

## Learning from Firefighters: A Goal-Free Evaluation of Fire Disaster Mitigation Program for Early Years Students

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### Abstract

Field trips are not merely an escape from the classroom; they are powerful tools to bridge theoretical concepts with real-world experiences. The fire disaster mitigation program for early learners at a local fire station introduced children to essential fire safety practices while reshaping their understanding of heroism and inspiring new aspirations. This study aimed to evaluate the program's implementation, its impact on children's understanding of fire safety, and the development of critical thinking and career aspirations. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through direct observation, interviews with students, teachers, and parents, and an analysis of program materials. Thematic analysis revealed that children gained a deeper appreciation for real-world heroism, comparing firefighters to figures like Captain America and Iron Man, while also reflecting critically on fire safety concepts, such as the importance of safe assembly points in their daily environments. Additionally, the program sparked new career aspirations among the children, particularly among boys, although gender stereotypes persisted with fewer girls expressing interest in firefighting. Despite its strengths, such as engaging presentations and hands-on simulations, the program exhibited limitations, including minimal parental involvement and a lack of diverse role models. These findings suggest that targeted improvements, such as incorporating follow-up activities, enhancing parental engagement, and introducing gender-inclusive narratives, could significantly enhance the program's impact.



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## INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education for children aged 4-6 years is a cornerstone of lifelong learning and development that provides critical opportunities to shape cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities (Damayanti et al., 2024; Eadie et al., 2022; Kucirkova, 2024; Purba et al., 2024; Mehraj, 2024). These formative years are marked by rapid brain development and the establishment of foundational skills that influence future learning and behavior (Cheruiyot, 2024a; Kase & Amseke, 2024). In particular, high-quality early childhood programs have been shown to significantly enhance school readiness, improve problem-solving

abilities, and foster social competence (Eadie et al., 2022; Harianti et al., 2020; Irma et al., 2019). Shortly, it is emphasizing their role in preparing children for the complexities of life (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Ionescu, 2020). Among the essential skills to impart during this period is safety awareness, particularly in areas like fire disaster mitigation, which can reduce risks and promote proactive behaviors from an early age (Bakar, 2023). Despite its critical importance in fostering a generation of safety-conscious individuals, this topic remains relatively uncommon in discussions surrounding early childhood education, highlighting a significant gap that warrants further attention.

Besides that, early years education also lays the foundation for personality development since early years experiences will profoundly shape adulthood (Kızıltaş & Sak, 2018; Vesely et al., 2017). Therefore, within this critical period, children will develop important key skills, recognize responsibilities, build self-confidence, and cultivate positive attitudes toward learning and school (Alan, 2023; Cheruiyot, 2024b; Harianti et al., 2020; Kale et al., 2024; Puspita Dewi & Rachman, 2023). Therefore, in order to support this golden-age period development, Erikson's theory underscores the importance of hands-on experiences during these formative years. The theory highlights that children aged three to six learn effectively through play, where engagement in games fosters lasting understanding (Molenaar et al., 2021; Mehraj, 2024). Bandura adds that children acquire knowledge by observing and modeling behaviors within their environment, with these interactions influencing subsequent behaviors (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2011). However, this process is selective, shaped by individual personalities, past experiences, and relationships with role models (Kit et al., 2024; Mesquita, 2016). Educational environments must therefore allow children to independently explore, receive constructive feedback, and develop self-monitoring skills (Rachmawaty & Warid, 2020). Furthermore, educational theories such as Vygotsky and Piaget, specifically mention the importance of adopting developmentally appropriate practices. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory highlights the critical role of social interaction and culturally meaningful activities in learning, asserting that children construct knowledge through guided participation in real-world experiences (van der Veer, 2020). Similarly, Piaget's theory of cognitive development emphasizes hands-on exploration as a pathway to understanding (Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). Both of these frameworks advocate for active, context-driven learning environments that engage children meaningfully and align with their developmental needs.

