



Developing the Social-Emotional Competence of Group B Children Through Group Play Activities

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Abstrak

Kemampuan sosial emosional merupakan fondasi penting bagi kesiapan belajar dan adaptasi sosial anak usia dini, namun di Kelompok B TK Melati Kecamatan Mestong kemampuan tersebut masih rendah: anak cenderung bermain sendiri, sulit berbagi dan bergiliran, kurang menunjukkan empati, serta belum mampu menyelesaikan konflik secara baik. Penelitian ini bertujuan meningkatkan kemampuan sosial emosional anak usia 5–6 tahun melalui kegiatan bermain kelompok yang dirancang secara bertahap. Penelitian menggunakan rancangan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) model Kemmis dan McTaggart yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, masing-masing dua pertemuan, dengan subjek 22 anak Kelompok B. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi terstruktur menggunakan lembar observasi delapan indikator dengan skala perkembangan empat tingkat (BB, MB, BSH, BSB), dilengkapi catatan refleksi dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif kuantitatif melalui rata-rata skor dan persentase ketuntasan klasikal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan peningkatan yang konsisten: rata-rata skor klasikal meningkat dari 1,56 (Belum Berkembang) pada Siklus I menjadi 3,31 (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan) pada Siklus II, sedangkan ketuntasan klasikal meningkat tajam dari 6,25% menjadi 87,5%. Seluruh delapan indikator pada Siklus II mencapai sekurang-kurangnya kategori Berkembang Sesuai Harapan sesuai milestone anak usia 5–6 tahun. Disimpulkan bahwa kegiatan bermain kelompok efektif mengembangkan kemampuan sosial emosional anak Kelompok B.

Kata Kunci: Sosial Emosional; Bermain Kelompok; Anak Usia Dini

Abstract

Social-emotional competence is a crucial foundation for young children's school readiness and social adaptation, yet among Group B children at TK Melati, Mestong District, this competence remained low: children tended to play alone, struggled to share and take turns, showed limited empathy, and were unable to resolve conflicts constructively. This study aimed to enhance the social-emotional competence of children aged 5–6 years through systematically designed group play activities. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the Kemmis and McTaggart model was conducted over two cycles of two sessions each, involving 22 Group B children. Data were collected through structured observation using an eight-indicator sheet with a four-level developmental scale (BB, MB, BSH, BSB), supported by reflective notes and documentation, and analysed descriptively using mean scores and the classical mastery percentage. The findings revealed a consistent improvement: the class mean score rose from 1.56 (Not Yet Developing) in Cycle I to 3.31 (Developing as Expected) in Cycle II, while classical mastery increased sharply from 6.25% to 87.5%. All eight indicators in Cycle II reached at least the Developing-as-Expected category, consistent with the developmental milestones for children aged 5–6 years. It is concluded that group play activities are effective in developing the social-emotional competence of Group B children.

Keywords: social-Emotional; Group Play; Early Childhood

Introduction

Early childhood, particularly the range of four to six years, is known as the golden age, when all aspects of development grow very rapidly and become the foundation for subsequent developmental stages [1]. One of the aspects that develops most intensively during this period is the social-emotional aspect, namely the child's ability to recognize and manage their own emotions, build relationships with others, and adjust behaviour to the demands of their social environment. Erikson positions early childhood as the stage for forming initiative and autonomy that determines the quality of a child's social relationships later in life [2]. If this social-emotional foundation is not optimally nurtured from an early age, children risk experiencing difficulty in interacting, cooperating, and adjusting when they enter higher levels of education.

Social-emotional competence is not merely a complement to cognitive ability but an important predictor of children's learning success. Goleman asserts that emotional intelligence—which includes self-awareness, emotion management, empathy, and social skills—contributes greatly to a person's life success, even beyond the role of intellectual intelligence alone [3]. In line with this, Denham shows that social-emotional competence in preschool children functions as a pillar of school readiness: children who can regulate their emotions and build positive relationships with peers tend to be better prepared for formal learning [4]. Therefore, developing social-emotional competence has become one of the main foci of early childhood education services.

In the Indonesian context, the scope of early childhood social-emotional development has been explicitly formulated in the Child Development Achievement Level Standards (STPPA) set out in Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 [5]. The standard requires Group B children (aged 5–6 years) to be able to show cooperative attitudes, share,

take turns, obey rules, display empathy, control their feelings, and solve simple everyday problems. These skills serve as the reference for formulating achievement indicators that teachers use to design and assess learning activities. Istianti adds that social skills need to be deliberately developed through habituation and structured activities so that mature social behaviour is formed in early childhood [6].

