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Implementation of the Multiple Intelligences Method at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to explore the implementation of a Multiple Intelligences-based curriculum in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia, applied to children aged three to four years with a total of 12 participants. Research on Multiple Intelligences is important considering that education today still places greater emphasis on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, while other types of intelligence are not yet optimally facilitated. This has negative impacts on children's personality development, such as feelings of shyness, fear, and low self-esteem. **Methods:** This research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation of the process of implementing the Multiple Intelligences method for children aged three to four years. Data analysis used Miles and Huberman's model, assisted by NVivo 12 Plus software to support systematic coding, organization, and visualization of thematic relationships among learning strategies, challenges, and solutions in the implementation of the Multiple Intelligences method. **Results:** The findings indicate that children's intelligence is not only measured by IQ but also by various other intelligences according to their individual characteristics. Play-based activities proved effective in fostering children's multiple intelligences. The initial identification of each child's dominant intelligence, supported by questionnaires and teacher observations, was a key factor in applying Multiple Intelligences-based methods tailored to the needs of each child. Thus, the stimuli provided by teachers were aligned with the developmental stages of children's intelligences. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive examination of all aspects of multiple intelligences integrated into a specialized curriculum, beginning with observation to identify each child's dominant intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial foundation for children's development in subsequent stages of life. At this stage, children tend to enjoy engaging in fun activities. Therefore, support from the surrounding environment, particularly from parents, educators, and the community, is essential for providing appropriate and directed stimulation to ensure the optimal growth and development of children. Early childhood education is not only intended to provide initial academic experiences, but also plays an important role in fostering socio-emotional development, which is necessary for preparing children to enter the next stages of life (Fuadia, 2022).

Intelligence can be defined as an individual's ability to think, reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, understand ideas, and learn (Khusniasari, 2021). Providing appropriate stimulation at an early age has a significant impact on the development of a child's dominant intelligence. The multiple-intelligence approach can offer children meaningful learning experiences. When children are treated fairly in accordance with their potential, their intelligence develops optimally. Conversely, negative experiences,

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such as emotionally hurtful treatment, may hinder their development, often resulting in fear, shyness, or low self-esteem (Armstrong, T, 2009).

In the context of optimizing children's potential, the multiple intelligence theory proposed by (Gardner, H, 1993) provides an understanding that intelligence is not limited to logical-mathematical and linguistic abilities, but rather consists of various types of intelligences, such as musical, kinesthetic, visual-spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, naturalistic, and existential. Each child possessed a different dominant intelligence. Therefore, diverse adaptive learning approaches are necessary to ensure that all aspects of a child's potential develop in a balanced manner.

Based on Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, as elaborated in the book *you are Smarter Than You Think* (Armstrong, T, 2014), there are nine types of human intelligence: linguistic (word smart), logical-mathematical (number smart), intrapersonal (self-smart), interpersonal (people smart), musical (music smart), visual-spatial (picture smart), bodily kinesthetic (body smart), naturalistic (natural smart), and existential (life smart). These have been widely recognized; however, their implementation in early childhood education remains suboptimal. In practice, early childhood learning tends to focus primarily on logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences, whereas other intelligences receive less attention. This gap often stems from the limited understanding of comprehensively applying the multiple intelligence method. Consequently, other potentials, such as visual-spatial, kinesthetic, musical, and existential intelligences, are not maximized in their development. Lack of dominant intelligence mapping and proper guidance may hinder both academic progress and personality development in children.

The unequal stimulation of all types of intelligence can obstruct an individual's future success, which is not solely determined by academic abilities but also by the capacity to utilize multiple forms of intelligence in everyday life. This theory emphasizes that every child is intelligent, and their intelligence can be seen from multiple aspects rather than being measured only by a high IQ to achieve success. Other forms of intelligence can be nurtured and observed through educational play activities, such as creating artwork ranging from simple to more complex tasks, using picture cards, molding with playdough, threading beads, and other activities that train motor skills and body coordination (Arief dkk., 2017).

