



## ENHANCING COOPERATION SKILLS OF GROUP B CHILDREN THROUGH ROLE-PLAYING GAMES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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### Abstrack

Cooperation is an essential aspect of early childhood social-emotional development. Initial observations of Group B children at an early childhood education institution indicated that children's cooperative ability was still low, particularly in interacting with peers, sharing roles, helping others, and following group activity rules. This study aimed to improve children's cooperative ability through role-playing games. The research employed Classroom Action Research based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, conducted in two cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 14 Group B children, consisting of 6 boys and 8 girls. Data were collected through observation and documentation and analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis by calculating the percentage of children's developmental achievement. The findings showed an improvement in the average score from 28.57% in the pre-cycle to 69% in Cycle I and 96% in Cycle II. By the end of Cycle II, all children reached the Very Well Developed category. These findings indicate that role-playing games are effective in improving children's cooperation because they provide opportunities for children to interact, share roles, help each other, communicate, and follow rules in an enjoyable learning atmosphere. The implication of this study is that role-playing games can be used as an alternative learning strategy for early childhood teachers to strengthen children's social-emotional development, particularly cooperation skills, through meaningful, active, and child-centered learning experiences.

**Keywords:** early childhood; role play; cooperation; play-based learning; classroom action research

### Abstrak

Kerja sama merupakan aspek penting dalam perkembangan sosial-emosional anak usia dini. Hasil observasi awal terhadap anak Kelompok B di sebuah lembaga pendidikan anak usia dini menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan kerja sama anak masih rendah, khususnya dalam berinteraksi dengan teman sebaya, berbagi peran, membantu orang lain, dan mengikuti aturan kegiatan kelompok. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan kerja sama anak melalui permainan



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bermain peran. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode Penelitian Tindakan Kelas berdasarkan model Kemmis dan McTaggart, yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus yang terdiri atas tahap perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah 14 anak Kelompok B, yang terdiri atas 6 anak laki-laki dan 8 anak perempuan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan analisis deskriptif kuantitatif dengan menghitung persentase capaian perkembangan anak. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya peningkatan skor rata-rata dari 28,57% pada pra-siklus menjadi 69% pada Siklus I dan 96% pada Siklus II. Pada akhir Siklus II, seluruh anak mencapai kategori Berkembang Sangat Baik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa permainan bermain peran efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan kerja sama anak karena memberikan kesempatan kepada anak untuk berinteraksi, berbagi peran, saling membantu, berkomunikasi, dan mengikuti aturan dalam suasana belajar yang menyenangkan. Implikasi dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa permainan bermain peran dapat digunakan sebagai alternatif strategi pembelajaran bagi guru pendidikan anak usia dini untuk memperkuat perkembangan sosial-emosional anak, khususnya keterampilan kerja sama, melalui pengalaman belajar yang bermakna, aktif, dan berpusat pada anak.

**Kata Kunci:** anak usia dini; bermain peran; kerja sama; pembelajaran bermain; penelitian tindakan kelas

### **Introduction**

Early childhood education is a crucial phase in shaping the foundation of children's personality, intelligence, and social competence. At this stage, children do not only need cognitive stimulation but also concrete social experiences that help them learn how to interact, regulate emotions, communicate, negotiate, and build positive relationships with peers. Current studies emphasize that social-emotional development in early childhood is closely related to the quality of learning environments, teacher facilitation, peer interaction, and play opportunities (Hosokawa et al., 2024; McInnes et al., 2024; Tamblyn et al., 2024). In classroom practice, however, some children still show limited participation in group activities, are less accustomed to sharing roles, find it difficult to wait for turns, and rely heavily on teacher direction when completing collaborative tasks. This condition indicates that cooperation skills need intentional stimulation through meaningful classroom activities.

Cooperation is an important part of early childhood social-emotional development because it enables children to learn how to communicate, respect others, share roles, help peers, obey rules, and complete tasks for common purposes. Cooperation does not emerge automatically; it grows through repeated social experiences that allow children to practice mutual involvement. Studies on children's social development show that early opportunities for interaction, shared problem-solving, and constructive peer engagement can strengthen children's collaboration, responsibility, and emotional awareness (Lin et al., 2024; Sianipar, 2025; Umezaki et al., 2024). Therefore, learning strategies that involve children directly in group activities are needed so that cooperation becomes a lived habit rather than merely a verbal instruction.

Play-based learning is highly relevant for early childhood education because play is children's natural way of exploring the world. Through play, children can move, speak, imitate, imagine, negotiate, and express ideas in ways that are concrete and enjoyable. Play-based learning supports not only cognitive

development but also social, emotional, physical, and language development when it is intentionally planned and facilitated by teachers (Khalil et al., 2022; Keung & Cheung, 2019; Lunga et al., 2022; Sitorus et al., 2025; Taylor & Boyer, 2020; Tuncdemir, 2025). The pedagogical value of play lies in its ability to connect learning objectives with children's developmental characteristics. In this sense, play can become an effective medium for strengthening cooperation, especially when the activity requires children to work with peers.

