THE EFFECT OF THE ALPHABET MYSTERY BOX MEDIA ON ENHANCING BEGINNING READING SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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Keywords	ABSTRACT
Alphabet Mystery Box, Early Childhood, Early Reading	The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of the use of the alphabet mystery box media on early reading skills in early childhood. A literature review was conducted using Google Scholar, Google Search, and ResearchGate. A total of 13 peer-reviewed publications, dated between 2015 and 2024, were included in the review, covering studies in both English and Indonesian. The data analysis utilized content analysis to examine findings related to the Alphabet Mystery Box media and its influence on early childhood reading skills, contextualized within relevant theories and previous research. The results of the study show that the ability to read early through the using of alphabet box media for early childhood has a significant impact on early literacy skills. The use of "magic box" learning media can improve children's cognitive and language skills, including recognizing numbers, alphabets, and colors. This article aims to optimize the reading ability of children aged 0-6 years, which is considered a critical developmental period. This research could assess how integrating traditional and digital media impacts engagement and the effectiveness of early reading instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Improving reading skills is one of the basic developments in early childhood education institutions. Permendikbud Number 137 of 2014 on the level of achievement of the development of children aged 5-6 years in the scope of literacy, namely mentioning known letter symbols, recognizing the sound of the initial letter from the names of objects around it, mentioning a group of images that have the same sound of the letter/initial letter, understanding the relationship between sound and letter form, reading one's own name, and write one's own name.

Early childhood education is the golden age of child development and is the basis for higher education. There was an extraordinary development in that time that would not happen again. Through various aspects of child development, early childhood education offers an opportunity to develop children's character. Children's language skills are one of the areas of development that must be developed. Preschoolers must be able to read and write in order to acquire language skills, which include the ability to communicate orally and symbolically through writing. Reading is the first thing that preschool teachers must do when training their students to read. Early reading is a stage of reading development that is characterized by proficiency in reading the alphabet, but is limited to reading each letter, understanding the alphabet, and combining letters into syllables to make a single word (Ramadanti et al., 2021).

Learning the alphabet, numbers, and symbols is the first step in the cognitive process of early reading. Therefore, early reading involves children who start their activities by recognizing the alphabet using symbols. Improving early childhood reading skills is very important because children's IQ increases along with their level of linguistic development. Based on this description, the application that

can be used in developing children's initial reading skills is by using a basic reading method that uses the Alphabet Mystery Box Media (Asiah, 2020).

Early reading is the initial stage in which children learn to recognize letters and sound symbols and sound them, as a basis for subsequent reading learning (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2020). The ability to read the beginning of this study refers to the opinion above is the ability to recognize letters and mention vowels and consonants that are taught in a planned manner to preschool children as the basis for further learning (Dita Mailinda et al., 2023).

Early reading starts from the ability of children to develop eye movements from left to right, the ability to associate letters with the sounds of the language they represent, reading simple words and sentences and reading is one of the most important aspects of language skills, reading is also the main foundation as an effort made by a person to be able to understand other learning processes (Nora Fatmawati Ningrum & Nurlita, 2023). Introductory reading is reading that is taught programmatically to preschoolers (Ismawati et al., 2022). If teachers in the teaching and learning process do not use variation, it will bore children, reduce attention, sleepiness, laziness and as a result learning goals will not be achieved. The three variations are teaching styles, media, and learning materials, and interactions between teachers and children. The three variations are emphasized on process variations rather than products. If these three components are combined in their use, it will increase children's attention, arouse the desire and willingness to learn. All children do not want boredom in learning because it is not fun (Islamiya et al., 2024).

Media Alphabet Mystery Box is a modified version of the chain-word guessing game. Alphabet mystery box is a fun learning tool to introduce children to letters. Children will guess the letters while learning by touching the objects in the box. Media Alphabet Mystery Box is a fun educational game for preschool and kindergarten-aged children. This game helps kids learn the Alphabet, letter recognition, and fine motor skills (Marini Handriani & Syefriani Darnis, 2020).