These activities are useful for stimulating and promoting optimal brain growth from an early age through the multiple intelligence strategy, which recognizes that every child possesses all types of intelligence, but not all of them are equally developed or function effectively, as each child has its own strengths (González-Treviño dkk., 2020). It is essential to provide opportunities for children to explore and use their natural and innate intelligence from birth. Differences in intelligence should be viewed as natural, as the formation of traits and attitudes that influence one's intelligence is shaped through motivation within the surrounding environment, including support from teachers (Mahmudah, 2018).

During the learning process, teachers often encounter diverse characteristics among children, such as those who learn quickly and those who are slower in grasping lessons. If teachers are unable to respond appropriately to such conditions, the learning process will be less effective (Erviana, 2018). However, in practice, there are still gaps in the optimal application of the Multiple Intelligences method. The lack of dominant intelligence identification and proper guidance may hinder students' academic and

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personality development, highlighting the need for holistic implementation of the multiple intelligence approach.

A previous study conducted by (Kamilah, 2019) in Ananda Mentari Playgroup and Kindergarten Yogyakarta implemented Multiple Intelligences in combination with other approaches such as fun learning, Montessori, brain-based learning, and the Mozart effect. Each child's intelligence was developed through enjoyable activities tailored to their learning style. This study showed that the implementation of Multiple Intelligences was designed comprehensively to create a meaningful learning process and to optimally develop children's potential.

Another study was conducted by (Firdausyi et.al, 2022) in early childhood education (PAUD) using a center-based approach designed with the concept of "independent learning through play." The results of this study showed significant development, particularly in linguistic and intrapersonal intelligence. In its implementation, teachers must have a thorough understanding of the various indicators and characteristics of each type of intelligence possessed by students so that the implementation of the Multiple Intelligences method can be applied effectively. To meet children's physical, emotional, and cognitive needs, it is crucial to consider and integrate a holistic learning approach with various instructional strategies.

The gap lies in the unequal stimulation of various multiple intelligences, as well as the lack of facilities to support their development and curricula that do not comprehensively address all types of multiple intelligences. To date, no study has comprehensively integrated the implementation of the multiple intelligence method with a curriculum specifically designed for children aged 3–4 years, along with the strategies applied by teachers during learning and the challenges and solutions in its application.

Based on these findings, this study aims to explore the implementation of the multiple intelligence method in the learning system of children aged 3–4 years through a specially designed curriculum that supports children's dominant intelligences while identifying the challenges and solutions encountered in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia. These findings provide new insights for the development of holistic and adaptive learning strategies.

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study was a qualitative method with a case study design. The case study design was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the multiple intelligence method in learning in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool, Malaysia.

This approach was selected in line with Creswell in (Sugiyono, 2023) and aims to explore the multiple intelligences method applied by teachers at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool by collecting detailed data through interviews with teachers regarding instructional strategies, challenges, and solutions encountered during its implementation.

The study involved children aged 3–4 years, consisting of 12 participants. The participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on school recommendations. The selection was grounded in the school's consideration that at this age, children are not yet engaged in formal academic learning. Their daily activities are more focused on play and direct interaction with their environment, which makes them

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suitable participants for studying strategies to develop multiple intelligences in young children.

The data analysis process employed NVivo 12 Plus software to facilitate the organization, coding, and systematic presentation of the research findings (Abidin dkk., 2023). The analysis refers to the model of Miles and Huberman (Sugiyono, 2023), which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out through coding in NVivo based on interview transcripts and observation notes. Data display was presented through word clouds and mind maps that visually illustrated dominant themes such as "intelligence," "activities," "learning," and "play," which became the main focus of the learning process centered on developing various intelligences in children.

The research instruments used in this study consisted of semi-structured interviews to explore teachers' understanding of planning, as well as the challenges and solutions in implementing learning with the multiple intelligences method. Data were collected through interviews with the principal, one teacher, and the school owner at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool, Malaysia. This was followed by field observations to examine how teachers implemented the multiple intelligences method, supported by documentation such as children's responses during learning activities, learning modules, lesson plans, and individual evaluation sheets, which provided the researcher with a more comprehensive picture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This observation was conducted in a school that implemented a specialized curriculum based on multiple intelligences, with a focus on children aged three to four years. In this study, the Word Frequency feature in NVivo was used to help the researcher effectively visualize the frequency of important keywords, with a collection of the most frequently occurring words presented in the form of a word cloud.