Field reality shows that children's social-emotional achievement often remains below expectations. Based on the researcher's initial observation of Group B children at TK Melati, Mestong District, Muaro Jambi Regency, most children still showed behaviour that was not yet developed in the social-emotional aspect. Children tended to play alone and were reluctant to share play tools, had difficulty waiting their turn, did not comply with agreed game rules, became easily angry or cried when their wishes were unmet, rarely helped friends, and were often involved in disputes that were not resolved constructively. This condition signals the need for a learning intervention that directly trains children's social-emotional skills in real social situations. Hyson asserts that the early childhood curriculum should be emotion-centred, so that learning experiences are designed to sharpen children's emotional awareness and management [7]. If left unaddressed, low social-emotional competence can affect children's social adjustment; the pressures of the modern environment, including excessive gadget exposure, have even been reported to hinder early childhood social-emotional development [8].

Referring to the STPPA and the actual classroom condition, the researcher formulated eight operational indicators of social-emotional competence as targets for development, namely the willingness to share play tools and materials, the ability to cooperate in completing activities, the willingness to take and wait for turns, compliance with agreed game rules, the ability to control emotions, empathy and

helping friends, the courage to express opinions and communicate, and the ability to resolve disputes constructively. These eight indicators represent three interrelated social-emotional domains, namely prosocial competence (sharing, cooperation, helping), self-regulation competence (controlling emotions, obeying rules, taking turns), and relational-communicative competence (expressing opinions, resolving conflict). This mapping is important because each domain demands different stimulation and develops at a different pace, so the design of play activities must give room to all of these domains.

One strategy considered relevant for developing children's social-emotional competence is group play activity. Play is both the world and the primary learning medium for young children. Vygotsky viewed play as an activity that creates a zone of proximal development, where children practise going beyond their actual ability through interaction with peers and adults [9]. In group play, children face social situations that demand negotiation, role division, and self-regulation. In her classic study of preschool social participation, Parten identified a gradation of play forms, ranging from solitary play to cooperative play, in which children work together toward a common goal and submit to group rules [10]. It is this cooperative play that naturally trains the skills of sharing, taking turns, and cooperating.

Group play activities have a strong theoretical foundation in cooperative learning. In her review, Gillies concluded that cooperative learning consistently improves social skills, communication, and mutual helpfulness among learners [11]. In early childhood, a widely used play form is role play or dramatic play. Gao and Hall show that role play supports preschool children's learning by providing room to experiment with social roles and emotional expression [12]. In Indonesia, Aulina found that role play positively affects young children's social ability [13], while Ananda and Fadhilaturrahmi demonstrated that

collaborative games can improve children's social-emotional competence [14]. Fauziddin also reported improvement in children's cooperation ability through group work activities [15].

A number of prior classroom action research studies reinforce the effectiveness of play-based approaches. Harianja, Siregar, and Lubis reported an improvement in children's social-emotional development through role play, from an average of 58% in Cycle I to 83% in Cycle II [16]. Ramadhani and Fauziah found a link between peer relations and traditional games with children's social-emotional skills [17], and Mukhlis and Mbello analysed how traditional games stimulate the social-emotional aspect [18]. Lubis asserts that play is an appropriate medium for developing children's social-emotional skills [19], while Wulandari and Suparno showed the contribution of problem-based learning to children's cooperative character [20]. Recent research by Fauzi, Purwati, and Gandana also underlines the role of role play in instilling empathy in young children [21].

Nevertheless, most prior studies tend to focus on a single type of play—commonly role play or a particular traditional game—and few have designed a tiered sequence of group play combined with media that support behaviour habituation. This study offers novelty by arranging the action across two tiers: Cycle I introduces group play through simple profession-themed role play oriented toward recognizing basic rules, while Cycle II presents group games that demand cooperation and joint problem solving, reinforced with visual behaviour-poster media and a group behaviour agreement (contract). This tiered design is expected to bridge the gap between introducing social skills and internalizing them in children's daily behaviour.

Based on the above, this study aims to: (1) describe the application of group play activities in developing the social-emotional competence of Group B children at TK

Melati, Mestong District; and (2) analyse the improvement of children's social-emotional competence after the application of group play activities in each cycle. The findings are expected to serve as a practical reference for kindergarten teachers in designing play activities that stimulate the social-emotional development of young children.

Research Method

This study used a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design. CAR was chosen because it fits the research objective, namely improving and enhancing the quality of the learning process and outcomes through reflective action carried out cyclically by the teacher in their own classroom [22]. The CAR model used is the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model, in which each cycle consists of four continuous stages, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting [23]. The result of reflection in one cycle becomes the basis for improving the action plan in the next cycle.