The purpose of this research is to improve initial reading through the medium of alphabet mystery box that has been carried out in previous research. The research contributes to the field of early childhood education and literacy development by demonstrating the practical application and effectiveness of the alphabet mystery box as a teaching medium to improve initial reading skills. This study builds on previous research by refining the use of this medium, providing evidence-based insights into its impact on young learners. Additionally, it offers educators an innovative and engaging tool to enhance phonemic awareness and alphabet recognition, addressing common challenges in initial reading instruction. The findings of this research not only validate the utility of the alphabet mystery box but also provide a replicable model for integrating play-based and interactive learning strategies into literacy curricula. By bridging theory and practice, the study contributes to the development of effective teaching methodologies and promotes a more inclusive approach to early literacy education.

METHODS

The method employed in this study is a literature review, focusing on evaluating existing research related to early reading skills through the use of alphabet mystery box media for early childhood education. This approach involved systematically identifying and analyzing relevant references to provide a foundation and benchmark for this research. The data from the reviewed articles were organized and analyzed using a matrix, with results summarized in a table (Appendix).

The study adopted a narrative review approach, which synthesizes prior knowledge qualitatively without aiming for generalizations or cumulative knowledge. The population for this review comprised all journal articles discussing early reading skills, while the sample specifically focused on research exploring the use of the alphabet mystery box as an independent variable and its impact on early reading abilities as the dependent variable. The research utilized descriptive analysis to systematically parse and explain the data.

Sources were retrieved using Google Scholar, Google Search, and ResearchGate, with articles selected based on their relevance to the topic and availability in full-text PDF format. A total of 13 peer-reviewed publications, dated between 2015 and 2024, were included in the review, covering studies in both English and Indonesian. Data synthesis was conducted through narrative techniques, classifying and comparing extracted data from the research objectives and findings to derive comprehensive insights and conclusions.

The data analysis utilized content analysis to examine findings related to the alphabet mystery box media and its influence on early reading skills, contextualized within relevant theories and previous

research. This allowed for a systematic exploration of how the tool supports early literacy, culminating in synthesized findings that contrast and compare individual study results. The research design chart illustrating this process is presented in Figure 1.
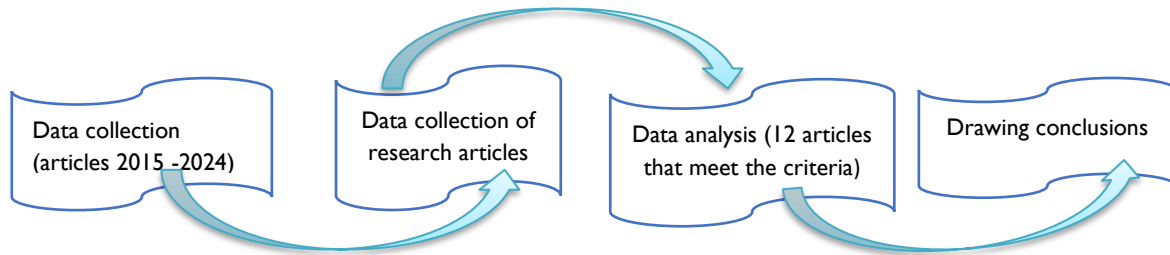
Figure 1. Research Stage

RESULTS

From the results of several literature reviews that have been conducted, the ability to read beginning through the use of alphabet mystery box media has been proven to have an impact on children's early reading ability, the data analysis matrix in the article presented in table 1. Data analysis matrix in articles used in literature review.