Figure 1. Word Cloud (Frequently Occuring Words from the Data)

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Based on the word cloud generated, several keywords emerged, among which *"intelligence"* and *"activities"* appeared as the most dominant words from the interview results. This indicates that the main focus of learning lies in the concept of developing various types of children's intelligences, in line with the learning approach applied by the school, namely, the multiple intelligences method.

The appearance of the words *"learning"* and *"play"* shows that the method for developing intelligence is implemented through various systematically designed activities to stimulate multiple intelligences in children, while considering individual abilities and each child's dominant potential. The prominence of the word *"play"* also highlights the importance of social interaction and environment-based activities as strategies in the learning process, as play represents the highest form of a child's free expression, as emphasized by Froebel (Withasari & Lestari, 2022).

In this study, the word cloud was used as a supporting tool to identify the dominant focus of learning. This visualization provided an initial overview of the major themes that emerged from the interview data. However, the word cloud is descriptive in nature and does not reflect the contextual relationships between words; therefore, it was further reinforced and elaborated through data coding.

Through the coding process, the researcher presented a diagram to visualize the relationships between the concepts identified from the interviews and observations. This diagram illustrates the interconnections between the implementation of multiple intelligences, the challenges encountered, and the solutions applied in the learning process in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia.

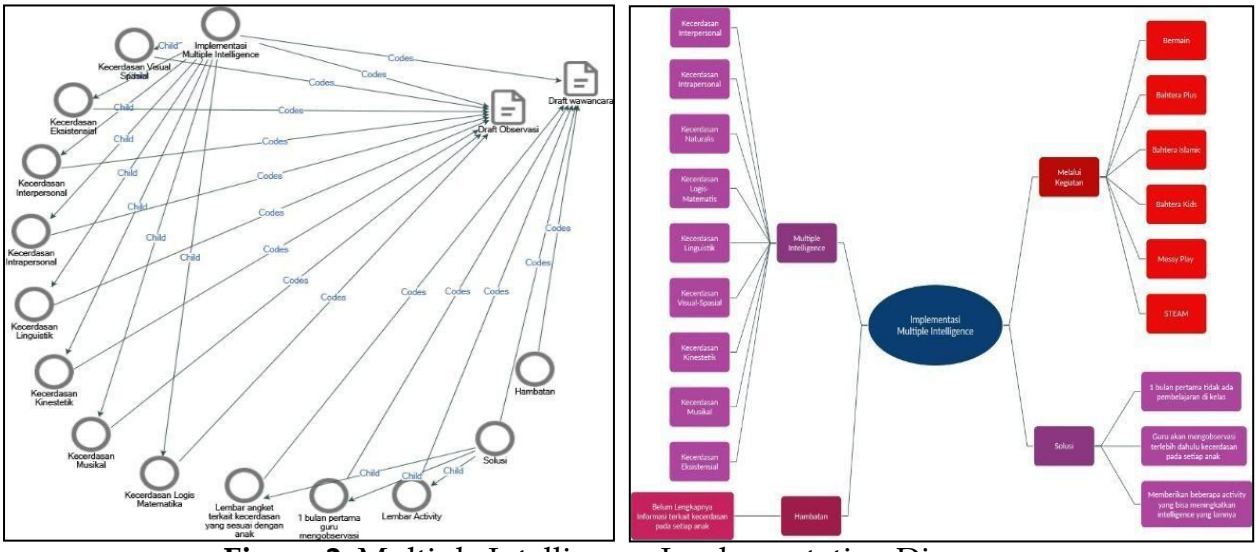

Figure 2. Multiple Intelligence Implementation Diagram

The results of data analysis using NVivo indicate that the *"Implementation of Multiple Intelligences"* plays an important role in accommodating the diversity of children's intelligences. This diagram illustrates how learning strategies are designed to map each child's dominant intelligence. Teachers apply a multiple-intelligence-based learning approach tailored to the needs and characteristics of the children, based on observations, questionnaires provided to parents, and interactions with the children during learning activities.

