



## Senam Kreatif Anak Usia Dini Sebagai Upaya Meningkatkan Daya Tahan Tubuh dan Kesehatan di Sekolah Citra Kasih Ambon

### *Creative Gymnastics in Early Childhood: Enhancing Physical Endurance and Health at Citra Kasih School, Ambon*

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#### Article History:

Naskah Masuk: April 16, 2025;

Revisi: April 30, 2025;

Diterima: Mei 17, 2025;

Terbit: Mei 31, 2025;

**Keywords :** Creative Gymnastics; Early Childhood; Health; Image School; Physical Endurance

**Abstract:** Early childhood represents a critical stage of rapid growth and development, during which children require appropriate stimulation to optimize both their physical health and overall well-being. One effective approach to meet these developmental needs is through engaging and enjoyable physical activities. Creative gymnastics, which combines rhythmic movements with music, offers a practical and appealing method to strengthen children's immune systems while simultaneously fostering the development of gross motor skills. This community service program was implemented at Early Childhood Education (ECE) Citra Kasih School, Ambon, and involved children aged 4–6 years. The method of implementation emphasized direct practice, where children actively participated in a series of simple, structured, and playful movements accompanied by cheerful music, making the activity easy to follow and enjoyable. Observations during the program indicated that children showed a higher level of enthusiasm, increased activeness, and notable improvements in stamina, balance, and movement coordination. In addition, teachers expressed positive responses, highlighting the added value of integrating structured physical activities into the learning environment. The program not only benefited the children physically but also provided educators with new insights on effective strategies to support children's health. Therefore, creative gymnastics can be recommended as a routine school activity to strengthen immunity, improve physical endurance, and promote healthy lifestyles in early childhood.

## 1. BACKGROUND

Early childhood education (ECE) represents a crucial phase in establishing the foundation for children's holistic growth and development, including physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects. At the age of 4–6 years, children are in the golden age period, during which appropriate stimulation is essential to support optimal development. This stage is considered a critical period, as the learning experiences and activities provided greatly influence children's quality of life in the future. Therefore, structured physical activity is one of the most important forms of stimulation that should be introduced from an early age (Piek et al., 2008).

However, current realities show that many young children spend more time engaging in sedentary activities, such as watching television or playing with digital devices for prolonged periods. This lack of movement can negatively impact their health by lowering immunity, hindering gross motor development, and increasing the risk of childhood obesity (Carson et al., 2016). In contrast, regular and adequate physical activity forms the cornerstone of physical fitness and long-term health (Janssen & LeBlanc., 2010).

To address these challenges, innovative physical activities that align with the developmental stages of early childhood are needed to encourage active movement. One effective and enjoyable approach is creative gymnastics. Creative gymnastics integrates simple movements with rhythmic music and playful elements, enabling children not only to move but also to express themselves, interact socially, and naturally develop motor skills (Halim et al., 2018). With this fun- oriented approach, children are more enthusiastic and willing to participate without feeling pressured.

Beyond its benefits for motor development, creative gymnastics also plays a vital role in enhancing children's immunity. Through repetitive and structured movements, children are trained to engage multiple muscle groups, improve blood circulation, and strengthen stamina. This aligns with the World Health Organization's,(2020) recommendation that preschool-aged children should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily to maintain physical fitness and health. Consequently, creative gymnastics can serve as an alternative form of exercise that is feasible to implement in ECE settings.

Based on this rationale, a community service program was carried out at Citra Kasih School, Ambon to introduce and implement creative gymnastics as a strategy to improve children's health.

This program aimed to encourage children to become more active, cheerful, and healthy, while also equipping teachers with new insights into the importance of structured physical activity for young children. In the long term, schools are expected to integrate creative gymnastics as a routine program that supports the improvement of children's immunity and overall health.

