

Realized Students Well-Being Through Self-Development Programs: Investigate The Role Of Student Guidance Activities Based On Practical Life Skills

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Abstract

This research is important because it discusses the integration of practical life skills as a fundamental component for realizing student well-being. The aim is to investigate in depth the role of these skills-based student development activities. This research adopted a qualitative approach with a single case study design at BA Restu 1, with data collected through interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis included data condensation, presentation, and verification. The results show that the student development program realizes child well-being through four aspects practical life skills that form the foundation for independence and self-confidence; social skills development that fosters a sense of belonging; integration of character development that transforms moral values into concrete behavior; and interest-based curriculum that increases children's autonomy and intrinsic motivation. The implication of these findings is holistic student development program is a fundamental component, not merely an addition, in creating a learning environment that supports children's holistic development.

Keywords: Students Development; Students Well-being; Practical Life Skills; Interest-based Curicullum.

Article Info

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1. INTRODUCTION

Modern educational developments increasingly recognize that student well-being is no longer merely the end result of learning, but rather an urgent and fundamental need that must be met from an early age. This urgency lies in the fact that children who are physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially well have the optimal capacity to interact, focus, and absorb new information, thus preventing the emergence of learning barriers and behavioral problems (Gkintoni et al., 2024; Papadopoulos, 2021). Student well-being makes a significant contribution to the creation of students who are independent, resilient, have high self-esteem, and are intrinsically motivated to learn, which in turn increases active involvement in school (Qureshi et al., 2024; Ren et al., 2024; Villegas et al., 2024). However, the achievement of this well-being is greatly influenced by various factors, both internal

such as the child's psychological condition and physical health, and external including the quality of social relationships with peers and teachers, as well as environmental support and relevant school programs (Hoferichter et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, investing in programs aimed at improving well-being is crucial. This is in line with global recognition that student well-being has been globally recognized as a crucial prerequisite for academic success and holistic personal development (Klapp et al., 2024; Ling et al., 2022). Educational theories and developmental psychology emphasize that a positive, safe, and supportive learning environment is vital for children (Mahoney et al., 2021; Tusseyev et al., 2021). However, a significant gap remains between this theoretical ideal and the social realities often encountered in practice, particularly at the early childhood education level. The reality on the ground is that many early childhood education programs still focus primarily on cognitive and academic achievement, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic, without adequate attention to the development of non-academic skills (Agnafors et al., 2021; Kaya & Erdem, 2021). This gap raises critical questions about why existing educational practices fail to effectively integrate student well-being, what causes the over-focus on cognitive aspects, and how this impacts children's psychosocial development. This issue is crucial because neglecting well-being can lead to emotional and social problems, such as anxiety and difficulty interacting, potentially hindering children's future development. This gap highlights the need for a more balanced approach that goes beyond academic goals to building a strong foundation for children's overall well-being.

Previous research has shown a positive correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and student well-being. Other studies have also consistently highlighted the importance of structured interventions, such as student coaching programs, in improving student well-being. A study conducted by Garaigordobil et al., (2022) showed that the integration of directed play activities with a focus on social-emotional skills resulted in significant improvements in children's emotional regulation and decreases in aggressive behavior, which directly contributed to their psychological well-being. This supports the research results by Widyarini & Jannah (2025) specifically investigated the effectiveness of a Montessori-based Practical Life Skills guidance program in playgroups, finding that simple activities such as pouring and buttoning clothes served as a foundation for children's sense of independence and self-efficacy. This sense of capability and independence is an essential pillar in the domain of child welfare. This finding is supported by the findings Gomez (2024) which emphasizes that a curriculum based on holistic character development through moral and ethical habits in daily activities has succeeded in fostering a sense of belonging and safe connections in the school environment. Overall, existing research does not directly focus on student well-being, but only takes certain indicators of student well-being such as self-efficacy, emotional regulation, etc. This research aims to fill this gap by directly examining how interventions focused on practical life skills, independence, and social interaction in the ECUD context can concretely improve child well-being. Thus, this research not only strengthens the findings from one of aspect well-being, but also supports the fact that attention to aspects of student welfare needs to be integrated from an early age (Feraco et al., 2023; Kaya & Erdem, 2021).