It is widely known that contextual learning, an experience-based education, has emerged as a powerful strategy in early childhood settings (Aleru, 2023; Ionescu, 2020; Mesquita, 2016; Muliastari, 2017; Vesely et al., 2017). This approach literally integrates real-world contexts into the learning process that is allowing children to connect theoretical concepts with tangible experiences (Falk & Dierking, 1997). This strengthens by Kolb's experiential learning model that posits learning will be effective when individuals actively engage in reflective and practical activities (Kolb et al., 2000). In the context of early years education, this way can be translated into approaches by many researchers as field trips and outings, where children's curiosity and understanding are deepened through direct interaction with their environment (Reese, 2011). Field trips and outings are in fact, numerous times, perceived as the same thing since both involve activities that take place outside the classroom. However, the two differ significantly in their purpose and structure (Alan, 2023; Behrendt & Franklin, 2014; Darmawan et al., 2024; Goh, 2011; Lailatul Rahmawati & Nazarullail, 2020). Field trips themselves are carefully designed with specific educational objectives in mind, such as understanding community roles or learning about safety practices, and they involve structured, guided interactions to achieve these goals (Henry et al., 2022; Kızıltaş & Sak, 2018; Mathar et al., 2024). In contrast, outings are primarily recreational, aiming to provide opportunities for leisure and social engagement (Hammarsten et al., 2019; Kiviranta et al., 2024). The field trip examined in this study itself serves as an example of a structured, educational activity conducted at a fire station. Unlike general recreational outings, this program places children in an intentional learning environment where they can observe the responsibilities of firefighters, participate in simulated emergency drills, and practice fire prevention techniques. These activities aim to enhance children's awareness of fire safety while developing their cognitive, social-emotional competencies, such as teamwork and empathy. By involving children in hands-on experiences, the program

seeks to make abstract safety concepts accessible and memorable (Fahdiyani & Khoiriyati, 2024; Hamidah et al., 2022; Safitri, 2023; Wahidah et al., 2024).

There is loads of research that consistently highlights the multifaceted developmental benefits of field trips. Many believe that field trips provide valuable contexts for children to observe and interact with real-world environments that will significantly enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Gal & Gal, 2014; Hashim & Said, 2021). This kind of activity has also been supporting and influencing social-emotional growth by encouraging cooperation and empathy, enhancing cognitive development through real-world problem-solving, and improving language skills via enriched communication and vocabulary (Hashim & Said, 2021; Kucirkova, 2024). Additionally, many field trips often include physical components, such as climbing or coordinated movements, which promote motor skill development (Falk & Dierking, 1997; Kiviranta et al., 2024; Purba et al., 2024). Others confirmed that the benefits of such methods are not only limited to an improved knowledge retention, but also enhancing problem-solving skills and greater emotional resilience (James et al., 2020; Kızıltaş & Sak, 2018; Muliasari, 2017; Puspita Dewi & Rachman, 2023). Also, if the field trips are carefully designed, they will not only deepen understanding across cognitive, motor, social-emotional, and language domains but also foster holistic development by encouraging exploration and critical thinking in authentic settings (Agusniatih & Husnitasari, 2024; Fitriya & Ifa, 2022; Henry et al., 2022; Mansur, 2022). However, the effectiveness of these outcomes depends on the activity's design and the level of children's engagement, underscoring the need for thoughtful planning.

In Indonesia, research on field trips in early childhood education has primarily focused on their developmental impacts, such as improvements in cognitive and social outcomes (Cheruiyot, 2024b; S. P. Damayanti et al., 2019; Fahdiyani & Khoiriyati, 2024; Fitriya & Ifa, 2022; Henry et al., 2022; Mathar et al., 2024; Safitri, 2023; Wahidah et al., 2024; Wuryani et al., 2021). By contrast, international studies, such as Kamariah Abu Bakar's research in Malaysia, have delved into specific aspects of field trips, particularly their influence on cognitive development through targeted activities, offering insights into how experiential learning fosters critical thinking and problem-solving that is uncovered by the students' drawing (Bakar, 2023). However, there is still a lack of studies that focus on evaluating the field trip programs themselves. Evaluation serves as a vital tool in understanding the efficacy of educational programs. It involves systematically analyzing a program's design, implementation, and outcomes to identify strengths and areas for improvement. In the context of field trips, evaluation provides insights into whether the activities are effectively engaging participants, achieving intended learning outcomes, and addressing potential gaps. This process is essential for refining program quality and ensuring alignment with developmental goals (Fauziyah et al., 2023). Therefore, this gap highlights the need for comprehensive research that goes beyond developmental impacts to holistically assess the effectiveness and quality of field trip programs.

