

Observation Methods in Evaluating Early Childhood Learning in Kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore observation methods for evaluating early childhood learning in Kindergarten Group B at Aisyah Kindergarten Lubuklinggau. The research involved 32 students, aged five years, comprising 12 boys and 20 girls. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing observation, interviews, and documentation. The study identified various observation methods, including anecdotal notes, running records, checklists, time sampling, and event sampling, each with distinct advantages and limitations. Anecdotal records provided detailed insights into individual student behaviors, while running records offered comprehensive observations over time. Checklists allowed for rapid assessments but lacked depth, focusing primarily on the presence or absence of specific behaviors. Time sampling concentrated on the frequency of behaviors, and event sampling added context by recording the causes and effects of behaviors, though it risked missing key behaviors due to its predetermined scope. These methods collectively serve to assess children's development and learning progress. The evaluation of early childhood education (PAUD) is critical for understanding the effectiveness of educational programs in shaping children's behavior and attitudes, as well as for guiding continuous improvement. However, challenges remain in aligning evaluation strategies with curriculum goals and selecting the most appropriate assessment tools. Despite these challenges, systematic evaluation and ongoing refinement efforts by PAUD educators are essential to optimize children's developmental outcomes and prepare them for future educational challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) is a guidance service provided by educational institutions both formally and non-formally. It is exclusively given to early childhood education coaches and stimulates children's development so that their growth and intellectual development become ideal. Early Childhood Education is the education provided to children from birth until six years of age. This period is very

important for children or also called the golden age. Early education is intended to provide provisions for children to develop the potential that exists in children. Early Childhood Education is essential-education organized to facilitate the growth and development of the child as a whole or emphasize the development of all aspects of the child's personality (Nilawati, 2015). Educational institutions involved in Early Childhood Education implementation include playgroups, commonly known as playgroups, as well as kindergartens and *raudhatul athfal* (Wiyani, 2015). The purpose of Early Childhood Education is to foster, grow, and develop all the potential that children have at an early age optimally so that basic behaviors and abilities are formed according to their developmental stages to have the readiness to enter further education (Anggraini & Kuswanto, 2019). Early Childhood Education encompasses formal and non-formal guidance services exclusively dedicated to coaching and stimulating children's development from birth to six years of age, which is often referred to as the golden age. This period is crucial for fostering children's potential and emphasizing the development of their personalities. Educational institutions offering Early Childhood Education include playgroups, kindergartens, and *raudhatul athfal*. The goal of Early Childhood Education is to optimally foster, grow, and develop children's potential, ensuring they acquire basic behaviors and abilities aligned with their developmental stages to prepare them for further education.

Quality in Early Childhood Education can be influenced by several factors, namely the child himself, parents, the environment, the quality of treatment, and service (providing stimulation). The provision of services and treatment (providing stimulation) is carried out to stimulate Early Childhood Education development, which is part of a process called the learning program in Early Childhood Education. Quality Early Childhood Education learning programs can help children complete developmental tasks. In addition to developmental tasks in the Early Childhood Education curriculum, children must achieve predetermined basic competencies. A teacher will know the description of the development of students based on the information obtained from the results of the assessment. Likewise, students will know their level of development based on the results of the assessment. Assessment information can be a guide for teachers and students in taking action related to planning and the learning process. In this context, assessment is referred to as a learning guide (Jaya, 2019). The achievement of developmental tasks and basic competencies in the form of student absorption and changes student behavior towards learning can be seen from the results of the learning evaluation. Evaluation is seen as the input obtained from the learning process that can be used to determine the strengths and weaknesses of various components contained in a learning process (Sawaludin, 2018).