Based on previous research described above, such as the research by Sari & Hidayat (2020) which focused on social-emotional skills, Wahyuni and Prasetya (2021) which highlighted practical life skills, and Kurniawan et al. (2019) which emphasized that character development has made a significant contribution to understanding student well-being, these studies tend to examine elements separately. The novelty of this research lies in its holistic and integrated approach, which has not been explored simultaneously in the literature. This study uniquely integrates and analyzes the cumulative impact of four key dimensions: practical life skills, social skills, character development, and interest-based curriculum on achieving early childhood well-being. Existing literature often uses only a single model or quantitative survey data, thus failing to capture the dynamic interactions between these elements. Another fundamental difference lies in the methodology: rather than relying on a single data point, this study uses a qualitative single-case study approach with rich data triangulation through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation from principals, teachers, and parents. The depth of this layered data offers more comprehensive contextual insights as needed in the specific context of PAUD compared to previous studies, thus not only broadening the scope of theory but also providing a practical, applicable intervention model to be implemented at the PAUD level.

Despite the accelerated focus on academic achievement in the context of early childhood education, a substantial discrepancy has been identified in the systematic integration between the development of practical life skills and the holistic fulfillment of children's well-being. This occurs because many educational institutions still prioritize academic achievement over meeting students' needs, particularly in the well-being aspect. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to determine how the implementation of a curriculum framework that emphasizes practical skills can bridge this discrepancy and fundamentally strengthen children's social, emotional, and psychological development. Based on the gaps and novelties, this research aims to examine efforts to realize student well-being through student development activities based on practical life skills. This research is expected to provide clear and practical insights for educators, policymakers, and parents about the most effective strategies to prioritize child well-being from an early age. This research is based on the argument that student development through integrated development activities and a focus on practical life skills can fundamentally and effectively realize child well-being in early childhood education units. Strong collaboration between teachers and parents in implementing development activities can strengthen their impact, creating a holistic support ecosystem for child development (Al-Hail et al., 2021; Heryanti & Nurhayati, 2023; Putra & Dianti, 2025).

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a single case study design. This approach was chosen to gain a deep and holistic understanding of the phenomenon of student development in realizing child welfare in PAUD. The single case study design allows researchers to explore in detail how various programs and activities are integrated within one specific context, namely BA Restu 1 Malang City. This design is appropriate because the focus of the research is not on generalization, but rather on an in-depth understanding of the processes, interactions, and meanings behind existing practices. Single case studies provide an opportunity to identify unique patterns and causal relationships that may not be visible in large-scale research.

This research was conducted at BA Restu 1 in Malang City due to the school's reputation for consistently focusing on a holistic approach to early childhood education, which emphasizes more than just cognitive aspects. BA Restu 1 is also known for its structured and innovative student development program, which encompasses activities beyond the standard academic curriculum. Therefore, this school was considered a rich case study for investigating how student well-being is realized through coaching. This location selection allowed the researcher to directly observe and analyze best practices relevant to the research objectives.

Data analysis in this study used data validity and reliability using triangulation techniques and sources. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with key informants selected using purposive sampling techniques. These informants consisted of the Principal, teachers, and the Vice Principal for Curriculum, each of whom provided unique perspectives on the program's philosophy, implementation, and structure. In addition, we conducted non-participatory observations to observe directly without being involved in coaching activities, providing descriptive data about what actually happened in the field. We also supplemented our findings by reviewing internal school documentation, such as lesson plans and curriculum materials, for additional context and validity.