This study focuses on evaluating a field trip program conducted at the fire station in Medan, Indonesia. The program is designed to educate young children about fire safety and disaster mitigation through immersive, hands-on experiences. Activities include observing firefighters' operations, participating in emergency simulations, and learning practical fire prevention techniques. The program aims to foster fire safety awareness, improve children's understanding of emergency procedures, and cultivate proactive attitudes toward disaster preparedness. By evaluating its implementation and outcomes, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on experiential learning and its role in early childhood education, offering evidence-based recommendations for program enhancement.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This qualitative research employs a single case study design which is particularly suited for exploring complex phenomena within participants' real-life contexts (Creswell, 2013). The choice of a single case study design is justified by its ability to provide in-depth insights into the specific experiences and processes of a targeted program, in this case, a field trip program for early childhood education to a local fire station located in Medan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia (Hong & Abdullah, 2020). The study itself focuses on understanding

students' experiences and the implementation of the program through detailed observations and interviews, ensuring rich, context-specific data collection. In order to evaluate the program, the researchers adopt goal-free evaluation model that is chosen for its strength in focusing on the actual outcomes and processes of the program without being constrained by predetermined objectives (Hallam, 2009; Pérez-Jorge et al., 2021). Goal-free evaluation's Scriven model is widely known model that is particularly useful for uncovering unintended outcomes and providing a holistic view of the program's effectiveness (Youker, 2024). Therefore, the researchers see this stuff aligns with the study's aim to understand both the implementation and impacts of the field trip program. The study involves participants from a single Islamic school, characterized by its distinctive cultural and religious identity. Female students and teachers wear hijabs, while male students wear *peci*, a traditional Indonesian's Islamic accessory for men, reflecting the school's Islamic ethos. The participants include 15 children aged 5-6 years and 3 teachers, with 46.67% of the student participants are male and the remaining 53.33% female. While all the three teachers involved in the program are identified themselves as female. These participants actively took part in the field trip program.

In terms of data collection method, the researchers use primary data by employing a field observation and semi-structured interviews. Observations are conducted during the program activities to capture authentic interactions, behaviors, and processes as they occur. These observations are non-participant, ensuring that the researcher does not influence the natural dynamics of the program (Creswell, 2013). While, semi-structured interviews are conducted with 6 children aged 5-6 years and 2 teachers who participated in the field trip program. The selection of participants for interviews was based on an analysis of the recordings from the observation of program activities. Furthermore, this interview method allows the researchers' flexibility to explore responses in greater depth while maintaining a structured focus on key topics related to the participants' experiences and program implementation. After the data from observations and interviews were successfully collected, they were analyzed using a constructivist framework, which emphasizes understanding participants' experiences and meanings within their social and cultural contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1984). Thematic analysis, as developed by Braun & Clarke (2006), was employed to systematically analyze the data, since it provides a flexible yet rigorous framework for identifying and interpreting patterns within qualitative data, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the study's findings. This method used in this study follows six phases started from familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

Since most of the participants in this study are students aged 5-6 years, the researchers must give careful attention to ethical considerations due to the involvement of young children. Therefore, parental and teacher consent are obtained prior to data collection. Moreover, children's assent is also sought to ensure voluntary participation. Also, confidentiality is maintained by anonymizing participants' identities and assigning pseudonyms in this research. The study adheres to ethical guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA) as well as the ethical standards set by Universitas Negeri Medan. By employing a robust qualitative methodology, this study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the field trip program, capturing its implementation, participant experiences, and broader impacts. The researchers hope that the findings will contribute valuable insights into the design and evaluation of experiential learning programs in early childhood education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Theme 1: Engaging Early Learners in Fire Safety: Well Done Teachers, Pak Togar, and Firefighters Team!*

From the interview and observation with the teachers and one of the local fire service team members, it is revealed that the implementation of the fire disaster mitigation field trip program at the fire department was a carefully coordinated effort between the teaching staff and the fire department personnel, involving pre-visit discussions, alignment of goals, and detailed scheduling to ensure all activities were age-appropriate and engaging for the students. This theme examines the critical components of the program implementation,

focusing on its duration, delivery, and the factors contributing to its success, such as coordination, presentation style, and logistical arrangements.