The achievement of developmental tasks and basic competencies can be seen from the results of the learning evaluation. Evaluation is carried out to optimize all parts of continuation in children such as cognitive changes, motor changes, social-emotional changes, language changes, artistic changes, and religious moral changes. Assessment actions are carried out comprehensively by the principles of assessment in Early Childhood Education, including educating, sustainable, objective, accountable, transparent, systematic, comprehensive, and meaningful (Hayati, 2009). Evaluation activities have great benefits in the world of education, as well as in learning activities. Through evaluation, the results of learning activities can be assessed, enabling the determination of necessary follow-up actions. Evaluation is a systematic process used to determine the extent to which students have achieved teaching objectives (Wahyudi, 2016). The quality of Early Childhood Education is influenced by various factors such as the child, parents, environment, quality of treatment, and service. The provision of services and treatment aims to stimulate the child's development as part of the Early Childhood Education learning program. These quality learning programs help children complete developmental tasks and achieve predetermined basic competencies. Teachers use assessment information to understand students' developmental levels and guide planning and the learning process. Evaluation serves as a learning guide, providing insights into strengths and weaknesses in the learning process. It optimizes cognitive, motor, social-emotional, language, artistic, and religious moral changes in children. Assessment actions adhere to principles such as being educational, sustainable, objective, accountable, transparent, systematic, comprehensive, and meaningful. Evaluation in Early Childhood Education is crucial, allowing for the assessment of learning

outcomes and guiding necessary follow-up actions based on a systematic assessment of teaching objectives achieved by students.

Quality of education requires teachers who can understand all the developmental needs of children according to their age stages. In addition, teacher knowledge is also needed in designing a learning evaluation. This is confirmed by the Early Childhood Education standard, which integrates with the National Education Standards described in the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture of Indonesia Number 137 of 2014 concerning Early Childhood Education Standards, one of which is the assessment standard. Standard assessment is an activity conducted by educators using reference assessment instruments to measure the process and learning outcomes standards according to the level of development and age of children.

Therefore, the teacher's expertise in designing evaluations for each learning process will ensure that learning meets the specific criteria for each child, optimizing their needs and development. Assessment in Early Childhood Education is crucial to gauge the impact of education programs on students' behavior and attitudes in the short-term, medium-term, and long term (Mulyasa, 2012). Unlike assessment models in primary and secondary education levels, assessment in Early Childhood Education involves observation, recording, and documentation of children's activities. It serves not only to measure program success but also to continuously monitor children's progress and development (Iswantiningtyas & Wulansari, 2018). Evaluation of learning quality aids in checking the learning process and enhancing education quality, aligning with Mardapi's perspective that education quality improvement hinges on enhancing learning and assessment system quality (Mardapi, 2003). In early childhood education, data collection for evaluation is primarily done through observation, gathering information on learning activities or children's participation in educational programs conducted by educators (teachers). Data collection occurs at the end of each learning session (Akhsanti, 2014). A written evaluation plan is essential for the preparation of the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH). This data is used to measure the learning process results according to the plan outlined in the RPPH. Thus, alongside creating a learning plan, compiling an evaluation plan is equally necessary. The observation results reveal a notable absence of evaluation plans in some RPPH documents, causing ambiguity in the day's learning process. In such cases, teachers play a pivotal role. Their responsibility extends beyond delivering teaching materials to students, including evaluation. They assess whether the intended learning objectives are achieved and monitor their students' progress. Hence, evaluation can be defined as an activity conducted by teachers during the learning process to ascertain if the expected learning objectives are met, gain insights into students' development, analyze the results, and utilize them as the basis for decision-making.

According to Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014, learning evaluation includes assessing learning processes and outcomes conducted by educators to evaluate the implementation of learning plans. Evaluation of learning outcomes is carried out by educators by comparing the plans with the actual learning outcomes. The results of the evaluation serve as the basis for considering follow-up actions for further development (Permendikbud, 2014). Wahyudin and Agustin suggest that evaluation in the context of learning in Early Childhood Education is a systematic procedure used to gather information about the progress of various aspects of student development after participating in learning activities for a certain period. In Early Childhood Education, teachers can evaluate the success of learning conducted, the suitability of media used, attractiveness, and appropriateness of methods employed. Evaluation aims to enhance the learning process for the following day, ensuring optimal achievement of learning objectives (Wahyudin & Agustin, 2011). Evaluation is the process of collecting and processing information to determine a child's developmental level. It is adjusted to indicators of child development achievement and adheres to assessment standards (Ridho, 2015). Moreover, evaluation serves as a process for documenting a child's skills and development, indicating their next stage of development. It extends beyond mere measurement, ranking, or grouping children into specific categories (Fridani et al., 2017). Lastly, evaluation involves giving meaning or determining the quality of measurement results by comparing them with certain criteria (Uno & Koni, 2014). Learning evaluation, as outlined in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014, encompasses

assessing learning processes and outcomes to evaluate the implementation of learning plans. Educators evaluate learning outcomes by comparing planned objectives with actual achievements, using the results to guide further development initiatives. Wahyudin and Agustin emphasize that in Early Childhood Education, evaluation is a systematic process aimed at gathering information about students' developmental progress. Teachers assess various aspects of learning effectiveness, aiming to enhance future learning processes and achieve optimal learning objectives. Additionally, evaluation serves to document children's skills and development, indicating their progression to the next developmental stage. It transcends mere measurement, instead focusing on holistic understanding and quality determination based on predefined criteria.