Data analysis was conducted interactively and continuously throughout the research process (Figure 1) (Miles et al., 2014). The first stage was data condensation, where we summarized, selected, and focused data from interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents. Next, we presented the data in matrices and charts to help identify emerging patterns and themes. Finally, we verified the data by confirming findings across sources and drawing strong and justified conclusions. This study used a combination of analytical methods to enrich the findings: content analysis to identify recurring themes, discourse analysis to understand how informants' language shapes meaning, and interpretive analysis to unearth deeper meanings from the data and connect them to the theoretical framework. This multi-layered analytical approach ensured that our findings were not only descriptive but also interpretive and meaningful.

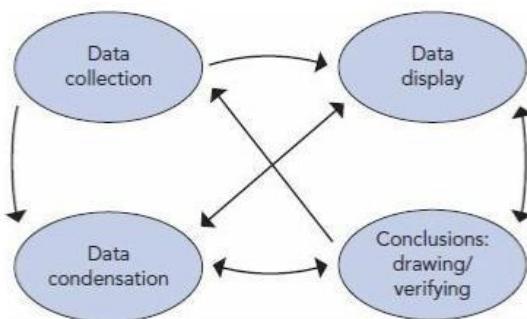


Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis Model (Miles et al., 2014)

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Practical Life Skills as the Foundation for Independence and Well-Being

Practical Life Skills as a Foundation for Independence and Well-Being is operationalized as a series of activities integrated into the daily curriculum that train children in basic daily tasks. This includes activities such as tidying up toys after play, putting on and putting away shoes independently, washing hands without assistance, and eating and drinking independently. The primary goal of these activities is not only to train children's motor skills but also to foster a sense of responsibility, independence, and self-competence, which directly contribute to their emotional well-being. In this context, well-being is measured by indicators such as expressions of happiness, initiative to try new things without fear, and the ability to overcome minor frustrations during the learning process. The program is implemented consistently with gentle guidance from teachers, who act as facilitators rather than task implementers. Based on the results of an interview by Mrs. F, one of the senior teacher A1, stated that,

"We saw how children who were initially very dependent on their parents began to show initiative within a matter of months. They no longer waited to be fed, but instead took pride in being able to finish their own food. The joy on their faces when they successfully buttoned their shirts was extraordinary. It was a sign of their sense of competence." (W/GKB/27-08-2025).

This statement demonstrates that small achievements in practical skills directly impact a child's happiness and sense of competence. In line with this statement, Mrs. M, one of the students' parents, shared her experience at home.

"My child used to always ask for a drink, but now he can get his own water from the children's water dispenser at home. He's become more confident, less fussy, and seems happier because he can do things on his own. So, what he's taught at school really applies at home." (W/GKA/22-08-2025).

This statement strengthens the results of direct observations by researchers at BA Restu 1, providing strong empirical evidence.

"During lunchtime, children were seen taking their own food trays and placing them on the table. Although some children still appeared clumsy, they continued to try diligently without showing any significant signs of frustration. When a child successfully poured water from a small jug into his glass without spilling, the teacher applauded and smiled encouragingly, while the child returned the gesture with a proud smile. In the play area, children volunteered to help organize toys into the baskets provided." (O/GKA/21-08-2025).

This behavioral pattern indicates that the activities they practice regularly have become part of their routine, something they enjoy, rather than a burden. This observation confirms that the

independence cultivated through practical activities has become a source of happiness and internal motivation for the children.

Based on these data, it is concluded that the implementation of practical life skills at BA Restu 1 is not simply a routine activity, but rather a fundamental strategy for building children's independence and well-being. These activities enable children to internalize a sense of competence and self-worth through small, tangible achievements. This aligns with interview findings that demonstrated children's happiness and pride, as well as parental recognition of positive behavioral changes at home. In other words, this school effectively transforms everyday tasks into learning opportunities that foster a strong psychological foundation.

