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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Forging the Future: Aisyiyah's Trailblazing Role in Indonesian Early Childhood Education

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Abstract
This study examines the transformative role of 'Aisyiyah, an Indonesian Islamic women's organization, in the development of early childhood education in Indonesia from the early twentieth century to the contemporary period. During the colonial era, access to formal education for indigenous communities—particularly early childhood education—was severely limited. This research employs a historical-qualitative approach using archival analysis, document review, and secondary literature. Primary sources include organizational records, early publications of Suara 'Aisyiyah, and official educational documents, complemented by scholarly studies on women's movements and education in Indonesia. The findings reveal that 'Aisyiyah played a pioneering role by establishing Taman Kanak-Kanak Bustanul Athfal (TK ABA), the first indigenous-owned kindergarten in Indonesia. Despite constraints in resources, infrastructure, and the absence of a standardized curriculum in its early phase, the organization successfully expanded a nationwide network of kindergartens. Over time, 'Aisyiyah introduced curricular innovations, professionalized teaching practices, and strengthened institutional governance, leading to the recognition of TK ABA as a model and pilot institution for kindergarten education in Indonesia. This study demonstrates that 'Aisyiyah was instrumental in shaping the foundations of early childhood education in Indonesia through sustained grassroots initiatives and educational reform. Its contributions highlight the critical role of women's organizations in advancing indigenous education and social transformation. The findings underscore 'Aisyiyah's enduring legacy in the national early childhood education system and its relevance to contemporary educational development.

Keywords : Aisyiyah; Early Childhood Education; History of Education; Women's Organization.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education refers to the period of education before primary schooling. Article 28 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 regarding the National Education System states that early childhood education can be pursued through formal, non-formal, or informal education. Formal early childhood education is provided through institutions such as Kindergartens, *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA), or other comparable programs. Non-formal early childhood education, on the other hand, includes activities like Playgroups, Daycare Centres, or similar programs. Lastly, informal early childhood education can take the form of family-based education or education that is organized by the surrounding environment.

According to Regulation 146/2014 from the Minister of Education and Culture in Indonesia, the 2013 Curriculum for Early Childhood Education defines PAUD as an educational program for children from birth to six years old. PAUD services are divided into different age groups and types of programs. The first service is designed for children from birth to 6 years old and includes daycare centers and other PAUD facilities. The second service is intended for children aged 2 to 4 and includes Playgroups and similar programs. The third service is intended for children aged 4 to 6 and includes Kindergarten, *Raudhatul Athfal, Busthanul Athfa*l, and similar programs.

Indonesia has a long history of early childhood education, which can be traced back to the implementation of Ethical Politics in the early 20th century. This transformative approach revolutionized the education and teaching sectors across various levels, including early childhood education. The Dutch government brought the concept of kindergarten, created by Friedrich Wilhelm August Frobel, to Indonesia and other educational ideas such as Primary School, Curriculum, Public Education policies and others (Krisandi et al, 2023; Sumardi, 2023). This introduction helped the locals recognize the significance of early education for their children.

A notable organization that strongly emphasizes children's education is Aisyiyah. As the women's branch of the Muhammadiyah organization, founded in 1917, Aisyiyah upholds a progressive interpretation of Islam that does not discriminate between genders in its teachings. Both Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah advocate for men and women to encourage others to do good. During its early establishment, Aisyiyah's upheld the equality between women and men, demanding equal access to education and promoting women's active role in the public sphere based on the Quranic principle of amar ma'ruf nahi munkar (Rahmaniah et al, 2025). This forward-thinking philosophy resulted in the establishment of the ground-breaking Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten in 1919 by Aisyiyah.

In Indonesia, the first kindergarten founded by indigenous individuals resulted from the vision of several Siswa Praja Wanita. Recognizing the significance of early childhood education, they created a tailored program for children as young as four. This program was later implemented in the establishment of Froebelschool, which taught young children the fundamentals of Islam through songs and stories (Chandrawaty & Khomaeny, 2019).