The field trip program to local fire service in Medan lasted for a well-planned duration of three hours, which aligns with recommendations for the optimal attention span of early childhood learners (Eadie et al., 2022; Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). Overly lengthy sessions risk diminishing engagement, while shorter programs may fail to provide sufficient depth. The three-hour format comprised an introduction, a presentation of fire safety concepts, interactive questions and answers (QnA) sessions with rewards followed, and hands-on simulations. On planning this stuff, the teaching staff coordinated seamlessly with the fire department, ensuring that the activities were age-appropriate and engaging. The two presenters, Mrs. Linda and Mr. Togar (pseudonyms), were instrumental in delivering the content. While Mrs. Lindan provided structured material, Mr. Togar's engaging style, infused with humor and anecdotes, captivated the children. According to studies on early childhood education, presenters who can relate content to a child's perspective and use playful interaction significantly enhance engagement (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2011). Mr. Togar's familiarity with children's behavior, owing to his own experience as a parent, likely contributed to his ability to connect with the students effectively.

The program incorporated multimedia elements, including videos depicting fire disasters and the role of firefighters. This approach aligns with Pakpahan & Saragih (2022) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which suggests that combining visual and auditory inputs enhances comprehension, especially for abstract concepts. For many students, the idea of a large-scale fire was unfamiliar, their prior experiences were limited to controlled fires, such as family barbecues in the islamic new year eve. The videos provided a concrete representation of fire disasters by the presenter, helping bridge the gap between abstract fire safety concepts and the children's limited real-world exposure. The videos were presented with follow-up explanations by Mr. Togar, who contextualized the scenarios in a manner relatable to young learners. For instance, when children expressed curiosity about the causes of fire shown in the videos, Mr. Togar's humorous yet informative style provided memorable explanations. Research highlights that humor in teaching can reduce anxiety and foster a positive learning environment (Anne-Nelly Perret-Clermont, 1980; Kızıldağ & Sak, 2018; Nabavi & Bijandi, 2011), which seemed evident in the children's enthusiastic and attentive responses from the observation's live and recording.

Not only the way the presenters, Mrs Linda and Mr Togar, that hugely contributed to the comfortability of students' excitement, but also the physical environment played a significant role in the program's success. The air-conditioned room, comfortable seating, and welcoming attitudes of the fire department staff created a conducive atmosphere for learning. A well-maintained environment reduces distractions and allows children to focus on the content being delivered (Fitriya & Ifa, 2022; Wahidah et al., 2024). When one firefighter entered the room in full protective gear, several children expressed awe, calling out, "That's so cool!" This moment underscored how an immersive environment can enhance the learning experience by sparking curiosity and admiration. Moreover, the program's interactive elements were pivotal in maintaining engagement and reinforcing learning. During the simulation of fire extinguishing, children eagerly participated, expressing excitement about handling equipment such as the fire extinguisher and water cannon. Hands-on activities like these are essential in experiential learning, as they provide children with opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings (Kolb et al., 2000). One notable interaction involved a child recognizing a smaller fire extinguisher similar to those seen on public transportation. When the child's observation was confirmed by presenting a similar extinguisher, it provided a moment of connection between prior knowledge and new learning. This aligns with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, where children construct knowledge by integrating new information with their existing schemas (Jean Piaget, 1964; Kit et al., 2024; Pakpahan & Saragih, 2022). Another critical observation was how the program addressed the children's preconceptions about fire and firefighting. Many children associated fires solely with benign activities, such as cooking or celebrations. By presenting real-life scenarios and demonstrating the role of firefighters, the program expanded their understanding of fire as both a hazard and

an aspect of community safety. This shift in perspective is vital for fostering a foundational awareness of disaster preparedness in early years education (Cheruiyot, 2024a; Ionescu, 2020; Zubaedah et al., 2023).