The data patterns emerging from these findings suggest a clear causal relationship between consistent exposure to practical life skills activities, increased child independence, and the realization of emotional well-being. The data suggest that the initiation of a coaching program and its consistent implementation can lead to children mastering their tasks and responsibilities. This habit can generate positive emotions such as pride and happiness, which are direct manifestations of well-being. Thus, these structured and supported activities form a positive cycle of increased independence, a greater sense of competence, and confidence in their abilities, which can help motivate children to try new things.

Social Skills and Positive Relationship Development

Social Skills and Positive Relationships Development refers to a series of activities designed to train children's interactions with peers and adults. This development also serves as a form of fostering empathy, cooperation, and the ability to resolve minor conflicts. This implementation is implemented through "circle time" activities where children are taught to listen and speak alternately, group games that require collaboration, and teacher guidance in conflict situations such as fighting over toys. The operational goal is for children not only to be able to interact effectively but also to feel a sense of belonging and safe connections within the school environment. The success of this development is measured by how often children share, how well they take turns, and how rarely they exhibit aggressive behavior or withdraw from group interactions. The results of an interview with Mrs. R, one of the class teachers of A4 stated that,

"By implementing practical methods (stacking blocks, organizing books) that require teamwork, we aim to develop students' autonomy and social interaction. We do this because it takes time to shift their focus from the need to 'win' to the ability to share. From these small practices, they now demonstrate self-regulation and turn-taking by asserting, 'Come on, it's my turn, and then yours.' (W/GKA/11-07-2025).

This statement emphasizes that consistent and structured guidance is crucial in shaping social behavior. In line with Mr. B statement, a parent of one of the students stated,

"My child used to be quiet and wouldn't play when his friends asked him to. But since joining BA Restu, he's become more courageous, often telling stories about his friends at school, and even inviting them to play at home. I've noticed he's happier and less anxious when it comes to interacting." (W/OWM/03-07-2025).

The results of the interview support the results of observations made by the researcher that,

"In circle time, children are seen sitting in a circle and listening quietly to the teacher. When one child tells a story, the others patiently wait their turn. In the play area, two children are seen fighting over a doll. However, instead of pushing or crying, one of the children says, 'I'll borrow it for a moment, I'll return it later,' and the other child lets it go." (O/GKA/15-08-2025).

This incident reflects the success of teacher coaching in resolving conflicts peacefully. Furthermore, during group art projects, children spontaneously shared crayons and glue without instruction, demonstrating that prosocial behavior had been internalized. The data obtained suggests

that the coaching program at BA Restu 1 has successfully created an environment highly conducive to the development of social skills and the formation of positive relationships. Purposefully designed activities aimed at fostering a collaborative environment, such as group games and storytelling sessions, have effectively fostered empathy and social understanding in children. These processes not only foster interaction but also help children feel safe, valued, and part of a supportive community, which are central to their social well-being.

This research pattern demonstrates a clear coaching-reaction-outcome cycle. First, teachers proactively and consistently facilitate activities that require social interaction. Second, children demonstrate positive responses by adopting the taught behaviors, such as sharing and taking turns. Third, adopting these behaviors results in harmonious and positive relationships, which in turn make children happier, more confident, and more motivated to engage in social interactions. In short, structured and targeted coaching not only changes children's behavior but also fundamentally improves the quality of their relationships, which is an important foundation for long-term social well-being.

Integration of Children's Character Development Programs

The integration of the Child Character Development Program is operationalized as the insertion of moral and ethical values into every daily activity, not as a separate subject. Values such as honesty, empathy, discipline, and gratitude are taught through concrete practices, stories, and songs. Teachers act as role models and facilitators who consistently guide children in understanding and applying these values. The success of this development is measured by the behaviors displayed by children, such as the ability to share, express gratitude, apologize sincerely, and show concern for their friends. This aims to foster a strong moral and social foundation, which is crucial for the formation of positive character and the overall well-being of children. Based on the results of the interview with the Head of BA Restu 1, he stated that

"This institution not only teaches children to be smart, but also to be kind. We always emphasize that good manners are above knowledge, so being smart isn't enough; it needs to be balanced with good manners. Every time a child shares a toy or helps a friend who falls, we immediately praise them and explain why it was a good deed. This helps them understand that kindness is appreciated."
(W/KBA/11-08-2025)

This recognition demonstrates that consistent positive habits are key. This statement was reinforced by Ms. M, a B5 teacher, who stated,

"This institution implements 5S in all its activities. This is, of course, through the actions of teachers, which will be modeled by the children. Children are still imitating their surroundings, so we implement this to help them develop positive habits in their interactions, both with their peers and with adults." (W/GKB/20-08-2025).