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1. Curriculum Design

The implementation of the multiple intelligence method at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool is not limited to daily learning strategies, but is also supported by a specially designed curriculum. This curriculum is known as a Module Based on Multiple Intelligences, which includes monthly themes, such as My Self, My Family, My Preschool, and Come and Play. The selection of learning topics is carried out by teachers based on the children's interests and developmental stages and is further adjusted to meet the needs of each class. These themes are then incorporated into lesson plans or daily learning plans that contain specific activities designed to facilitate the development of various intelligences in children. In addition to the thematic modules based on Multiple Intelligences, the school also utilizes other learning materials, such as sound starters, early math, and bees and friends.

2. Program Design

The implementation of the multiple intelligence method in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia is reinforced through six activity programs specifically designed to stimulate various types of children's intelligences. The six main programs implemented were as follows:

a. Play: Activities such as Children's Day, playing ball, hula hoop, face painting, and sensory games.
b. Bahtera Plus: Exploring natural themes through videos or direct observation, followed by creating artwork using natural materials.
c. Bahtera Islamic: Instilling Islamic values and habituating good manners through hands-on practices, quizzes, and educational videos.
d. Bahtera Kids: Regular sports activities such as playing ball and games that train gross motor skills.
e. Messy Play: Activities that allow children to explore various textures and materials such as clay, paint, flour, water, and playdough.
f. STEAM: Weekly projects such as bird nests, trains, robots, toy cars, and color experiments.

3. Evaluation System

The evaluation system implemented in the multiple-intelligence learning approach at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia uses a checklist assessment method. This assessment covers various aspects of children's intelligence, such as language skills, mathematics, social and emotional skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, motor skills, and science. The assessment process is supported by documentation in the form of photos or videos captured during the learning activities. Evaluations were conducted every three months, and at the end of each semester, the results were compiled into students' report cards.

The challenges faced in the evaluation process include the absence of a comprehensive mapping of children's intelligence at the beginning of learning, teachers' limited capacity to implement the learning method, and lack of effective communication between teachers and parents. As a solution, the school distributes questionnaires to parents, and during the first month, teachers carry out observations through play-based activities, such as coloring, playing with Lego, and other motor activities. This process aimed to strengthen the consistency between the questionnaire results and classroom observations, as well as

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to identify the dominant intelligence of each child. Such steps demonstrate the school's systematic efforts to integrate the collected information to design accurate and optimal learning strategies.

Discussion

The curriculum design based on Multiple Intelligences at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia reflects a systematic effort to integrate relevant themes with learning strategies tailored to the various intelligences of children. This is in line with (Nunuk Hariyati, 2021), who emphasized the importance of lesson planning in early childhood education that considers multiple essential aspects. The success of the teaching and learning process is greatly influenced by the selection of appropriate learning materials and establishment of targets that correspond to children's developmental stages. Furthermore, Campbell in (Karwadi, 2019) asserts that there are several steps in preparing learning activities from the perspective of multiple intelligences, such as the importance of ensuring the availability of supporting facilities and that the success of multiple intelligences development is a shared responsibility between teachers, parents, and the surrounding environment.

The learning programs implemented in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool demonstrate how each child's intelligence can be stimulated holistically. Play-based programs, such as "Children's Day," provide opportunities for children to express themselves through enjoyable activities, including playing ball, hula hoop, face painting, and sensory games such as searching for candy hidden in flour, accompanied by music throughout the activities. Children who actively participated in these activities displayed collaborative behavior, exploratory tendencies, and positive emotions. This aligns with (Agustin, M., et.al, 2022), who argued that play can stimulate a child's imagination, foster new ideas, build cooperation, and develop cognition through creativity, critical thinking, and social skills.