The three-hour duration proved to be well-suited to the children's developmental needs. Alternating between passive activities (watching videos) and active engagement (simulations and Q&A) ensured sustained interest. Short quizzes with small rewards further motivated participation, aligning with Vygotsky's emphasis on social and collaborative learning (van der Veer, 2020). The balance of activities minimized fatigue and allowed children to remain attentive throughout. The success of this program offers valuable insights for designing similar initiatives, such as choosing presenters who are not only knowledgeable but also skilled in engaging young learners is crucial, videos and visual aids can help make abstract concepts more tangible for children, a comfortable and welcoming setting enhances children's ability to focus and participate actively, hands-on activities and opportunities for children to connect prior knowledge with new information enriches the learning experience and the duration of the program that should not be long enough to cover content comprehensively but short enough to accommodate young children's attention spans. The fire disaster mitigation field trip program demonstrated how experiential learning, when effectively implemented, can enhance young children's understanding of critical safety concepts. By combining all the instruments, the program not only captured the children's interest but also expanded their knowledge and awareness of fire safety. Future programs can build on these findings to further refine field trip designs that educate and inspire early years learners.

### *Theme 2: Media for Developing Critical Thinking*

The fire disaster mitigation field trip observed in this study is proved to be more than just an educational outing, indeed it emerged as a medium for fostering critical thinking among early years students. Despite being unfamiliar with many of the concepts introduced during the session, the children displayed remarkable curiosity, asking numerous questions and actively engaging with the material presented. Interestingly, even students who were described by their teacher as typically passive in the classroom showed significant excitement and a strong willingness to learn during the field trip. This theme explores how the field trip environment facilitated critical thinking by encouraging students to connect new knowledge with their personal contexts.

One of the most striking outcomes of the field trip was the surge in questions posed by the children. This aligns with the idea that critical thinking begins with curiosity and inquiry (Cone et al., 2016; Muliasari, 2017). During the presentation, Mr. Togar introduced the concept of a *safe assembly point* as a designated area in every building where people should gather in case of an emergency, such as a fire. This new information sparked reflective questions among the children, who immediately sought to relate the concept to their own lives. For instance, Mirna, a student, asked their teacher accordingly, *Miss, do we have a safe assembly point in our school? Where is it?* Similarly, parents reported that their children asked the same question about the assembly point at home. These questions indicate a deep level of engagement, as the children were not only absorbing the information but also actively analyzing its relevance to their environments. The ability to connect the new knowledge with familiar contexts is a cornerstone of critical thinking. According to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (van der Veer, 2020), children learn most effectively when they can link new concepts to their existing cognitive frameworks. In this case, the concept of a safe assembly point resonated with the children because it addressed a fundamental question of safety in places they frequent, such as their school and home.

Another notable example involved a child, Roni, one of the active students in the class, approached his teacher with a shocked follow-up question, *Is the playground a safe place to gather if there is a fire?* Roni's question actually reflects an attempt to apply the new knowledge to a specific location within the school. The teacher's response then explaining the criteria for a safe assembly point and discussing whether the playground meets those criteria, further deepened the child's understanding and prompted other students to consider similar questions.

Interestingly, the field trip environment appeared to reduce barriers to participation for students who are typically less active in classroom discussions. For example, one student, whom the teacher identified as being shy and reserved, surprised everyone by asking multiple questions during the session. When discussing fire extinguishers, the student raised their hand to ask a question like, *Why are some fire extinguishers small, and some are big?*

This question prompted Mr. Togar to explain the different uses of fire extinguishers based on the type and size of the fire, further enriching the learning experience. Indeed, this phenomenon can be explained through the novelty and interactive nature of the field trip since the research suggests that non-traditional learning environments, such as field trips, can increase engagement among students who might otherwise feel inhibited in a traditional classroom setting (E. Damayanti et al., 2024). The combination of a new environment, hands-on activities, and approachable presenters created an atmosphere where all children felt comfortable expressing their thoughts.