Evaluation in Early Childhood Education is essentially conducted to obtain accurate information about children's development and learning, enabling the provision of appropriate services (Zahro, 2015). In Early Childhood Education, teachers assess the success of learning activities, the suitability of media used, and the effectiveness of methods employed. Evaluation aims to enhance the next day's learning process to achieve optimal learning objectives and determine the extent to which children's development and learning outcomes are attained. Evaluation is closely related to testing, as Fernandes describes it as a systematic procedure to assess a person's behavior in numerical or categorical form. Tests comprise questions aligned with predefined goals, reflecting formulated learning objectives that encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, articulated through measurable ability indicators (Yus, 2011). Evaluation can employ various methods, including assessment, tests, and measurement. According to Wortham, when assessing values such as respecting the opinions of others, teachers need to measure students' mastery. The data obtained through measurements are then analyzed and compared with predefined criteria to determine students' success levels. Subsequently, teachers evaluate using measurement data to inform instructional decisions (Yus, 2011).

According to Dockett and Tegel, Early Childhood Education teachers require adequate communication skills, as well as critical and reflective thinking abilities. Critical thinking involves setting clear benchmarks for thinking, while reflective thinking entails constant contemplation of actions taken. Kindergarten teachers must also assess situations, evaluate available information, make informed decisions, resolve dilemmas, justify their decisions, and effectively communicate them to others (Dockett & Tegel, 1995). Thus, evaluation emerges as a crucial aspect of Early Childhood Education teachers' skills, including those of kindergarten teachers. Bjorklund (2000) emphasized the pivotal role of teachers as observers, planners, and evaluators. As observers, teachers must first conduct observations to ensure smooth interactions between children and their surroundings (Tarigan & Mesra, 2013). In evaluating learning within Early Childhood Education, teachers bear significant responsibility, necessitating a strong motivation to excel in their tasks. To effectively fulfill their educational responsibilities, educators require not only academic proficiency and teaching skills but also psychological skills to motivate and guide children toward positive development (Syafrimen, et al., 2016). The essential communication skills and critical thinking abilities needed by Early Childhood Education teachers, particularly kindergarten educators. These skills encompass setting clear thinking benchmarks, reflecting on actions taken, assessing situations, making informed decisions, resolving dilemmas, and effectively communicating decisions to others. Evaluation is underscored as a vital component of these teachers' skill sets. Additionally, Bjorklund emphasizes teachers' roles as observers, planners, and evaluators, particularly in ensuring smooth interactions between children and their environments. Evaluation in Early Childhood Education carries significant responsibility, demanding a strong motivation for success. Educators must possess not only academic and teaching abilities but also psychological skills to inspire and guide children towards positive development.

The interviews conducted with a teacher at Aisyah Kindergarten Lubuklinggau revealed challenges in creating an evaluation plan. The teacher encountered difficulty in selecting an appropriate evaluation instrument aligned with the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH). Subsequent analysis exposed a lack of synchronization between the RPPH and the teacher-created evaluation sheet. Despite conducting observations, the teacher failed to consistently record them in detail. According to the 2013 curriculum,

Early Childhood Education assessment employs three techniques: anecdotes, checklists, and work samples.

Research findings indicate that Early Childhood Education teachers face difficulties in choosing and processing assessment results aligned with the 2013 Curriculum. This difficulty is corroborated by Kinasih et al. (2017), who noted challenges in curriculum implementation due to educators spending considerable time managing numerous daily events for each student. The process of synthesizing the three assessment types into an evaluation report proves time-consuming. Emphasizing students' potential, the assessment focuses on monitoring learning progress, results, and continuous improvement (Alfiriani, 2016). To address this issue, researchers analyzed various observation methods such as anecdotal notes, running records, checklists, time sampling, and event sampling. This analysis aimed to comprehend the strengths and weaknesses of each technique for learning evaluation. Consequently, teachers could determine the appropriateness of observation techniques based on learning evaluation needs.

2. METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine Observation Methods in Evaluating Early Childhood Learning in Kindergarten Group B of Aisyah Kindergarten Lubuklinggau. The participants of this research were 32 students of group B at Aisyah Kindergarten Lubuklinggau aged 5 years, including 12 male students and 20 female students. The method used was qualitative. This was because the researchers conducted observations in group B of Aisyah Kindergarten Lubuklinggau to collect data and identify evaluation techniques used by teachers according to the needs of students and the preparation of the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) that had been designed. Data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were made using evaluation instruments of anecdotal notes, running records, check lists, time sampling, and event sampling to assess the development and basic competencies of students. While the interview was carried out on Early Childhood Education teacher who did the evaluation. The analysis of the documents used in this research comprised the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) and the evaluation results document. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman model with the steps of data reduction, data display, and conclusions. The next step was the data reduction stage, which involved filtering important data related to the problem under study. Following that, in the data presentation stage, information from the filtered data in the previous step was compiled into text or narrative form. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying data, where researchers drew conclusions based on the reduced data and the presented information, supported by the data and evidence obtained during the research. The research design is illustrated in the chart in Figure 1.

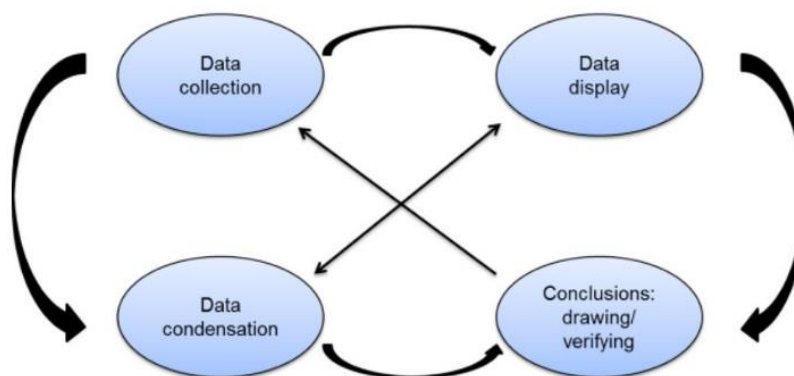


Figure 1. Research Design and Data Analysis

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation serves as a tool and method for assessing the success level of a planned program. According to Idrus (2019), evaluation is an integral part of the learning process inseparable from teaching activities. Conducting evaluations in educational activities holds significant importance, as it serves as a measuring tool to determine the level of success achieved by students in grasping the taught materials. Through evaluation, learning objectives can be accurately and convincingly assessed. Each evaluation possesses distinct criteria, characteristics, and procedures. The evaluation process in Early Childhood Education involves formulating activities, preparing assessment tools, and determining assessment criteria.

Assessment in the context of Early Childhood Education entails gathering, analyzing, and interpreting diverse information concerning children's performance and progress across various developmental aspects attained through habituation activities within a specified period (Zahro, 2015). Evaluations conducted in Early Childhood Education necessitate a tailored approach due to the distinct developmental characteristics of early-age children compared to those in elementary and middle school. Hence, Early Childhood Education teachers must adjust the observation method for each learning evaluation in line with the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH) utilized in the learning process. Based on the results of the researchers' findings and analysis, various observation methods are employed in the evaluation process, including anecdotal notes, running records, checklists, time sampling, and event sampling. The aim of these findings and analyses is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each learning evaluation technique. Consequently, teachers can determine the suitability of observation techniques based on the needs of learning evaluation.

3.1 Anecdotal Records

Anecdotal records are used to record all the facts, tell the situation that happened, what the child did and said (Kemendikbud, 2015). Anecdotal notes as a daily activity journal to record activities carried out by children during the learning process. The main elements recorded in the anecdotal notes include the child's name, the play activities or learning experiences they engage in, and their exhibited behaviors, including any speech conveyed during the learning activity. Anecdotal notes are daily journals that record the unique behavior of each student. Based on the results of the researchers' findings and analysis from interviews with Early Childhood Education teachers and examination of the RPPH documents, data were obtained that.