One form of play-based learning that is particularly suitable for developing cooperation is role-playing games. Role play provides children with opportunities to take roles, use language, imitate social situations, share responsibilities, and solve simple problems with friends. Previous studies have shown that role-playing methods can support children's social-emotional development, prosocial behavior, communication, empathy, confidence, responsibility, and independence (Anggraini & Putri, 2022; Harianja et al., 2023; Irmayanti et al., 2025; Lahiya et al., 2022; Putri & Hasiana, 2025; Wirahandayani et al., 2023). Unlike passive learning activities, role play requires children to engage actively with peers, making it suitable for improving cooperation indicators such as sharing roles, helping friends, waiting for turns, and obeying agreed rules.

Several Indonesian studies also confirm the relevance of role play in early childhood classrooms. Bakri et al. (2021) found that role play affected early childhood social interaction, while Maghfiroh et al. (2020) reported that role-playing methods were useful for developing social-emotional aspects in early childhood education. Jamilah (2019) emphasized that role play can support social-emotional development in Group B children, and Mulyani and Prahastiwi (2025) found that role-playing methods influenced early childhood social-emotional development. More recent studies also show that structured role-playing activities may enhance children's responsibility, communication, and social awareness when the teacher provides clear scenarios, appropriate materials, and positive guidance (Hafidhoh et al., 2025; Riwayati, 2025; Suwandi, 2026).

Although role play has been widely discussed in relation to general social-emotional development, studies that specifically connect role-playing games with cooperation skills in Group B children still need further strengthening. Previous studies often focused on broad developmental outcomes, language ability, communication, or character building, while cooperation indicators such as willingness to join peers, sharing roles, helping friends, obeying rules, waiting for turns, and completing group tasks are not always discussed in detail. This study therefore positions role-playing games not merely as entertainment but as a pedagogical strategy directed specifically at improving cooperation skills in a classroom action context (Pyle et al., 2023; Yang, 2024; Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2024).

Based on initial observations of Group B children at an early childhood education institution, children's cooperation skills were still relatively low. Several children tended to play alone, were not yet accustomed to joining group activities, showed difficulty in sharing roles, and needed repeated teacher guidance to follow rules and complete group activities. The research subjects consisted of 14 children, including 6 boys and 8 girls. In the pre-cycle stage, the average achievement of cooperation skills was 28.57%, which was still categorized as low. This condition shows that children needed a more concrete, active, enjoyable, and participatory learning strategy that could provide direct opportunities to practice cooperation.

The novelty of this study lies in the use of role-playing games as a

classroom action strategy specifically directed at improving children's cooperation skills, not merely social-emotional development in general. The role-playing activities were designed to train children to interact with peers, share roles, help one another, communicate, wait for turns, obey game rules, and complete group activities. Accordingly, the research question of this study is: Can the cooperation skills of Group B children be improved through role-playing games? This study is expected to enrich the discussion on play-based learning and provide a practical alternative for early childhood teachers in designing active, enjoyable, and child-centered learning experiences.

### **Method**

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) using the Kemmis and McTaggart model. This model consists of four stages in each cycle: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Classroom action research was selected because the study was intended to solve a practical learning problem found in the classroom and to improve the learning process through cyclical actions. In this study, the actions were conducted in two cycles, and each cycle consisted of two meetings. The use of CAR allowed the teacher and researcher to identify problems, implement role-playing games, observe children's cooperation skills, reflect on the results, and improve the next action (Kemmis et al., 2014; Sanjaya, 2016).

The study was conducted at a Raudhatul Athfal institution. The subjects were 14 Group B children, consisting of 6 boys and 8 girls. The object of the study was the improvement of children's cooperation skills through role-playing games. The learning activities were designed based on themes familiar to children so that they could understand the roles, follow the game flow, and interact naturally with their peers. The teacher acted as facilitator by explaining the scenario, distributing roles, guiding interaction, providing reinforcement, and ensuring that all children had opportunities to participate.

Data were collected through observation and documentation. Observation was used to record the development of children's cooperation skills during the learning process, while documentation was used to support the observation data through notes, photographs, and learning records. The observation sheet consisted of nine indicators of cooperation skills: interacting with friends or other people, participating in group discussions, sharing with peers, waiting for turns, helping friends, saying thank you when helped, completing activities until the end, obeying rules, and returning learning materials or equipment to the proper place. These indicators were chosen because they represent observable cooperative behavior in early childhood learning activities.