The results of the researchers' observations provide concrete evidence that character development through coaching activities at this institution yields maximum results. The researchers' observations are reflected as follows,

"During lunch, a child accidentally spills his drink. Instead of crying, he grabs a small cloth and tries to clean it up, demonstrating a sense of responsibility. The teacher then helps him and praises his initiative. In another scenario, when a child cries after falling, several of his friends spontaneously approach and offer help, reflecting the development of empathy (O/GKA/20-08-2025).

This behavioral pattern shows that coaching is not coercive but is applied directly so that the values applied will emerge naturally, indicating that character values have been internalized through habituation and role models. Based on these data, it can be concluded that BA Restu 1 has successfully integrated character development as an integral part of the daily curriculum. This program not only provides moral knowledge but also transforms it into concrete behaviors that

benefit the children themselves and their environment. By fostering values such as empathy, responsibility, and gratitude, the school effectively builds a solid ethical and social foundation, which is ultimately crucial for children's psychological well-being.

The pattern found in this study suggests a learning-internalization-behavior cycle. First, teachers consistently model and provide guidance on moral values. Second, children internalize these values through repetition and positive reinforcement. Third, this internalization is reflected in their spontaneous behavior, which demonstrates positive character changes. This proves that character building is not just about what is said, but more about what is consistently practiced.

Child Interest-Based Curriculum and Psychosocial Well-Being

The findings on the Child Interest-Based Curriculum and Psychosocial Well-Being are operationalized as providing a variety of exploratory activity options based on children's spontaneous interests. This curriculum is child-centered, where teachers act as facilitators who observe and accompany, rather than as primary instructors. Children are given the freedom to choose the play area or activity that most interests them, such as the science corner, art area, or story area. Psychosocial well-being in this context is assessed from the level of children's engagement, expressions of happiness during activities, and their initiative in asking questions or exploring. The goal is to foster autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and a sense of ownership of their learning process, which are important foundations for psychological well-being. Based on the results of an interview with the Principal, the effectiveness of this approach was confirmed. Mrs. S explained that,

"When children are free to choose, they don't seem stressed. Some can focus for hours on the blocks, while others are content in the reading area. They appear happy and proud of their work. That happiness makes them more willing to try new things." (W/KBA/12-07-2025).

This statement demonstrates that choice and autonomy have a direct impact on positive emotions. This statement aligns with the opinion of Ms. I, B4's guardian, who stated that,

"My child often tells stories about what he makes or finds at school. He's very enthusiastic. This is different from the monotonous stories from his previous school. I see my child becoming more confident and motivated to learn, not because he's told to, but because he truly enjoys it. Perhaps it's the diversity of activities implemented at Restu, such as center activities, preparatory activities, character development, etc., that have led my child to develop so far" (W/GBA/22-07-2025).

Observation results also demonstrate the concrete implementation of this curriculum. This is reflected in the following:

"One morning, a small group of children gathered in the science area to examine leaves they had found in the garden, while others were busy painting in the art area. The teacher circulated, asking open-ended questions like, "Why do you think these leaves are different colors?" without providing direct answers. The children seemed very focused and engaged, with little intervention from the teacher. There were no signs of boredom or frustration. The atmosphere in the classroom was lively, full of questions and excitement." (O/GBA/04-09-2025).