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

According to Piaget (as cited in Santrock., 2018), early childhood is categorized as the preoperational stage, during which children learn primarily through play and direct experiences. At this stage, children develop imagination, language, and symbolic abilities that are closely linked to physical activities. Physical activity not only supports physical growth but

also provides concrete experiences that enrich cognitive development. Therefore, movement and physical play, including creative gymnastics, can serve as effective learning media to foster children's holistic development. Gallahue and Ozmun (2012) emphasize that children's motor development can be enhanced through enjoyable structured physical activities, such as gymnastics and movement-based games. These activities allow children to practice gross motor skills such as running, jumping, and balancing, while simultaneously strengthening muscular and cardiovascular systems. Consistent motor stimulation from an early age serves as a foundation for physical fitness and long-term health.

In addition, Hurlock (2011) explains that physical activity in early childhood impacts not only physical health but also character formation. Through group activities, children learn discipline, understand rules, cooperate with peers, and develop self-confidence. Creative gymnastics conducted in a joyful atmosphere can increase children's motivation to participate while instilling important social values.

From a health perspective, the World Health Organization, (2020) recommends that preschool-aged children engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily to maintain fitness and reduce the risk of disease. Such activities may include play, light exercise, or other forms of age-appropriate movement. Creative gymnastics meets these recommendations, as it encourages children to engage actively in a cheerful environment. In this way, physical activity is not perceived as an obligation but rather as an enjoyable daily routine.

Creative gymnastics has a unique advantage in combining elements of music, play, and simple movements that are easy for children to follow. From the perspective of motor development theory, the integration of rhythmic movements with music supports improvements in coordination, balance, and concentration. Moreover, cheerful music creates a positive atmosphere that stimulates children's enthusiasm for movement. Thus, creative gymnastics becomes an effective medium for stimulating motor development while promoting physical health in early childhood.

Practically, creative gymnastics also has educational value as it provides opportunities for children to express themselves through varied movements. This activity aligns with play-based learning approaches widely recommended in early childhood education. By incorporating creativity, gymnastics functions not only as a form of exercise but also as a learning medium that supports children's cognitive, emotional, and social development. Therefore, the implementation of creative gymnastics in early childhood institutions, including Citra Kasih School, Ambon, is highly relevant as a strategy to improve immunity while supporting children's holistic growth and development.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

The method used in this study was descriptive qualitative with a participatory approach. A descriptive qualitative method was chosen as it is suitable for illustrating the phenomena observed during the implementation of creative gymnastics in early childhood. Meanwhile, a participatory approach was applied to ensure that children and teachers were directly involved in the process, making the outcomes more contextual and relevant to the learning needs at Citra Kasih School, Ambon. The program was conducted in May 2025, involving 30 children aged 4–6 years.

The first stage was the preliminary observation, which aimed to examine the children's conditions and the school's readiness to support the creative gymnastics program. This observation included facilities, learning schedules, and the children's daily physical activity habits. The information gathered during this stage served as the foundation for designing activities appropriate to the abilities and characteristics of early childhood.

The second stage was the design of the gymnastics movements. The movements prioritized simplicity, joy, and accessibility so they could be easily followed by children. The combination of movements included basic motor activities such as jumping, light running, clapping, and bending.

Each movement was synchronized with cheerful music to enhance motivation and create a fun atmosphere. Playful variations were also incorporated to maintain children's enthusiasm throughout the activity.

The third stage was the implementation of creative gymnastics, which was carried out in three sessions, each lasting 30–40 minutes. The activities took place in a safe and comfortable open space, with guidance from classroom teachers and the community service team. During the sessions, children were encouraged to perform the movements according to their abilities without any pressure. This aimed to provide a positive experience so that children would perceive physical exercise as an enjoyable activity.

The fourth stage was the evaluation of the program. The evaluation applied two techniques: direct observation of children's responses during the activity and short interviews with teachers after the sessions. The observed aspects included children's activeness, ability to follow the movements, stamina, and emotional responses (enthusiasm, cheerfulness). Meanwhile, teacher interviews were conducted to gather perceptions regarding the benefits of creative gymnastics and its potential integration into routine school programs.