According to studies (Arifin et al, 2022; Soesantari et al., 2023), Aisyiyah as one of the oldest women's organization in Indonesia, has played a pioreering role in early childhood education, particularly thorugh the esablishment of Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten, which was part of their broader mission to empower women and promote literacy. However, the pioneering process and the establishment of kindergarten have yet to be studied in depth. This examination explores Aisyiyah's journey in creating Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten, including the obstacles encountered. Ultimately, the government recognized Aisyiyah's Kindergarten as a pilot school for kindergarten implementation at the 1st Kindergarten Education Conference in 1956.

METHOD

This study employs a four-stage historical method: heuristic, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2001). Reclaimed sources will be filtered to minimize irrelevant sources. Written sources, specifically archives, magazines, meeting notes, and books, will be utilized. The author collected archives relating to Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah from the National Archives of Indonesia and Suara Aisyiyah magazine from its publisher in Yogyakarta. The author cross-referenced sources to ensure compatibility. Magazine sources are utilized to analyze the atmosphere of the period, providing a sharper analysis of the obstacles and development of Aisyiyah's kindergarten. The second stage involved evaluating the source and its selection process. This evaluation involves internal and external criticism, which assesses the source's quality, credibility, and validity through comparative analysis with other sources. The interpretation stage,

where selected sources was analyzed thematically using a sosial science lens, emphasizing the challenges surrounding Aisyiyah's kindergarten development. The last stage was historiography which involved crafting a more elaborated historical account by engaging with the analyzed sources and situating the dinfings within broader historical narratives concerning Aisyiyah's early education establishment. This stage combines descriptive and analytical writing on how Aisyiyah being the pioneer of early childhood education in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Aisyiyah's Establishment and Contribution to Early Childhood Education in Indonesia

In 1917, a meeting was held at the residence of Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan, where Muhammadiyah board members Haji Fachrudin, Kiai Haji Mochtar, and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo were present. Six girls who were also members of the Sapa Tresna recitation group, namely Siti Dalalah, Siti Busjro, Siti Wadingah, and Siti Badilah, were also in attendance (Muarif & Setyowati, 2020, p. 58). Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan developed the Sapa Tresna into a more organized association, following a suggestion from Haji Mochtar. This association was later renamed Aisyiyah. Initially, it was proposed that the organization be named 'Fatimah' as its official name. However, Kiai Haji Fachrodin contended that Aisyiyah, derived from one of Prophet Muhammad's wives called Siti Aisyiyah, was a more fitting name. The Aisyiyah organization was intended to collaborate with the Muhammadiyah movement, and members were expected to emulate Siti Aisyiyah in executing organizational tasks. The founding of Aisyiyah aimed to encourage women's participation in society, the da'wah movement, and education beyond their customary household duties, ultimately increasing women's visibility in society (Darban, 2017, p. 57).

After their meeting, the Aisyiyah organization was formed, and nine women from Sapa Tresna were elected to serve on its initial board. Siti Bariyah assumed the role of first chairperson, while Siti Badilah and Siti Aminah were appointed Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Additionally, assistant administrators Mrs. H. Abdullah, Mrs. Fatimah Wasaal, Siti Dalalah, Siti Wadingah, Siti Dawimah, and Siti Busyro were selected to support the organization (Chandrawaty & Khomaeny, 2019, p. 52).

Two years later, Aisyiyah established Frobelschool, the first Indonesian kindergarten, to provide early education to children. Initially established by Siswa Praja Wanita (SPW), the school was handed over to Aisyiyah in 1926. Through songs and stories, the school taught children the fundamentals of Islam (Chandrawaty & Khomaeny, 2019, p. 52).

Initially established in 1919, Siswa Praja Wanita was an extracurricular program offered in Muhammadiyah schools. The program was led by chairperson Siti Washilah and her deputy, Siti Umniyah, daughter of Kiai Penghulu Muhammad Kamaludiningrat, who was a key figure alongside Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in the establishment of Muhammadiyah. At the program's inception, Kiai Haji Sangidu generously allowed his residence to serve as a venue for its activities.