The data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis by calculating the percentage of children's developmental achievement. The developmental categories used in this study were Not Yet Developed (BB) for 0–25%, Beginning to Develop (MB) for 25–50%, Developing as Expected (BSH) for 50–75%, and Very Well Developed (BSB) for 75–100%. The action was considered successful if children's cooperation skills reached at least the Developing as Expected category, with a minimum success criterion of 71%. The use of descriptive analysis was intended to show the pattern of improvement from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle I and Cycle II without changing the classroom action orientation of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## Results and Discussion

The study was carried out through the pre-cycle stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II. In the pre-cycle stage, children's cooperation skills were still low. After role-playing games were implemented in Cycle I, children's cooperation began to improve. The improvement of actions in Cycle II resulted in stronger development until all children reached the Very Well Developed category.

### Pre-cycle

In the pre-cycle stage, the average achievement of children's cooperation skills was 28.57%. Some children were in the Not Yet Developed category, while others were in the Beginning to Develop category. Children were not yet able to cooperate optimally, were less active in interacting with peers, were not accustomed to waiting for turns, and were not consistent in completing group activities until the end.

### Cycle I

In Cycle I, role-playing games were implemented through two meetings. Children were assigned roles according to the theme, guided to interact with peers, and encouraged to complete the game together. The observation results showed that the average achievement increased to 69% at the end of Cycle I. This improvement indicates that children began to understand the rules of play, became more willing to interact, and started to share roles, although some children still required teacher guidance.

### Cycle II

Cycle II was conducted as an improvement of Cycle I. The teacher and researcher prepared a more focused game scenario, clarified role distribution, simplified instructions, and provided positive reinforcement during the activity. The result showed that the average achievement of cooperation skills increased to 96% at the end of Cycle II. All children reached the Very Well Developed category. Children became more independent in following rules, sharing roles, helping friends, communicating, and completing activities until the end.

**Table 1. Summary of the improvement in children's cooperation skills**

Stage	Average Achievement	Dominant Category	Description
Pre-cycle	28.57%	BB and MB	Cooperation skills were still low; children needed substantial guidance.
Cycle I	69%	BSh	Children began to join groups, interact, and

Cycle II	96%	BSB	share roles. All children reached the Very Well Developed category.
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**Table 2. Increase in the average score across stages**

Comparison	Increase
Pre-cycle to Cycle I	40.43 percentage points
Cycle I to Cycle II	27 percentage points
Pre-cycle to Cycle II	67.43 percentage points

The results of the study indicate that role-playing games were able to improve the cooperation skills of Group B children. This improvement was reflected in the behavioral changes observed at each stage of the action, from the pre-cycle stage to Cycle I and Cycle II. In the initial condition, some children tended to be passive during group activities, were not accustomed to joining peers, still relied heavily on teacher instructions, lacked confidence in taking roles, and were not consistent in following the rules of the game. This condition confirms that cooperation skills need to be developed through direct experiences that require children to interact, negotiate, and work together (Hosokawa et al., 2024; Tamblyn et al., 2024).

The implementation of role-playing games provided a learning experience that was different from ordinary instruction. Children did not merely listen to the teacher's explanation about the importance of cooperation; they directly practiced cooperation through play. They learned to take roles, share tasks, wait for turns, use materials alternately, help friends who faced difficulties, and complete activities according to the game scenario. This concrete experience is important because children learn social values more effectively through active participation than through abstract advice (Hughes, 2010; Johnson et al., 2005; Wirahandayani et al., 2023).

Role-playing games also created a learning atmosphere that was close to children's world. Early childhood learners naturally learn through movement, imitation, language, imagination, and social interaction. When learning is designed in the form of role play, children feel freer to express themselves and are more willing to participate. This supports the idea that play-based learning can connect teacher objectives with children's developmental needs when the activity is intentionally designed and pedagogically facilitated (Keung & Cheung, 2019; Khalil et al., 2022; Lunga et al., 2022; Taylor & Boyer, 2020).

In Cycle I, role-playing games began to have a positive effect on children's participation. Children started to communicate with peers, follow directions, and join group activities. Some children who had previously tended to be passive began to show interest in taking part in the game. However, the improvement in Cycle I was not yet evenly distributed. Some children still needed teacher assistance in sharing roles, waiting for turns, and maintaining participation until the activity ended. This shows that cooperation is a social skill that requires habituation, repetition, and consistent reinforcement (Harianja et al., 2023; Irmayanti et al., 2025; Lahiya et al., 2022).