The children's questions about safe assembly points and fire safety practices exemplify reflective thinking, a higher-order cognitive skill that involves analyzing and synthesizing information (Kit et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2024). By questioning whether their *school or home has a safe assembly point*, the children demonstrated an ability to apply abstract concepts to real-world situations. These questions also opened up discussions with their teachers and parents, fostering a collaborative learning process. The field trip demonstrated that well-designed experiential learning activities could serve as powerful tools for developing critical thinking skills in young children. Key elements that contributed to this outcome including interactive presentations, relevance of content, and supportive environment, where the latter means that the field trip setting should provide a non-judgmental space where all children felt empowered to participate.

Many studies support the idea that experiential learning fosters critical thinking in young children. One of them is from (Kolb et al., 2000) that emphasized the importance of direct experience in building critical and reflective skills. Similarly, Reese (2011) argued that inquiry-based learning, which encourages children to ask questions and explore answers, is essential for cognitive development in early childhood. The findings from this field trip align with these principles, showcasing how interactive and contextually relevant activities can promote deep learning. Therefore, it can be noted that the fire disaster mitigation field trip not only taught children about fire safety but also provided a platform for developing critical thinking skills. Through reflective questions and active engagement, the children demonstrated their ability to analyze new information and relate it to their personal contexts. This underscores the potential of field trips as a medium for fostering inquiry and reflection in early years education. By integrating similar approaches into regular curricula, educators can further cultivate critical thinking skills, preparing young learners to navigate complex concepts with confidence.

### *Theme 3: Reconstructing the Meaning of Hero through the Metaphors*

The fire disaster mitigation field trip provided an impactful experience that reshaped the children's understanding of the concept of heroes and inspired aspirations to pursue a career as firefighters. Despite their limited prior knowledge of what it means to be a firefighter, the field trip sparked a significant shift in the way they viewed the profession and its role in society. This was figured out before the field trip where many of the children associated the term *hero* with fictional characters such as Captain America or Iron Man. These fictional figures acted as metaphors for bravery and strength, concepts that the children could later project onto the real-life actions of firefighters. These figures represent strength and bravery in their imagination. However, after participating in the field trip and engaging with the firefighters, the children began to equate real-life professions with heroism. Through Mr. Togar's engaging presentation and the live simulation of firefighting activities, the children began to draw parallels between the firefighters and their fictional heroes. This metaphorical connection helped them realize that heroes are not just fictional figures with superpowers but also everyday individuals who dedicate themselves to protecting others, often at great personal risk.

One of the students, Arief, remarked that, ... *Firefighters are like Captain America because they save people.* Another child added during the interview that, *They don't have superpowers, but they are brave, and they don't get scared of fire.* Such comments reflect how the children used metaphors to bridge their understanding of fictional heroism with the tangible bravery of firefighters, leading to a newfound appreciation for real-world heroism. Research on children's moral development supports this finding, suggesting that exposure to role models in real-life contexts helps children form a more grounded understanding of altruism and bravery (Kızıldağ & Sak, 2018; Nabavi & Bijandi, 2011).

The field trip also led to a notable repositioning of the children's career aspirations. Prior to the program, common aspirations included becoming police officers, YouTubers, or TikTokers. However, after the field trip, many children expressed a desire to become firefighters. When asked at the end of the simulation, *Who wants to be a firefighter?* all the boys enthusiastically raised their hands, while three girls also expressed interest. For some children, their interest in firefighting was motivated by the practical aspects of the profession. One big boy said loudly that, *I want to wear the cool uniform and use the water cannon to put out fires.* For others, the decision was influenced by their admiration for the firefighters' dedication. *They work even at night when people are sleeping,* one child observed. However, a few children, particularly girls, expressed reservations about becoming firefighters. *I'm scared of the big fire,* said one girl. Another added, *It looks very hard, and I don't think I'm strong enough.* These reflections indicate the need for further educational efforts to address misconceptions and encourage greater inclusivity in how children perceive challenging professions. The interactive elements of the program, including the hands-on simulation, played a key role in shaping the children's perceptions. The opportunity to use firefighting tools and observe the firefighters in action made the experience tangible and inspiring. Children's fascination with the equipment, such as the protective gear and water cannon, contributed to their newfound aspirations. Another boy commented, *The helmet and jacket make them look like real heroes...*