The study was conducted at TK Melati, Mestong District, Muaro Jambi Regency, Jambi Province, in the even semester of the 2025/2026 academic year, namely during the period from March to April 2026. The research subjects were all 22 Group B children. The researcher also acted as the implementing teacher, while a fellow teacher served as observer (collaborator) to maintain the objectivity of the observation. This collaboration aligns with the principle of CAR that emphasizes participatory reflective work [24].

Action Procedure and Description

The study was conducted in two cycles, and each cycle consisted of two sessions. The planning stage included developing daily lesson plans (RPPH) themed around group play, preparing play tools and materials, arranging small groups, and preparing observation sheets. The action stage was carried out according to the play activity scenario. The observation stage was conducted simultaneously with the action

using observation sheets, and the reflection stage was carried out at the end of each cycle to assess achievement and formulate improvements.

The action in Cycle I focused on introducing group play with simple games and basic rules. The first session featured role play as a doctor and nurse, while the second session featured role play as a chef and restaurant waiter. Through these activities, children began to be introduced to role division, taking turns using play tools, and simple game rules within small groups.

The action in Cycle II was designed based on the reflection from Cycle I and focused on group games that demanded cooperation and joint problem solving. The first session involved building a station and railway track as a group, reinforced with visual behaviour-poster media and a group behaviour agreement (contract), while the second session involved a firefighting simulation role play that demanded coordination, task division, and collective problem solving. The addition of visual behaviour-poster media was intended to strengthen the habituation of prosocial behaviour such as sharing, taking turns, and helping friends.

In each cycle, the four CAR stages were carried out operationally as follows. The planning stage included determining the group play theme, developing the RPPH, forming heterogeneous small groups so that social interaction would be richer, preparing safe play tools and materials, and aligning perceptions with the observer regarding the indicators observed. The action stage was carried out by the researcher as teacher by opening the activity with apperception, explaining the game rules, dividing roles, accompanying children during play, and closing the activity with a simple reflection together with the children. The observation stage was carried out by the observer simultaneously with the action using the eight-indicator observation sheet, while the researcher recorded important events in field notes. The reflection stage was carried out

after both sessions to examine indicator achievement, identify obstacles, and formulate improvements for the next cycle.

To maintain data validity, the researcher applied collaboration with the observer and conducted source triangulation by combining the results of observation, field notes, and documentation. An agreement between the researcher and the observer on the meaning of each assessment category (BB, MB, BSH, BSB) was established before the action to ensure consistent and unbiased assessment. This collaborative-reflective approach is a distinctive feature of CAR that differentiates it from experimental research [23], [24].

Instruments and Data Collection Techniques

The main instrument was a social-emotional competence observation sheet containing eight indicators, namely: (1) willing to share play tools and materials with friends in the group; (2) cooperating to complete activities or games with friends; (3) willing to take and wait for turns during play; (4) complying with agreed group game rules; (5) able to control emotions (patient, not easily angered) during play; (6) showing empathy or helping friends in difficulty; (7) daring to express opinions and communicate within the group; and (8) resolving disputes or conflicts in a constructive way. Each indicator was assessed using a four-level developmental scale in accordance with early childhood assessment guidelines, namely Not Yet Developing (BB) with a score of 1, Beginning to Develop (MB) with a score of 2, Developing as Expected (BSH) with a score of 3, and Developing Very Well (BSB) with a score of 4. These categories correspond to the developmental milestones expected of children aged 5–6 years, where BSH represents attainment of the age-appropriate milestone. The assessment of each indicator in each session represents the group's dominant (classical) attainment on that indicator.

Data collection was carried out through structured observation, field notes and

reflection in each session, and activity documentation. Observation was used to record the emergence of children's social-emotional behaviour during group play, reflective notes were used to document obstacles and findings in each session, and documentation served as authentic evidence of the implementation of the action.

Data Analysis Technique and Success Criteria

Data were analysed descriptively and quantitatively. The classical mean score in each cycle was calculated by dividing the total of all indicator scores by the number of assessments. The classical mastery percentage was calculated from the proportion of assessments reaching the Developing-as-Expected (BSH) and Developing-Very-Well (BSB) categories against all assessments, using the formula $P = (f / N) \times 100\%$, where P is the classical mastery percentage, f is the number of assessments in the BSH and BSB categories, and N is the total number of assessments. The study was declared successful if classical mastery of the BSH and BSB categories reached at least 80% and/or the classical mean score reached at least 3.00 (Developing as Expected). When these criteria were met, the cycle was stopped.

Findings and Discussion

Cycle I Results

Cycle I was conducted in two sessions, on 3 March 2026 and 10 March 2026, with 22 children present at each session. In the first session, which featured role play as a doctor and nurse, most indicators of children's social-emotional competence were still in the Not Yet Developing category. Children still had difficulty cooperating, taking turns, and obeying game rules, and had not yet shown empathy or the ability to resolve disputes constructively. Only the willingness to share and the courage to express opinions began to appear in the Beginning-to-Develop category.