The data obtained from observations and interviews were analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis. The analysis involved organizing findings, identifying patterns in

children's responses, and interpreting the results based on early childhood developmental theories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this method, the study not only provided empirical insights into the effectiveness of creative gymnastics but also offered practical recommendations for early childhood teachers to integrate physical activity as an essential part of school-based learning.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of creative gymnastics at Citra Kasih School, Ambon was conducted over three sessions, each lasting 30–40 minutes. Based on the observations, the children demonstrated positive responses to the activities. From the first session, most children appeared enthusiastic in following the movements, although some initially showed shyness or hesitation. By the second and third sessions, however, the number of children actively participating increased significantly, with even previously passive children beginning to confidently move and follow the rhythm of the music. This progression indicates that creative gymnastics successfully created an enjoyable learning atmosphere and contributed to enhancing children's self-confidence. Similar findings have been reported in studies showing that structured movement-based activities not only foster motor development but also improve social-emotional skills and self-efficacy in early childhood (Barnett et al., 2016; Logan et al., 2018).



**Figure 1.** *Early childhood education (ECE) children joyfully participating in creative gymnastics movements*

In terms of physical endurance, the children demonstrated the ability to sustain physical activity for longer periods without easily becoming fatigued compared to the initial session. Simple repetitive movements such as jumping, light running, and bending were performed with relatively stable energy levels. The children appeared fitter and more enthusiastic after the

sessions. These findings are consistent with Gallahue and Ozmun., (2012), who emphasize that structured physical activity enhances children's physical fitness and motor capacity. Thus, creative gymnastics proved to be an effective means of strengthening stamina while maintaining health in early childhood.

Beyond physical aspects, the program also had a positive impact on children's social-emotional development. Since creative gymnastics was conducted in groups, children had opportunities to learn cooperation, follow rules, and appreciate their peers. Some children who initially tended to be individualistic began to demonstrate improved social interaction, such as encouraging peers, imitating others' movements, and sharing laughter. This aligns with Hurlock's., (2011) view that physical activity in early childhood not only contributes to physical health but also supports character formation and social skill development.

Interviews with teachers revealed that they perceived creative gymnastics as a highly beneficial activity that deserves to be integrated into routine programs. Teachers stated that the activity not only improved children's fitness but also facilitated a more conducive classroom atmosphere. They observed that children were more focused and engaged in subsequent learning activities after participating in creative gymnastics. This supports Santrock's., (2018) assertion that play-based activities and direct experiences enhance school readiness in early childhood.

From a health perspective, the implementation of creative gymnastics is also aligned with the World Health Organization's., (2020) recommendation that preschool-aged children should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Creative gymnastics offers a practical approach to meeting this guideline, as the movements are simple, easy to follow, and enjoyable for children. Therefore, it can serve as an alternative solution to the current issue of low physical activity among children in the digital era, where many tend to prefer screen-based play rather than active movement.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that creative gymnastics provides holistic benefits for early childhood development, encompassing physical, social, emotional, and learning readiness domains. The program also offered teachers new insights on integrating physical activity into the learning process. The implication of these findings is the need for schools to adopt creative gymnastics as part of structured routine programs to ensure sustainable benefits for children's health and development.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The community service program implementing creative gymnastics Citra Kasih School, Ambon demonstrated highly positive outcomes. Creative gymnastics proved effective in improving physical fitness and immunity among early childhood children, while simultaneously fostering a joyful learning atmosphere, enhancing enthusiasm, and building children's self-confidence. In addition, the program contributed to social-emotional development through the cultivation of cooperation, discipline, and peer interaction. From the educators' perspective, teachers gained new insights into the importance of structured physical activity for young children and considered this activity feasible to be adopted as a routine school program. Furthermore, the implementation of creative gymnastics aligns with the World Health Organization's (2020) recommendation that preschool-aged children should engage in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily to support optimal growth and health.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be proposed. For schools, creative gymnastics should be established as a weekly routine program to ensure sustainable benefits. For teachers, it is advisable to continuously develop variations of movements and music tailored to children's developmental stages to maintain their enthusiasm. For parents, it is essential to encourage children to remain physically active at home through simple play activities so that physical exercise is not limited to the school environment. Meanwhile, for future practitioners or researchers, it is recommended to conduct further studies by measuring children's health indicators quantitatively, such as physical fitness levels or body mass index, in order to strengthen the evidence on the effectiveness of creative gymnastics in improving early childhood health.

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