The reflection from Cycle I became the basis for improving the action in Cycle II. The teacher and researcher improved the scenario, clarified role distribution, simplified instructions, prepared more attractive supporting materials, and gave positive reinforcement during the activity. The teacher's role as facilitator was important because the teacher helped children understand their roles, modeled cooperative behavior, guided peer interaction, and appreciated positive behavior. These findings are consistent with studies showing that teacher facilitation and planned play environments are central to successful play-based learning and social-emotional stimulation (McInnes et al., 2024; Pyle et al., 2023; Sitorus et al., 2025; Tuncdemir, 2025).

In Cycle II, the improvement became more evident. Children began to understand their individual roles in the game, followed rules more independently, and became more active in communicating with peers. Several cooperative behaviors appeared more naturally, such as helping friends who did not understand their roles, waiting for turns with fewer reminders, sharing play materials, and completing the activity until the end. These changes indicate that repeated and enjoyable social experiences can gradually build cooperative habits (Lin et al., 2024; Sianipar, 2025; Umezaki et al., 2024).

The findings also show that cooperation in early childhood is closely related to opportunities for meaningful interaction. Children cannot simply be asked to cooperate; they need to be placed in situations where cooperation is needed and valued. Through role play, children learn to communicate, imitate, negotiate, distribute roles, and solve simple problems together. These processes help children understand that the success of an activity depends not only on themselves but also on the participation of their peers. This explains why role play is effective in improving cooperation as well as broader social-emotional competence (Bakri et al., 2021; Hafidhoh et al., 2025; Maghfiroh et al., 2020; Mulyani & Prahastiwi, 2025).

Role-playing games also supported other aspects of children's development. Children learned self-control when they waited for turns, learned respect when roles were distributed, learned responsibility when completing assigned tasks, and developed empathy when helping friends. These outcomes are in line with studies reporting that role play contributes to prosocial behavior, emotional regulation, communication skills, and character development in early childhood settings (Anggraini & Putri, 2022; Putri & Hasiana, 2025; Riwayati, 2025; Suwandi, 2026; Yang, 2024).

The success of the action highlights the importance of teacher creativity in designing early childhood learning. Teachers should not only deliver material or give instructions; they also need to create learning activities that allow children to experience the values being developed. In this study, cooperation was strengthened because children were given space to practice cooperation in a concrete, joyful, and socially meaningful situation. Therefore, role-playing games should be understood as a pedagogical strategy with strong educational value, not merely as entertainment (Jamilah, 2019; Pahrul et al., 2026; Zarra-Nezhad et al., 2024).

The practical implication of this study is that role-playing games can be used as an alternative strategy for early childhood teachers to strengthen cooperation skills. Teachers can apply this strategy by choosing themes close to children's lives, preparing simple scenarios, distributing roles clearly, providing sufficient materials, and giving positive reinforcement. Institutionally, the findings suggest that early

childhood education programs should provide more structured play-based activities to support children's social-emotional development. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discussion on play-based learning by showing that role-playing games can specifically improve cooperation indicators in Group B children.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The findings have direct implications for classroom practice. First, teachers need to design role-playing games with clear cooperation targets rather than using play only as a filler activity. The cooperation indicators in this study can be translated into practical classroom routines, such as assigning small roles, rotating responsibilities, asking children to help peers, giving opportunities to wait for turns, and closing each activity with a simple reflection. When these routines are repeated, children gradually understand that cooperation is part of everyday classroom culture.

Second, the role-playing strategy can be integrated with various early childhood themes, such as family, market, clinic, transportation, worship, environmental care, and community life. Each theme can be developed into a simple scenario that requires children to communicate, share materials, and complete tasks together. This makes role-playing games flexible and easy to adapt to different classroom contexts. For teachers, the most important point is not the complexity of the scenario but the consistency of facilitation, modeling, reinforcement, and reflection after the activity.

Third, the improvement from 28.57% to 96% shows that cooperation skills can develop rapidly when children are provided with structured opportunities to practice. Nevertheless, the strategy needs to be implemented carefully. Teachers should consider children's readiness, avoid forcing shy children to perform immediately, provide gradual support, and ensure that every child has a meaningful role. In this way, role play becomes inclusive, enjoyable, and developmentally appropriate for early childhood learners.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the results of the classroom action research, it can be concluded that role-playing games were effective in improving the cooperation skills of Group B children. The improvement was reflected in the average achievement of children's cooperation skills, which increased from 28.57% in the pre-cycle stage to 69% in Cycle I and reached 96% in Cycle II. By the end of Cycle II, all children were categorized as Very Well Developed. Role-playing games encouraged children to interact, share roles, help one another, communicate, obey rules, wait for turns, and complete group activities more independently. The implication of this study is that role-playing games can be adopted by early childhood teachers as an enjoyable, active, and child-centered strategy to strengthen cooperation and broader social-emotional development. For future research, similar actions may be applied to other social-emotional indicators or different age groups to examine the wider effectiveness of role-playing games in early childhood education.

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