Siswa Praja Wanita consisted of three subsections, each with its responsibilities. The first category, *Oeroesan Tholabussa'adah*, focused on theological pursuits such as recitation and joint prayer. *Oeroesan Tajmiloel Achlaq* oversaw charity activities, speech, and meeting practice, while *Oeroesan Dirasatoel Banat* organized gatherings for young children to teach them recitation, the Hijaiah alphabet, and storytelling. This last sub-division led to the creation of Froebelschool. In 1923, Siswa Praja Wanita was integrated into Aisyiyah and renamed Aisyiyah Urusan Siswa Praja.

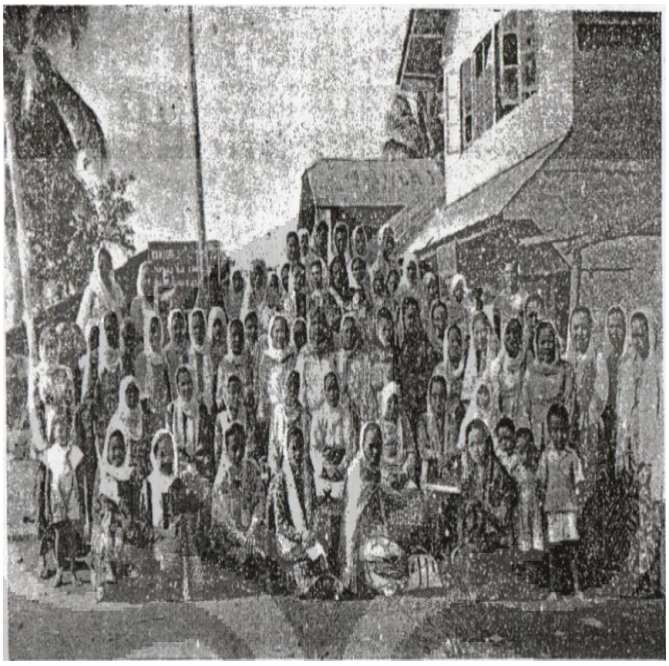
The 18th Muhammadiyah Congress mandated all branches to establish Siswa Praja Wanita, which was eventually rebranded as *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah* to streamline its pronunciation and clarify its meaning for non-Javanese speakers. Incorporating Arabic terms, this new name marked a significant chapter in the program's history. (Muarif & Setyowati, 2020, pp. 55). Similarly, the Froebelschool, a previously affiliated kindergarten with the organization, has also undergone a name change and is now referred to as *Busthanul Athfal*. This decision was made during the 20th Muhammadiyah Congress, where it was decided that all branches within the Muhammadiyah organization should adopt Arabic or Indonesian names better to represent the organization's extensive reach beyond Java (Muhammadiyah, n.d.).

The Froebel School was initially pioneered by the Siswa Praja Wanita (SPW) before management was handed over to Aisyiyah in 1926. (Chandrawaty & Khomaeny, 2019, p. 52). The school pioneered Islamic-based early childhood education in Indonesia and the first kindergarten in Kauman Village, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In 1924, Froebelschool Kindergarten Aisyiyah underwent a name change to Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten, also called TK ABA. This change marked the school's official transition to a kindergarten—the initial teaching staff of TK ABA comprised Siti Umnijah, Siti Dalalah, and Siti As'adah. The three of them were

among the early female cadres nurtured by Kiai Haji Ahmad Dahlan in the establishing Aisyiyah. Two factors prompted the establishment of the Aisyiyah *Busthanul Atfhal* Kindergarten. Firstly, it aimed to provide guidance, education, and the fundamentals of Islam to children. Secondly, it aimed to address the presence of Western education that was only accessible to the noble classes. The Colonial Gobernment had already established the Froebel School in 1914 (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 22-26).

Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten was initially established in an impromptu setting at the front of Siti Umnijah's house, who also served as the chairperson of SPW. Later, the kindergarten and SPW offices were relocated to the back of her house. Despite limited resources in its formative years, the school's administrators' relentless efforts led to the community choosing to send their children to this kindergarten, which is under the ownership of SPW.

During the early period of Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten, instructors affiliated with SPW taught the students. Additionally, with the growing enthusiasm of Kauman residents to enroll their children in school, Aisyiyah members provided aid, even with the limited number of available teachers. *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten was one of many programs established across Indonesia during the colonial era (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 31-32).



Gambar 1. Aisyiyah Boestanoel-Athfaal students at the 1952 Aisyiyah and Nasyiyatul Aisyiyah Conference
Source: *Suara Aisyiyah*, No.7, May 1952

Aside from learning singing or religion, students typically perform the songs they learned at events such as branch, regional, or congress meetings. In the initial stages of development, Busthanul Athfal schools lacked a consistent and standardized curriculum. Each school's curriculum relied on the management of the corresponding Aisyiyah branch. Nevertheless, religion remained the fundamental lesson taught at these kindergarten schools.

The Dissemination and Effects of Aisyiyah Early Childhood Education in Indonesia

Historical records indicate that the Aisyiyah organization has developed significantly since the 1930s. The first Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten in South Sumatra was established in the Plaju area and began operating in 1935. Subsequently, other Aisyiyah Kindergartens were founded in Prabumulih City in 1950, Pagaralam City in 1965, and other locations throughout South Sumatra. Initially, the students were primarily children of Muhammadiyah members. However, over time, the Aisyiyah 2 Kindergarten gained the trust of the surrounding community, resulting in many parents enrolling their children in the school (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 94-96).

Aisyiyah's presence on the island of Bali dates back to 1940 when it was active in the Singaraja area. Aisyiyah also pioneered its kindergarten education institution, Taman Pengajaran Nasijatoel Aisijah, which Nasyiatul Aisyiyah manages. Before the establishment of the kindergarten, Muhammadiyah had already founded HIS Met de Qur'an, the equivalent of an elementary school, in 1939. The founding of the kindergarten was considered a significant achievement at the time, and it received a positive response from the Muslim community, particularly those residing in the Singaraja district. The school initially occupied a building with three classrooms lent by a resident. Unfortunately, it had to be shut down during the Japanese occupation due to a shortage of teachers (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 185-186).

A report from the Aisyiyah Gorontalo Branch was published in Suara Aisyiyah magazine, detailing the progress of the organization's movement in Gorontalo, Sulawesi.

> "Selain dari pada boekti kemadjoean pergerakan Aisjijah jang saja telah oendjoekan tadi, maka saja rasa Bahagia djoega kepada saja jang sempat mengoendjoekan lagi sematjam tentang kemadjoean dan madjoenya pergerakan ini, ialah

dengan kemoerahan dan pertolongan Toehan jang Maha Koeasa dan dengan kegiatan anggota-anggota pengemoedi perkoempoelan ini bekerdja jang sehingga telah beroleh serba sedikit perabat soeatoe sekolahan, ialah bakal sekolahan Aisjijah. Maka pada hari Ahad tgl. 7 h.b. September j.b.l. telah dirajakan pemboekaan sekoalah Aisjijaj terseboet... ...Seharoesnja hari pemboekaan sekolah terseboet ialah, Ahad 7 September 1930, akan dimasoekkan dalam babat tanah Gorontalo, ditoelis dengan mas. Sekolah terseboet diberi nama 'Boestanoel Atfal' jang hoebaja boebaja dengan perlindoengan dan pertolongan Toehan Jang Maha Moerah dan dengan sokongan saudara-saudara jang dermawan, akan berdirilah sekolah itoe sebagaimana mestinja dan pada achirnya moga-moga tertjapailah jang diharapharapkan." (Aisa, 1930)



Gambar 2. Boestanoel-Athfaal Gorontalo Student
Source: *Suara Aisyiyah*, No.12, December 1932.