Table 1. Anecdotal Records

Benefits	Drawbacks
Assessments are made to focus more on unique events that occur in children.	The assessment is incomplete, this is because the notes only contain a few special events that happened to students.
Notes are objective and factual.	The contents of the notes depend on the memory of the observer because the recording is done after the learning hours are over. So sometimes the notes are not so detailed.
More detail in recording special events, this is because the information obtained is written in full, regarding when, how and where the incident occurred.	Observers must be sensitive in determining the unique behavior of each child being observed.
Observers do not require special training in their use.	

Based on Table 1, it could be concluded that in anecdotal notes, observers could observe behavior freely without being limited to only one behavior. This made the record richer in information about the unique behavior of students, how, when, and where the behavior occurred without requiring special training in its use. The recording was usually done after the learning activity had ended. Anecdotal notes were narrative and objective, reflecting the reality that occurred during the learning process. However, it should also be realized that not everyone had a good memory, so these anecdotal notes

depended on each observer, considering that these notes were made at the end of the learning activity. Sometimes this resulted in incomplete notes, and observers might forget some important things.

3.2 Running Records

Running records are comprehensive and complete records and contain detailed and sequential events (Sitorus, 2015). Observers took notes continuously during the learning activities that occurred. The difference between running records and anecdotal records was that observers recorded the overall and general behavior of children, not just specific events. Based on the results of the researchers' findings and analysis from interviews with Early Childhood Education teachers and examination of the RPPH documents, data were obtained that.

Table 2. Running Records

Benefits	Drawbacks
Notes are more complete and detailed, this is because all activities are recorded as accurately as possible from the beginning to the end of the learning activity.	Notes take longer because they are done during the learning process.
Current records are factual and more open and not only focused on one particular event.	Observers will feel bored because they have to focus on the object of observation for a long time.
Comments or interpretations are written separately from actual events.	Observers will have difficulty doing it on a group of children, so it will be more effective if observers make observations only on one child.
Observers do not require special training in their use.	If there is only one teacher in a group of children, the observations made will be difficult to do. This is because the teacher must provide learning materials and record observations during the learning process.

In running records, observers would record the behavior of students from the beginning to the end of the learning process. Therefore, this became a little difficult for the teacher to manage because they had to teach and make running records simultaneously. Similar to anecdotal records, the observed behavior comprised not only one but also several behaviors that occurred in students. Running records would have been more effective if the observations had focused solely on one child rather than on a group of children simultaneously, in order to avoid subjective and insufficiently detailed notes in their writing.

3.3 Checklist

A checklist is a form of progress notes containing the results of observations and actions based on developmental aspects and indicators. Checklists can be used to assess children's developmental achievements (Ayriza, 2007). The use of checklists in observations can be carried out with a value scale or not. The checklist allows educators to record the results of observations or measurements carried out repeatedly that do not need to be written down systematically, including children's data. The checklists can be used by teachers to determine a child's skills or developmental characteristics for better planning for later stages. Based on the results of the researchers' findings and analysis from interviews with Early Childhood Education teachers and examination of the RPPH documents, data were obtained that.

Table 3. Checklist

Benefits	Drawbacks
It is easier for observers to take notes, this is because the sequence of activities has been made in advance. Observations can be made more quickly in a group of children this is because the recording can be done at the same time.	Records become less detailed, such as when, how, and where the behavior occurred. The data becomes more limited to the data in the checklist.
The checklist can be used for every stage of a child's development. Children's behavior can be recorded as often as possible, and facilitate the observer in the process of improvement if needed.	It takes time to practice filling out the checklist

In the checklist assessment, it was easier for observers to take notes because the sequence of activities had been predetermined, allowing observers to record a group of students simultaneously. The checklist assessment also did not require much time. However, the record was incomplete and lacked detail because the observed behavior was very limited, confined only to the prepared checklist.

3.4 Time Sampling

Time sampling records are observations that show the frequency or appearance of a behavior occurring (Nugraha, 2010). This technique is used to help determine the cause and time of how often a behavior occurs. This is done to observe the behavior of students or groups and record the behavior of children in a predetermined time interval. Based on the results of the researchers' findings and analysis from interviews with Early Childhood Education teachers and examination of the RPPH documents, data were obtained that.