The concept of *learning by playing* is an effective educational approach in early childhood. Essentially, for young children, play is a joyful and meaningful learning process created through educational interactions. Introducing various games from an early age is important as a form of stimulation that continuously shapes children's personalities and knowledge (Firmansah, 2019). Interpersonal intelligence, which develops through positive social relationships and sensitivity to others' emotions, is consistent with (Ariatman & Arifin, 2024). Intrapersonal intelligence emerges when children are able to regulate their own emotions (Walela, A., 2024), and musical intelligence is stimulated through singing, with children showing sensitivity to rhythm and melody (Berliana & Atikah, 2023).

The Bahtera Plus program aims to engage children in exploring natural themes through visual media such as videos or direct observation of real objects, for example, searching for dry leaves in the school environment. The children then create crafts from natural materials such as leaves, cotton, or stones, either individually or in groups. This activity not only stimulates creativity but also fosters children's social skills. Throughout the process, children learn to exchange information, appreciate their peers, and show respect for their teachers.

This program also serves as a form of stimulation for developing naturalist intelligence as it encourages children to classify, observe, and directly experience objects outside the

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classroom. Moreover, it supports the development of visual-spatial intelligence, which involves the ability to understand and manipulate visual information, as well as imagination (Mahmud, S. et.al, 2024). Children with visual-spatial intelligence tend to grasp learning material more quickly when introduced through pictures, such as flashcards (Syaikhu, A., 2020).

At the same time, this activity stimulates linguistic intelligence, which refers to the ability to use spoken and written language. The development of this intelligence is not limited to reading activities but is also carried out through engaging and meaningful experiences, such as storytelling with the help of picture media, recognizing letters through alphabet cards, and playing language games like word guessing (Ardiana, 2022).

In addition, linguistic intelligence can be developed through conversations held outside the classroom, with topics relevant to children's learning experiences at the time. Through interactions in an outdoor setting, children gain new experiences that enrich their vocabulary. This process allows for the emergence of spontaneous questions from children regarding the phenomena they observe, which they may not have previously known or understood. Consequently, children learn to listen, ask simple questions, and express their thoughts and ideas verbally, thereby fostering the natural and contextual development of their thinking processes and language skills (Prins, J. et.al, 2025).

The Bahtera Islamic programme aims to instill Islamic values related to existential intelligence. This includes habituating children to proper manners such as table etiquette, appropriate behavior in the mosque, and understanding their duties and manners as Muslims. These activities are introduced through interactive methods such as educational quizzes, digital games, and educational videos.

Based on observations, the children showed interest and enthusiasm in participating in these activities, which were designed to be interactive and enjoyable. Such habituation has proven to be effective. For example, children automatically recite prayers when entering and leaving the bathroom without being prompted by teachers as this habit is consistently reinforced. This is in line with (Seknun & Attamimi, 2022), who explained that existential intelligence can be developed through religious activities, such as reading the Qur'an, listening to advice about Islamic manners, and reflecting on exemplary stories of prophets and their companions.

Furthermore, several indicators of existential intelligence include children asking fundamental questions, such as "Who created us?" "Who created the world?", "Who created animals?", and other essential inquiries. Through video presentations and direct observation of nature's beauty, children come to recognize and experience wonders created by God (Afifah, H.U.N, et.al, 2024).

The Bahtera Kids program is a form of regular sports activity implemented in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia. Activities such as playing balls and other motor games are specifically designed to stimulate the development of children's bodily kinesthetic intelligence. These activities not only serve as physical exercises but also function as an important means of supporting the optimal growth and development of children's gross motor skills.

Based on observations, the children demonstrated high enthusiasm and actively participated in every series of organized physical activities. They appeared to enjoy the learning process through bodily movements such as kicking a ball, jumping, running in zigzag patterns, or throwing and catching a ball. The children's positive responses

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indicated that the physical activities successfully created an enjoyable learning atmosphere, while also supporting the achievement of kinesthetic intelligence development goals. This aligns with (Walela, A., 2024) who states that children's ability to control body movements, use their body parts in a coordinated manner, and develop motor skills, both gross and fine, can support their overall development.