The quote from the 1930 Suara Aisyiyah magazine report on the establishment and opening of the Bustanul Athfal kindergarten in Gorontalo powerfully illustrates the foundational spirit of the Aisyiyah movement in early childhood education. The quote underline how the school's creation was deeply rooted in the belief of divine will and collective grassroots effort. The name of Bustanul Athfal, meaning children's garden, symbolize a nurturing environment for moral and intellectual growth framed within Islamic values and nationalistic aspiration. The attendance of diverse societal representatives at the opening suggest the broad community support and recognition of the importance of such education for children.

In 1951, Kauman ABA Kindergarten had an impressive enrollment of 90 students, divided into two classes. The Aisyiyah Central Leadership had prepared a comprehensive lesson plan for *Busthanul Athfal*, covering six subjects: conversation, drawing, playing games, singing and frobelan, counting and writing, and religion (Pimpinan Pusat Aisyiyah, 1952).

The hope was that each branch and ranting of Aisyiyah would establish its own Busthanul Athfal, and the learning outcomes of these school children would be showcased at every event. However, despite having a specialized curriculum, not all Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* kindergartens could implement it daily due to a lack of teachers and inadequate space.

In the 1950s, Indonesia's early childhood education system was in a nascent stage with limited specialized provisions for children under seven, reflecting broader infrastructural and organizational challenges as the newly independent nation sought to unify and expand its education sector. In response to this gap, organizations like Aisyiyah played crucial role by establishing numerous Busthanul Athfal kindergartens nationwide, addressing the educational needs of young children and contributing to the foundational develompent of early childhood education in Indonesia. (Octarra & Hendriati, 2017)

> Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* 1 Kebayoran Baru in Jakarta is the oldest ABA kindergarten, founded on August 10, 1950. At the time of establishment, the curriculum was indefinite, and religious education was the only available form of learning.

The first Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten in West Sumatra was founded in Padang in 1950. The Aisyiyah South Padang Branch leadership founded the school. The local mayor provided a plot of land and a building with four classrooms in Padang City – which the school still occupies today – to aid in establishing the ABA 1 Padang Kindergarten Building. The inaugural students at the school included the children of both Muhammadiyah members and the wider community (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 66). This early inclusivity exemplified Aisyiyah's commitment to serving not only its members but also broader society through educational initiatives.

Building on this foundation, Aisyiyah expanded its educational efforts in Bengkulu under the leadership of Munsa Munir in 1926. Prior to the establishment of

ABA 1 Kindergarten, the organization had already laid important groundwork by founding Sekolah Rakyat in 1928 and Aisyiyah Teacher Education, an institution recognized for its size and reputation in the region. Unlike other areas where kindergarten often served as the initial educational effort, Aisyiyah in Bengkulu followed a trajectory marked by the early establishment of formal schools and teacher education before kindergartens. This unique path likely reflects Bengkulu's specific socio-political and cultural context, including a strong early institutional presence and visionary leadership, which permitted a more structured and layered development of education. Moreover, Bengkulu's distinct community response and relatively concentrated Muhammadiyah-Aisyiyah networks may have facilitated the simultaneous growth of multiple educational levels rather than a sequential progression. Such a pattern indicates that regional variations in Aisyiyah's expansion were shaped by local leadership, community readiness, and resource availability, pointing to an adaptive approach tailored to specific local needs. The establishment of the Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten was met with positive reception from the Bengkulu community, largely due to Aisyiyah's unique position as the sole organization managing the first kindergarten in the province (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 111).

Aisyiyah had already been established in Lampung in 1934, but the organization's beginnings and progress remain obscured due to inadequate archival documentation. Prior to 1950, there were no educational establishments in the South Teluk Betung locale specifically catered to early childhood education. Consequently, Aisyiyah, with the aid of a donation of land from a member of Muhammadiyah, founded Aisyiyah Kindergarten on January 1, 1955 (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 117).