Table 1. Data analysis matrix in articles used in literature review

Author, Title, Journal	Method	Result
(Asiah, 2020) "Development of Alphabet Mystery Box Learning Media to Introduce Letters in Kindergarten Group A"	The method used in this journal is the ADDIE method, which stands for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation. This method is used to develop the "Alphabet Mystery Box" learning media.	The results of the study show that the "Alphabet Mystery Box" learning media is suitable to be used to introduce letters to children aged 4-5 years in group A of Kindergarten. These results show that the developed learning media pays attention to material and media aspects, so it is suitable for use in learning to recognize letters.
(Ramadanti et al., 2021) "Strategies for Improving Early Reading Skills through Picture Card Media for Early Childhood in the Frame of Islam and the Perspective of Education Experts."	The method used in this study is the library research method, which is taking data from books and journals. This research consists of two important sources, namely primary data sources and secondary data sources.	The results disclosed in the article include: • The Importance of Image Media. • Picture Cards as a Teaching Tool. • Learning Strategies. • Development of Reading Ability. • Islamic Approach and Moral Values. Overall, this article aims to optimize the reading ability of children aged 0-6 years, which is considered a critical developmental period.
(Reza et al., 2021) "Development of Educational *Games* for Learning Alphabet Letters in Early Childhood Using."	The journal method used is the research and development method (Research & Development).	The results of the journal show that all the features of the educational game developed function as expected. In addition, this game is expected to improve the quality of children's learning and reading skills in a fun and interactive way.

(Karin Pramuwitya Gutni, Fatrica Syafri, Deni Febrini, 2024) "The Effect of Magic Box Game Media on the Ability to Recognize Letters in Children Aged 5-6 Years."	The research method used in this journal is an experimental method. The design used is Post-Test Control Group Design (Non Equivalent Control Group Design).	The results of the study showed that the use of "magic box" game media can improve the ability to recognize letters in children aged 5-6 years at Kemala Bayangkari 26 Kindergarten, Bengkulu City. After the treatment, there was a significant improvement in children's ability to recognize letters, which confirmed that this game media was effective and fun in helping children understand and remember letters. This research also emphasizes the importance of letter recognition as a basis for learning to read.
(Islamiya et al., 2024)	The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative research method. Qualitative research aims to describe, explore, and understand meanings that are considered to come from social or humanitarian problems.	Based on the information provided, the results of the research on the learning media "Magic Letter Box" showed a significant positive influence on students' motivation and reading skills. Most students expressed enthusiasm in using the media, and this study concluded that Magic Letter Box is effective in improving reading ability in early age students.
(MAILINDA et al., 2023)	The method used in this journal is comparative research with a quantitative approach. Comparative research aims to compare the presence of one or more variables in two different samples or at different times. In this study, the researcher wanted to prove the effect of the letter box game on the early reading ability of group B children at Tarbiyatul Islam Kindergarten.	The results of the study show that: • Children's early reading ability in the experimental group after participating in the letter box game. This shows that the child's early reading ability is just beginning to develop. • Children's early reading ability in the control group that did not participate in the letter box game. • There was no significant difference between children's early reading ability in the experimental group and the control group. Thus, it can be concluded that the letter box game is not effective in improving early childhood reading skills in Tarbiyatul Islam Kindergarten.
(Nora Fatmawati Ningrum & Nurlita, 2023)	The method used in this journal is experimental research. The research design applied is a pre-experimental model with a one-group pretest posttest design. The steps taken in this experimental activity include:	The results of this study show that there is a significant influence of the use of Alphabet Fishing media on the reading ability of 5-6 year old children in Mawar Putih Kindergarten, Singingi Hilir District, Kuantan Singingi Regency.