The Messy Play program is an exploratory activity that allows children to engage in messy or "dirty play," while also exploring different media such as clay, water, paint, flour, glue, and modeling clay. This activity aims to stimulate both fine and gross motor skills as well as children's naturalist intelligence.

Based on field observations, children enjoyed the process of mixing and shaping various materials, showing a particular interest in the textures of the media used. This learning atmosphere created a sense of joy and novelty, as the activities were carried out outdoors, preventing the children from feeling bored. According to (Saripudin, 2017), children's sensitivity to natural textures demonstrates their interest in learning about natural objects and experimenting with texture, form, and color in natural ways. Meanwhile, (Nurkhasanah & Fitri, 2022) emphasized that messy play provides valuable opportunities for children to improve fine motor skills while also fostering courage to explore.

The STEAM program provides experiences that stimulate critical thinking, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, and linguistic intelligence. Based on observations, the children engaged in a variety of STEAM projects designed according to the lesson plan, such as making bird nests, trains, robots, and conducting color-mixing experiments.
This activity aligns with (Novitasari & Zaida, 2022), who emphasized that through such activities, children are encouraged to develop multiple aspects of intelligence, particularly logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, and linguistic intelligence. The STEAM program provides opportunities for children to explore, discover, experiment, and sharpen their creative ideas, resulting in diverse outcomes for each group and individual.

The evaluation system applied in the multiple-intelligence learning process at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia uses a checklist assessment method. This assessment covers various aspects of children's intelligence such as language skills, mathematics, social-emotional skills, creativity, problem-solving abilities, motor skills, and science. The evaluation process is supported by documentation in the form of photos or videos captured during learning activities. Evaluations were conducted every three months, and the results were incorporated into students' report cards at the end of each semester.

Challenges faced in the evaluation process include the absence of a comprehensive mapping of children's intelligence at the beginning of learning, teachers' limitations in applying the method, and a lack of effective communication between teachers and parents. (Aan, 2022) highlights the need for active roles and support from families, particularly parents, to support the development of multiple intelligences in children. Such support is crucial to ensure that the stimulation provided for various aspects of intelligence, such as logical-mathematical, linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, kinesthetic, musical, naturalist, and existential, can be carried out continuously, both at school and at home.

Furthermore, (Mustoip et.al., 2023) added that when students have access to adequate facilities and infrastructure, this can strengthen the process of implementing active,

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creative, and enjoyable learning. This supports the view of (Muqodas et.al., 2020), who emphasized that children's intelligence can develop more optimally when they are provided with consistent stimulation and opportunities that align with their dominant intelligence.

This study affirms that the consistent implementation of the Multiple Intelligence method in Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia is highly relevant in supporting the holistic development of young children's potential. Thus, this research provides analytical insights into how the Multiple Intelligence method is applied to children aged three to four years through well-designed learning strategies implemented by the school.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Findings: The results of this study indicate that the implementation of the multiple intelligence method at Bahtera Multiple Intelligence Preschool Malaysia for children aged 3–4 years is carried out through an integrated learning system that includes initial intelligence mapping, curriculum design, and program planning to holistically stimulate children's intelligences in accordance with their individual characteristics. This study emphasizes the importance of early intelligence mapping and observation from an early age to design learning strategies tailored to each child's unique traits. Programs such as Play, Bahtera Plus, Bahtera Islamic, Bahtera Kids, Messy Play, and STEAM demonstrate how these activities can effectively stimulate multiple intelligences.

Implications: This study illustrates that the application of the multiple intelligence method in early childhood education has the potential to support children's development more comprehensively and opens opportunities for further research, particularly in conducting comparative studies on the implementation of Multiple Intelligences across different countries in a more measurable manner over the long term.

Limitations: This study was conducted in only one school in Malaysia with a specific curriculum.

Future Research: Future studies should conduct cross-country comparative analyses to reveal differences in the implementation of Multiple Intelligences within diverse cultural contexts and educational systems.

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