The first Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* kindergarten in East Java is ABA 1 Ngawi, established on April 17, 1945. Multiple members of Muhammadiyah spearheaded the initiative for TK ABA 1 Ngawi. The need for educational institutions for children, particularly those belonging to the Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah families, was the driving force behind the foundation of this institution. Initially, the kindergarten operated within the mosque corridor, limiting its exposure to the public due to its limited facility. The school then underwent formal institutionalization in 1965 (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 173-174).

The post-independence period of Indonesian education was challenging, particularly during the revolutionary era. As a result, many schools stopped operating. Following Indonesia's return to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, the government reformed the education sector. Aisyiyah, an organization with charities and businesses in the education sector, played a vital role in education development during this time. In a speech by a representative of the Aisyiyah Leadership Centre, Aisyiyah branches and sub-branches were urged to participate in revitalizing schools that had previously closed due to various factors (Suara Aisyiyah, 1954).

> "…masa pendjajahan itu sudah kita alami, pahit getirnja sudah kita rasakan. Zaman berlalu, masa beredar, revolusi tiba. Zaman revolusi memang menghendaki pengorbanan fikiran, djiwa dan tenaga. Banjak bangunan jang runtuh, banjak tulang belulang pahlawan- pahlawan kita jang berserakan, darah menggenangi persadah tanah air, kesemuanja ini, menjadi modal perdjoangan dengan berachir kemenangan. Kemerdekaan bangs akita. Kurnia Tuhan jang sebesar ini djanganlah kita lupakan, dia harus diisi, karena besarlah bahajanja kalau kita biarkan begitu sadja.
>
> Banjak peninggalan-peninggalan dan bekas-bekas akibat dari revolusi jang mempengaruhi sendi-sendi kehidupan masjarakat kita. Bangunan-bangunan jang runtuh jang harus dibangunkan kembali, menghidupkan sekolah-sekolah jang tak berdjalan lagi, dan banjak lagi jang harus kita bangunkan untuk mengisi kemerdekaan tersebut, dan jang terachir lagi terpenting ialah membangun membentuk achlak ummat, jang mana disana sini telah kita rasakan mulai meradja lelanja kemunduran budipekerti dalam istilah sekarang disebut krisis moreel." (Suara Aisyiyah, 1954)

As one of Indonesia's most experienced kindergarten organizers, Aisyiyah participated in the 1956 Conference on Kindergarten Education, sending Siti Fatimah Usulu and Siti Rohana Djamil as its representatives.

> "…panitia Perumusan Pertama mengenai Pendidikan Taman Kanak-Kanak dan Kebudajaan dan Agama berpendapat:
>
> a. Perlu adanja Taman Kanak-Kanak sebagai tempat dasar pendidikan untuk anak-anak dibawah umur tujuh tahun untuk mentjapai tudjuan pendidikan seperti termaktub dalam undang-undang No. 12 tanggal 18 Maret 1954 (R.I. No.4 tahun 1950) pasal 3.
>
> b. Dasar pada pendidikan Taman Kanak-Kanak ialah Nasional dan Ketuhanan jang Maha Esa.

c. Untuk mentjari jang termaktub dalam a dan b tersebut diatas, hendaknja oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Pengajaran dan Kebudayaan didirikan suatu Lembaga Penjelidikan Pendidikan Kanak-Kanak jang berpokok kepada konsepsi: destruksi kolonial, konstruksi nasional dan orientasi internasional" (Suara Aisyiyah, 1956).

Aisyiyah and its kindergarten system, B*ustanul Athfal,* played critical roles in shaping early childhood education policy and practice in Indonesia, especially as highlighted during the 1956 Conference on Kindergarten Education. By sending representatives such as Siti Fatimah Usulu and Siti Rohana Djamil to this conference, Aisyiyah actively participated in national discussions on the foundational educational needs of children under seven years old. The conference emphasized the establishment of kindergartens as essential to early education, grounded in nationalist and religious principles, and called for the Ministry of Education to create a dedicated institution to research and develop childhood education with a focus on decolonizing colonial legacies and fostering national identity with international orientation. Through its widespread network of *Bustanul Athfa*l kindergartens, Aisyiyah not only operationalized these ideals by providing systematically organized and religiously grounded early education but also served as a pioneering and leading institution in advocating for standardized, accessible kindergarten education across Indonesia, reflecting both educational reform and socio-religious empowerment.