Interestingly, the gender dynamics observed during the session reveal underlying societal influences on career preferences. While the boys showed overwhelming interest in becoming firefighters, fewer girls shared the same enthusiasm. This aligns with findings from studies on gender stereotypes in career aspirations, which suggest that societal norms and early exposure shape children's career preferences (Puspita Dewi & Rachman, 2023). However, the three girls who expressed interest in firefighting demonstrate that exposure to diverse role models can challenge traditional gender stereotypes. Notably, the children's reflections on the qualities of a hero evolved throughout the program. One child summarized their thoughts by stating, *...a hero is someone who helps people no matter what time it is, like firefighters.* Another remarked that *heroes are not just in movies, they can be people like firefighters who do hard work every day.* These statements highlight the children's ability to internalize and articulate complex ideas about selflessness and dedication.

Overall, the field trip's ability to inspire and reshape the children's understanding of heroism and career aspirations has significant educational implications. To build on these outcomes, educators can introduce children to professionals from various backgrounds and can help broaden their understanding of career options and challenge stereotypes, create opportunities for children to discuss what they learned and how it relates to their own lives, highlighting stories of female firefighters and other professionals can encourage girls to consider careers in traditionally male-dominated fields, and interactive activities that simulate real-world tasks are powerful tools for engaging children and inspiring aspirations. Also, the findings from this field trip align with theories on experiential learning and its impact on children's understanding of societal roles. Kolb's theory (Kolb et al., 2000) emphasized that learning through experience enhances cognitive and emotional engagement. Additionally, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Nabavi & Bijandi, 2011) suggests that observing role models in action significantly influences children's aspirations and behavior.

In summary, the fire disaster mitigation field trip has successfully reconstructed the children's concept of heroism and inspired new career aspirations. By engaging directly with firefighters and participating in hands-on activities, the children developed a deeper appreciation for the profession and the values it



represents. These outcomes underscore the potential of field trips to not only educate but also inspire young learners, fostering a sense of purpose and ambition that extends beyond the classroom.

## CONCLUSION

The fire disaster mitigation field trip program showcased numerous strengths, particularly in its ability to engage young learners through interactive and experiential methods. The children demonstrated heightened curiosity, critical thinking, and a reconstructed understanding of heroism, with many expressing newfound aspirations to become firefighters. The program's design, which included multimedia presentations, hands-on simulations, and engaging presenters, effectively captured the children's interest and made abstract concepts tangible. Moreover, the supportive and welcoming environment contributed to the program's overall success, enabling even typically passive students to participate actively.

Despite these strengths, the program exhibited some notable weaknesses that warrant attention. The lack of diverse role models limited the inclusivity of career aspirations among students, particularly for girls. Additionally, while the program provided a solid foundation in fire safety education, it lacked structured follow-up activities to deepen and sustain the children's learning. Parental involvement was also minimal, creating a gap between school-based learning and reinforcement at home. These shortcomings, however, can be addressed through targeted improvements. By incorporating diverse role models, designing reflective follow-up activities, and fostering greater parental participation, the program can become more inclusive, impactful, and comprehensive. With these enhancements, the fire disaster mitigation field trip has the potential to not only educate children but also inspire lifelong critical thinking and a broader understanding of societal roles.

Even though the findings from this evaluation underscore the broader implications of experiential learning in early childhood education. Field trips like this not only serve as an effective medium for introducing safety concepts but also play a crucial role in fostering children's socio-emotional and cognitive development. By offering hands-on experiences and real-world interactions, such programs can help shape children's perceptions of societal roles and inspire aspirations that go beyond traditional norms. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of designing field trips that are inclusive and reflective of diverse perspectives. Ensuring gender equity in role modeling and engaging parents as partners in learning are critical steps in maximizing the educational value of such initiatives. Finally, these findings advocate for embedding reflective and critical thinking components in early childhood curricula, demonstrating how meaningful experiences can contribute to holistic development and lifelong learning. Moreover, future research could examine the long-term impact of field trips on children's understanding of safety and career aspirations, as well as explore how diverse role models and parental involvement enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of such programs. Additionally, studies comparing similar programs across different cultural contexts could provide insights into how local values shape learning outcomes.

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