Table 4. Time Sampling

Benefits	Drawbacks
Notes are objective because the focus of the behavior to be observed has been determined. Observations become more focused because the observed behavior is more specific and limited. It saves time because observations can be made on a group of children at the same time Records have data regarding the time interval and frequency of occurrence of the observed behavior.	Records are incomplete because many important behaviors or events are missed. Observable behavior is limited to focusing only on predetermined behavior. Observers are too focused on time, so they pay less attention to the causes of events that occur. Records are incomplete because many important behaviors or events are missed.

In time sampling, the assessment focused on the time and frequency of the child exhibiting the observed behavior. The observed behavior was very limited, so the assessment concentrated more on one student's behavior. This could also cause observers to overlook many behaviors that were equally important to note. Because observers were too focused on time, they sometimes missed how these behaviors could occur.

3.5 Event Sampling

Event sampling is an observation method where the observer waits for and records specific behaviors that have been pre-selected. This method examines the circumstances in which certain behaviors occur or occur frequently. It captures instances of behavior (deviant behavior) that manifest

under specific conditions and cannot be predicted in advance (Gullo, 2005). The purpose is to observe the causes or consequences of the child's deviant behavior, such as aggression towards peers or reluctance to cooperate with others. Based on the results of the researchers' findings and analysis from interviews with Early Childhood Education teachers and examination of the RPPH documents, data were obtained that.

Table 5. Event Sampling

Benefits	Drawbacks
Recording can be more complete and sequential when compared to time sampling, this is because event sampling contains a record of the time and cause and effect of the observed behavior.	There are likely to be many behaviors that are also important but missed in the logging.
It is objective because the behavior observed by the observer has been predetermined.	Notes are more closed, so observers only observe certain behaviors and ignore other behaviors. Not more detailed when compared to anecdotal records or running records.

This assessment was a form of evaluation that enhanced the time sampling assessment. In this assessment, the observer noted the time and frequency of the behavior that occurred, as well as the causes and consequences of that behavior. It was more objective and solely focused on one behavior predetermined by the observer. However, similar to time sampling, this assessment also overlooked many important student behaviors because it concentrated solely on one predetermined behavior.

A previous study relevant to the same topic is a research conducted by Idrus (2019) on evaluation in the context of the learning process. According to that research, evaluation is considered as a tool and method to assess the level of success of a planned program. Idrus emphasizes that evaluation is an integral part of the learning process inseparable from teaching activities. The study underscores the importance of conducting evaluations in educational activities, as evaluation serves as a measuring tool to determine the level of success achieved by students in understanding the taught materials. The previous research also mentions that each evaluation has different criteria, characteristics, and procedures. The evaluation process in early childhood education involves formulating activities, preparing evaluation tools, and determining evaluation criteria. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of tailored approaches in conducting evaluations in early childhood education due to different developmental characteristics compared to children in elementary and middle school. In both studies, there is a similarity in the approach to evaluation in the context of early childhood education. Both studies acknowledge the importance of adjusting observation methods for each learning evaluation in line with the RPPH (Daily Learning Implementation Plan) used in the learning process. Additionally, they also highlight the diversity of observation methods used in the evaluation process, including anecdotal records, running records, checklists, time sampling, and event sampling.

However, there are some differences between the two studies. The previous research did not specifically discuss the observation methods used in evaluation, as done in the current study. Additionally, the previous research may not have involved in-depth analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each evaluation technique used, as done in the current study. In the previous research, there may not have been a direct analysis of the specifications and effectiveness of each evaluation method, as presented in the current study. Therefore, it can be said that the findings in the current study are in favor of the previous research because they develop a deeper understanding of evaluation methods in the context of early childhood education and provide more detailed information.

4. CONCLUSION

The evaluation process is essential for assessing the effectiveness of educational programs, especially in Early Childhood Education, where it plays a crucial role in measuring students' understanding and progress. This research found that various observation methods—such as anecdotal notes, running records, checklists, time sampling, and event sampling—each have their strengths and limitations when used for learning evaluations. Anecdotal records provide detailed insights into individual behaviors, but may lack depth due to reliance on memory, while running records offer comprehensive documentation but are challenging to maintain during teaching. Checklists and time sampling are efficient for group observations but can miss important details, and event sampling enhances objectivity but might overlook other significant behaviors. A key limitation of this study is the difficulty in maintaining objectivity and detail across different observation methods. Future research should focus on developing more integrated and adaptable evaluation techniques that address these challenges, ensuring a more holistic assessment of early childhood development.

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