Regarding the proposal's outcomes, it was suggested that multiple institutions with relevant experience in kindergarten education implementation should be involved. The establishment of the Institute for the Study of Kindergarten Education by the government is proposed to acquire the viewpoints and experiences of various institutions, including Aisyiyah. Aisyiyah has been operating Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten for decades. There are several lessons to be gleaned from current kindergarten organizers, including the employment of global pedagogical techniques, the implementation of the teaching system, and the tools utilized.

According to Law No. 4 of 1950 on the Fundamentals of Education and Instruction in Schools in Indonesia, kindergarten education was officially incorporated into the educational system of Indonesia. Nonetheless, the government is not accountable for its implementation, leading to a lack of uniformity in execution. Organizations or institutions within the school's vicinity often establish private kindergartens. However, implementing such kindergartens presents particular challenges, such as a need for qualified teachers, suitable infrastructure, consistent guidelines, and other necessary resources. During the congress, it was suggested that the government should involve itself in setting up kindergartens by extending maximum support (Suara Aisyiyah, 1956).

From 1952 to 1959, *Busthanul Athfal* kindergarten was among the many that opened numerous new branches. Muhammadiyah advocated for Aisyiyah *Busthaul Athfa*l kindergartens to be established in all Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah branches through its congresses. Despite a shortage of teaching staff, many Busthanul Athfal kindergartens were established during this time. As a result, Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten was created and is still run by Aisyiyah today. After being established in Sumatra and Java following Indonesia's independence, *Busthanul Athfal* has steadily grown and spread across the archipelago. Additionally, certain regions in Indonesia have initiated the establishment of their first Busthanul Athfal within existing Aisyiyah branches.

From 1952 to 1959, Busthanul Athfal schools were established by multiple Aisyiyah branches. TK ABA Muntok in Bangka Belitung was the first of these schools, opening its doors on December 1, 1952. This kindergarten was founded during the Aisyiyah Conference in Palembang. Initially, TK ABA Muntok was in a rented house in Kampung Tanjung. The Aisyiyah branch leadership in Muntok requested assistance from the Wedana to acquire a plot of land for institutional purposes. Aisyiyah members also helped fundraise to construct a building that would operate as a kindergarten.

At first, the local community did not fully appreciate the importance of a women-led kindergarten. However, by 1955, ABA Muntok Kindergarten had more than 50 students competing with Santa Maria Kindergarten. The community's support for the kindergarten encouraged the principal to request a permanent building, which was granted. The building still stands strong today, consisting of four classrooms, bathrooms, and a warehouse (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 105-106).

In 1953, the Aisyiyah Sigli Regional Leadership took the initiative to establish the first Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten in the Sigli area of Aceh. This school was founded at a meeting in Padang about the dire need for kindergartens in the Aisyiyah Sigli community. The establishment of the school was met with great enthusiasm, given the scarcity of educational resources for children at that time. Initially, the school focused

on children's activities and religion, with no formal curriculum in place (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 47).

Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfa*l Kindergarten was founded in Pekanbaru, Riau, on August 1, 1954. The land and building, which included four classrooms, were generously donated by Yahya, Khadijah Ali, and Raja Rusli. Khadijah Ali, who served as the chairperson of Aisyiyah Riau and a local parliament member, had a deep passion for education in the region. Three classrooms were designated for the girls' diniyah school, while one was reserved for the Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 77-78).

The Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* 01 was established in Medan on August 1, 1956. It was the first Aisyiyah Busthanul Athfal Kindergarten in North Sumatra, founded by six members of the Aisyiyah Medan branch. Despite the growing demand for educational services, they were motivated by the need for more educational facilities for children in the predominantly Chinese neighborhood where the school was established. Their goal was to provide children with a solid foundation in both Latin and Arabic to prevent illiteracy (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 56).

