environment at Bungong Kupula Kindergarten can help clarify the opportunities and challenges teachers encounter in facilitating visual arts education.

Assessment should focus on children's creative processes as well as the characteristics of their finished artwork. Teachers can observe whether children generate their own ideas, experiment with materials, explore different possibilities, make independent decisions, and explain the meanings of their creations. Documentation of children's work across several activities can help teachers recognize changes in participation and creative expression over time. Cici et al. (2026), in their study of teachers' strategies for developing creativity through visual arts activities, described planning, implementation, and evaluation as interconnected components of the teaching process. Their work supports an approach in which teachers consider both the learning experience and children's artistic outcomes. For a qualitative study, observations, interviews, and examples of children's artwork can provide complementary evidence for understanding how teachers recognize and support creativity.

Teachers' strategies for fostering creativity through visual arts ultimately involve the integration of intentional planning, diverse materials, freedom of expression, supportive guidance, positive reinforcement, and process-oriented assessment. The studies by Yani and Qadafi (2026), Aisyiah and Pamungkas (2023), Muqorrobin and Fathoni (2023), and Cici et al. (2026) offer relevant perspectives on the ways teachers can organize artistic learning and create opportunities for children's creative participation. At Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, the analysis should identify the strategies teachers actually use, the reasons behind their instructional choices, and the responses of children during drawing, painting, collage, or other visual arts activities. Evidence from classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation is necessary to establish how these strategies operate in practice. This contextual analysis can provide useful insights into strengthening visual arts education as a means of encouraging imagination, originality, and creative independence in early childhood.

Conclusion

Visual arts education provides an important medium for fostering creativity in early childhood by encouraging imagination, originality, experimentation, and independent decision-making. Activities such as drawing, painting, finger painting, and collage-making offer opportunities for children to explore different materials, express individual ideas, and develop creative solutions through artistic experiences. Teachers play a central role in supporting these processes through intentional lesson planning, the provision of diverse and accessible materials, freedom of expression, constructive guidance, and assessment that values the creative process as well as the final artwork. A supportive and child-centered learning environment can further encourage children to experiment, communicate their ideas, and develop confidence in their creative abilities. In the context of Bungong Kupula Kindergarten, Aceh Besar Regency, visual arts education can be examined as a potential approach to connecting children's imagination with meaningful learning experiences and local cultural resources. Further empirical analysis of classroom observations, teacher interviews, and children's artwork is necessary to establish how these strategies are implemented and how they relate to children's creative development in this specific setting. This study highlights the importance of integrating visual arts into early childhood education as a means of providing opportunities for creative exploration and supporting

children's individual potential.

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