This pattern suggests that when activities are based on children's interests, deep engagement naturally occurs, a strong indicator of psychological well-being. Based on these results, student development, interpreted through the implementation of a child-interest-based curriculum at BA Restu 1, is not merely an alternative teaching method, but rather a powerful instrument for improving psychosocial well-being. This approach effectively empowers children to become active subjects in their own learning. By experiencing autonomy, children become more motivated, feel competent, and have a positive attitude toward education, which is ultimately crucial for healthy mental development.

The results of this study indicate that there is a positive cycle in the process of developing students, such as providing a variety of activity choices based on children's interests effectively triggers intrinsic engagement and deep focus, providing positive experiences and a sense of

achievement, which then increases internal motivation and overall psychosocial well-being. This pattern proves that when the curriculum adapts to the needs of children, not the other way around, the result is children who not only learn well, but also feel happy and well-being in the process.

This study found that the student development program effectively promotes child well-being, a finding that aligns with modern educational and psychological theories. The findings demonstrate that practical life skills foster independence and self-confidence. This aligns with Maria Montessori's child development theory, which emphasizes the importance of daily activities in building children's abilities (Anggini et al., 2024; Leuwol et al., 2023). Furthermore, the findings regarding social skills and positive relationships formed through structured interactions echo Abraham Maslow's Theory of Basic Human Needs (HHM), where the need for love and belonging is the psychological foundation for achieving one's potential (Calicchio, 2023; Hoxha & Ramadani, 2023). However, this study also highlights a crucial difference: much of the literature focuses on the cognitive outcomes of ECD programs, whereas the findings of this study specifically demonstrate that psychosocial well-being should be the primary measure. This indicates a gap in existing practices and highlights the need to shift the focus from "smart children" to "well-being children."

The findings of this study have significant implications for facilitating student development tailored to their needs. The implication is that an integrated student development program, such as the one implemented at BA Restu 1, is not merely a supplement, but rather a fundamental component of a successful early childhood education curriculum. Failure to integrate these activities can result in dysfunctional child development, such as increased anxiety, difficulty interacting, and a lack of intrinsic motivation. Conversely, their implementation can serve as a catalyst for holistic development, producing children who are more resilient, empathetic, and prepared to face future challenges. One such cause is the strong causal relationship between the structure of the development activities and their outcomes, or impacts, on student well-being. For example, we found that an interest-based curriculum structure directly stimulates children's autonomy, which in turn leads to improved psychological well-being (Champ et al., 2023; Sobri et al., 2025).

The findings of this study, which demonstrate that interest-based curricula improve children's psychosocial well-being, align closely with research on intrinsic motivation in education. A study by Lee & Yang (2025) within the framework of Self-Determination Theory suggests that individuals, including children, have an innate drive to master their environment and engage in engaging activities. When children are allowed to choose activities, they feel intrinsically motivated, leading to deeper engagement and higher satisfaction (Nurishlah et al., 2023; Susilawati, 2020; Utami et al., 2024). This concept directly supports our findings in BA Restu 1, where autonomy in choosing activities was a key catalyst for emotional well-being. Thus, this study not only corroborates existing findings in the literature but also provides empirical evidence from the ECE context.

The implications of these findings for practice and policy are clear. Early childhood educators should prioritize activities that foster practical life skills and social skills as the foundation of the curriculum, not merely as an add-on. Second, policymakers should encourage flexible, child-centered curricula, allowing teachers to adapt to each child's specific interests and needs. Thus, policies should support teacher training to adopt a facilitative, rather than simply instructive, approach. Overall, this study concludes that investing in student development programs not only produces children with practical skills but also creates a solid foundation for learners' well-being.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that student development at BA Restu 1 embodies holistic students well-being through the development of practical life skills, social skills, and character, along with an interest-based curriculum. These findings address a gap in the literature by demonstrating that independence, autonomy, and a sense of belonging can be structured and nurtured from an early age. However, due to the limitations of a single case study, these findings cannot be generalized. Further research with more diverse samples and methods is needed to formulate more effective policies.

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