	• Conduct a pretest to measure the child's reading ability before treatment. • Providing treatment in the form of Alphabet Fishing media. • Conduct a posttest to measure the child's reading ability after treatment. • Data analysis was carried out using a t-test with the SPSS Windows Version 25 program to determine the significant influence of the use of the media on children's reading ability.	Some of the key points from the results are: • T-Test Statistics: This means that the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, indicating a very significant influence of the use of the media on the child's reading ability. • Big Influence: The effect of the use of Alphabet Fishing media on children's reading ability. • Comparison of Pretest and Posttest: The results of the pretest and posttest showed a significant improvement in children's reading ability after the treatment was given. This study confirms the effectiveness of Alphabet Fishing media in improving early childhood reading skills.
(Ismawati et al., 2022)	The research methods used in this study are: • Research Design: Pre-experimental with One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design. This aims to compare reading ability before and after the application of Kofabar media. • Population and Sampelss • Data Collection Techniques: Using observation to measure children's early reading ability before and after treatment. • Research Instruments: Observation sheets that have been tested for validity and reliability. • Data Analysis: Using the Wilcoxon Test to analyze differences in reading ability before and after treatment.	The results of this journal show that: • Improvement of Reading Ability: There is a positive and significant influence of the use of Kofabar media on children's early reading ability. The results of the Wilcoxon test showed a Z value = -5.467 and an Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) value of 0.002, which was less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between reading ability before and after treatment. • Skill Development: Children show progress in recognizing vowels and consonants, connecting images with words, and arranging syllables into words. • Interesting Learning Method: Learning carried out through games and group activities makes children more enthusiastic and not bored, making it easier for them to receive new material.

		• Conclusion: The regular and repeated use of Kofabar media has a great influence on the development of children's early reading skills.
(Ulfadhilah & Suyadi, 2021)	The methods used in this study are as follows: • Qualitative Approach • Data Collection: Observation; Interview;. Documentation. • Research Subject • Purpose of Use of Media • Implementation of Learning Innovation Research	The results of the study show that the use of box of number and alphabet media can improve children's cognitive and language skills, including recognizing numbers, alphabets, and colors. Children are able to name numbers and letters, as well as enter pieces of numbers and letters according to the available boxes. In addition, this media also helps create a fun and non-monotonous learning atmosphere, so that children are more focused and enthusiastic in learning.
(Anna Kartika Wahyuningrum & Linda Dwiyanti, 2022)	The method used in this journal is Qualitative Descriptive. The data collection techniques used include observation, interviews, and practice (data triangulation).	The results of the study show that the use of APE (Educational Game Tools) mystery box media is effective in improving the ability of children aged 4-5 years to recognize letters. This media makes learning more fun and interactive, so that children are more active and understand the material better. This study also shows a positive impact on children's involvement and interest in learning, and suggests that teachers use this media in the learning process to facilitate explanations and increase children's involvement.
(Kurniawan et al., 2023)	The method used in the journal is a document-descriptive research approach, which involves reviewing and analyzing documents related to letter board games and early childhood reading skills. The research employs a qualitative method that focuses on description, study, and analysis of data or information related to the development of early reading skills in early childhood. Data collection is conducted through intensive reading of relevant documents.	The results of the research indicate that developing early reading skills in children can be effectively achieved through letter board games. These games are enjoyable for early childhood and involve various steps based on the introduction of letters and words. The specific early reading skills developed through playing with letter games include picture reading skills, narration skills, letter reading skills, and syllable and word reading skills.

According to the findings of the Literature study from 12 articles or journals mentioned in table 1, the role of the alphabet media is a mystery box and improves early childhood reading skills. It is two topics that the fund has studied that are linked to each other. The development of the relationship is the result of the development of the alphabet mystery box media in the form of a learning media in the form of a box with attractive colors and large letters packaged in the form of letters A-Z using the main material, namely cooking oil cardboard attached with a planel cloth. At the stage of analysis, the stages

carried out are analyzing children's needs and media analysis. One of them is when the learning process teachers often use only letter card media to improve initial reading in children, when using letter card media, children are mostly unfocused and get bored quickly, so that learning is less effective in improving initial reading in children.