The establishment of *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten in Lubuk Linggau, West Sumatra, on July 1, 1953, was a significant event, as announced in a regular Suara Aisyiyah magazine meeting in the same year. Meanwhile, in 1952, on the island of Java, the family of Hj. Mariyah Attamimi, the chairman of Aisyiyah, generously donated the land for the Siti Khodijah Maternal and Child Health Centre (BKIA). As time passed, Muhammadiyah and Aisyiyah Branch Management in Sidoarjo assisted in managing the Siti Khodijah Hospital and established a musholla and Aisyiyah 01 Bebekan Kindergarten. The establishment of TK ABA Bebekan Sepanjang on August 1, 1952, marked a significant milestone for the Sepanjang Branch of Aisyiyah, which ultimately led to the formation of the Regional Board of Aisyiyah Sidoarjo. The opening of this kindergarten was highly celebrated by the community, providing an opportunity for approximately 50 students in the first cohort to receive an education, with numbers steadily increasing each year (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 177-178).

Despite Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah's longstanding presence in West Java dating back to 1923, it was not until 1956 that Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfal* Kindergarten was established in Garut. To the delight of the community, nearly 100 students enrolled upon its opening. Such enthusiasm later spurred the founding of the Indramayu ABA Kindergarten by the Indramayu branch of Aisyiyah in 1966 (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 133-134).

The Aisyiyah *Busthanul Athfa*l Kindergarten School in Singaraja faced closure due to a shortage of teachers which commonly happen that time. However, it reopened in 1954 with the support of Japan's entry into Indonesia. The kindergarten was rebuilt under a new name, Taman Kanak-Kanak Asri Singaraja, to cater to all community members, not just Muslims. This decision ensured the school's acceptance and inclusivity in a diverse society. The name Aisyiyah Kindergarten was adopted in 1969 after Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah gained a more positive reputation in the community (Tim Peneliti Sejarah TK ABA PTM, 2020, pp. 190-191).

CONCLUSION

In Indonesia, kindergarten is recognized as an official level of education administered by institutions or organizations not affiliated with the government. The establishment of kindergartens in Indonesia responded to the need for early childhood education before beginning primary school.

Despite facing various challenges, the Praja Wanita Students were the pioneers who established the first Indonesian kindergarten school. Over time, they evolved into a part of Aisyiyah and, in collaboration with *Busthanul Athfa*l, began propagating across the archipelago as part of Muhammadiyah's distribution agenda. Muhammadiyah supported the establishment of *Busthanul Athfal* in every Aisyiyah section.

It is worth noting that establishing an organization during that era required more effort than it does currently. Beyond transportation limitations, the political climate also had a significant impact. Despite numerous challenges, Aisyiyah and Muhammadiyah successfully expanded their reach into diverse regions. The emergence of *Busthanul Athfal* schools is a testament to this accomplishment. While some schools were well-received, others faced criticism from local communities, with some parents unwilling to enroll their children in these institutions.

Additionally, certain schools require more teaching staff. Most educators at *Busthanul Athfal* belonged to the Aisyiyah branch, where the school was founded. During this period, not all *Busthanul Athfal* schools had

proper structures to conduct classes. Some functioned from temporary huts or occupied premises belonging to Muhammadiyah institutions or members. Regarding education, there was no transparent curriculum system in place during the implementation of early childhood education at that time. Schools varied in their approaches to learning.

Faced with various challenges, Aisyiyah took a proactive approach and addressed each issue individually. A women's teachers' college was established to provide regular training to enhance educators' skills at *Busthanul Athfal*. A standardized curriculum was also developed to ensure continued growth and success. Aisyiyah's contributions were recognized when she was invited to attend the Kindergarten Conference in 1956 and asked to participate in forming the Lembaga Penyelidikan Pendidikan Kanak-Kanak. The conference proposed improvements for the kindergarten level, which had previously received little attention from the government. A true pioneer in early childhood education, Aisyiyah has achieved remarkable accomplishments within Indonesia.

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