This research was conducted on children aged 5-6 years. materials and tools and steps for the use of media mystery boxes and implementation for students. Media mystery box materials and tools used from used cardboard, flannel, dakron, scissors, thread, needles, and fox glue. Based on the results of the analysis, an alphabet mystery box media was designed that is in accordance with the needs of children to support in improving early childhood reading. Teachers can design, make and create alphabet mystery boxes that can stimulate aspects of children's development comprehensively. The media alphabet mystery box was created to develop the ability to read the beginning. How to make an alphabet mystery box media are: 1. Create a Mystery Box; Make a hole on one side or the top of the box large enough for your child to put his hand in it.2. Box Decoration; Stick a letter sticker or an image of the alphabet on the inside or outside of the box according to the theme of the letter you want to introduce. 3. Insert the object; Select the small object that corresponds to the letters you want to teach, then put it in the box. 4. Giving of Covering Cloth; Stick a cloth or dark paper to the top of the box so that children can't look inside when they pick up the object. How to play the mystery box media is: 1. Open the box, then the child takes a word card. Then the card is placed in the mica that has been provided; 2. The child's obstacle is that it is difficult to read, in the word card that has been taken earlier, the child is asked to arrange the letters using the lid of the alphabet bottle according to the letters on the word card; 3. Help children if they have difficulty finding letters; 4. Help the child if he has difficulty finding letters; 5. Next, if the letters have been arranged like a word card taken, the child is asked to read the letters one by one and then read one word. Teachers help children if they find it difficult to read letters and words; 6. Next, if the letters have been arranged like a word card taken, the child is asked to read the letters one by one and then read one word. Teachers help children if they find it difficult to read letters and words (Anna Kartika Wahyuningrum & Linda Dwiyanti, 2022).

The specialty of the Media Alphabet Mystery Box media is that it can attract children's attention because it contains color images and their large size so that they can improve students' initial reading skills and make it easier to learn to read the beginning and understand the reading text with the support of letters, Media alphabet mystery box is one of the media in the form of a book and is accompanied by an interesting picture and is large enough where the media is interesting and fun so that children will be motivated and increase children's interest in learning.

Alphabet Mystery Box Media Media is a media that is liked by children and can be made by the teacher himself. This book with a large size is usually for low group children, In it is written a simple, short discourse with large letters and given color pictures, children can also read or listen to stories, children also see pictures made in color with a large enough size so that their use is more communicative, Children are interested in reading and are easy for children to see. This increase is very significant and explains that the use of Alphabet Mystery Box Media media is very effective in improving early childhood literacy skills, the application of the method.

The results of the literature review found several relevant studies that have been discussed showing that the alphabet mystery box or mystery letter box media is effective in stimulating and improving early reading skills in early childhood (Asiah, 2020; Dita Mailinda et al., 2023). The Alphanet mystery box media developed has the characteristics of materials that are easy to obtain, recyclable (environmentally friendly), and attractive design. Environmentally friendly media is very necessary to support sustainable development programs, teachers can also teach children to use materials that can be recycled, with this teachers can also teach the character of loving the environment, and can innovate faster and more creatively, Media developed in the form of (Anna Kartika Wahyuningrum & Linda Dwiyanti, 2022)Alphabet mystery box mediawhich can be used by teachers and to facilitate the learning process, especially in reading the beginning (Windayanti, 2024).

By using the media of the alphabet mystery box, children are able to enrich their spoken language and develop all aspects of language. Children can also read and discuss in groups and can add information that students have according to their respective experiences. Children can enjoy learning activities by using the alphabet mystery box media. There is an increase in children's initial reading ability after using the media alphabet mystery box (Rosyida et al., 2024). From the study, it can be concluded that the ability to read early through the use of alphabet mystery box media for early childhood has a significant impact on early reading ability in early childhood.

CONCLUSION

The Alphabet Mystery Box has proven to be an effective and engaging tool for improving early childhood reading skills. Its interactive, multisensory approach fosters letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and memory retention while enhancing fine motor skills and building children's confidence. The environmentally friendly and adaptable design makes it suitable for diverse learning contexts, both at home and in schools. By incorporating elements of fun and creativity, this media not only supports literacy development but also instills values of environmental responsibility. Future research can expand on this foundation by examining the long-term impacts of Alphabet Mystery Box usage, its customization for diverse learners, integration with digital tools, and effectiveness across cultural contexts. Additionally, studies could explore its influence on emotional and social development, teacher implementation practices, and the sustainability of its eco-friendly design, ensuring the tool's broader applicability and scalability in early childhood education.

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