In the second session, which featured role play as a chef and restaurant waiter,

children's social-emotional competence generally began to rise. Most indicators moved to the Beginning-to-Develop category, and the courage to express opinions had reached the Developing-as-Expected category. However, the empathy/helping and conflict-resolution indicators remained in the Not Yet Developing category. Overall, the classical mean score in Cycle I reached only 1.56 of a maximum of 4.00, with a category distribution of Not Yet Developing at 50%, Beginning to Develop at 43.8%, Developing as Expected at 6.2%, and Developing Very Well at 0%. Thus, classical mastery (BSH and BSB) in Cycle I was only 6.25%, far below the established success criterion.

In terms of process, in the first session of Cycle I the teacher divided the children into small groups and introduced the roles of doctor and nurse with simple play tools. The children appeared enthusiastic about the play props, but social interaction was still dominated by individual behaviour: some children fought over play tools, were reluctant to wait their turn, and were not yet accustomed to following the flow of the game. The teacher repeatedly needed to mediate small disputes. In the second session with the chef and waiter theme, the teacher began to emphasize game rules and modelled turn-taking behaviour. The children gradually showed progress in sharing tasks, although empathy and the ability to contain emotions while competing for roles were not yet consistently evident.

The reflection from Cycle I showed that introducing group play succeeded in fostering the courage to communicate but was not yet strong enough to foster more complex prosocial behaviour, especially empathy (indicator 6) and conflict resolution (indicator 8). The games in Cycle I were still introductory and did not yet explicitly require children to help one another or solve problems together. On the basis of these findings, the researcher designed improved actions for Cycle II in the form of group games that demand cooperation and problem solving, accompanied by visual

behaviour-poster media and a group behaviour agreement to strengthen habituation.

Cycle II Results

Cycle II was conducted in two sessions, on 31 March 2026 and 7 April 2026, with 22 children present at each session. In the first session, which featured building a station and railway track as a group, the application of visual behaviour-poster media and a group behaviour contract began to show results. Most indicators rose to the Developing-as-Expected category, and the courage to express opinions even reached the Developing-Very-Well category. The emotion-control, empathy, and conflict-resolution indicators showed clear progress compared with Cycle I, moving toward the expected milestone.

In the second session, which featured a firefighting simulation role play, the social-emotional competence of Group B children developed even more strongly. This activity, which demanded coordination and task division, encouraged children to help one another and solve problems collectively. The majority of indicators reached the Developing-Very-Well category, while the remaining indicators reached the Developing-as-Expected category. Overall, the classical mean score in Cycle II rose to 3.31 of a maximum of 4.00, with a category distribution of Not Yet Developing at 0%, Beginning to Develop at 12.5%, Developing as Expected at 43.75%, and Developing Very Well at 43.75%. Thus, classical mastery (BSH and BSB) in Cycle II reached 87.5%. Crucially, all eight indicators attained at least the Developing-as-Expected category, meaning every targeted skill reached the developmental milestone expected of children aged 5–6 years.

In terms of process, in the first session of Cycle II the teacher posted visual behaviour posters depicting sharing, taking turns, and helping friends in the play area, then invited the children to agree on a group behaviour contract before building the station and railway track together. The

presence of the posters proved to help children remember the expected behaviour, and the construction task, which required uniting ideas, encouraged children to negotiate and divide tasks. In the second session with the firefighting simulation theme, the children faced a play situation that demanded quick coordination and mutual help, such as forming a line to extinguish a mock fire and rescue a victim doll. This activity naturally elicited empathy, cooperation, and group decision-making behaviour, so that most indicators surged to the highest category.

Because the results of Cycle II exceeded the established success criteria—classical mastery of at least 80% and a mean score of at least 3.00—this classroom action research was declared successful and stopped at the end of Cycle II.

Between-Cycle Comparison of Achievement

To clarify the development of children's social-emotional competence, the achievement of each indicator in Cycle I and Cycle II was recapitulated and compared. Table 1 presents the mean achievement of each indicator together with its increase, while Table 2 presents the distribution of developmental categories and the classical mastery percentage between cycles.

Table 1. Recapitulation of the Mean Achievement of Each Social-Emotional Indicator in Cycle I and Cycle II

No	Social-Emotional Competence Indicator	Cycle I	Cycle II	Increase
1	Willing to share play tools and materials	2.00 (MB)	3.50 (BSB)	+1.50
2	Cooperating to complete activities/games	1.50 (BB)	3.50 (BSB)	+2.00
3	Willing to take and wait for turns	1.50 (BB)	3.00 (BSH)	+1.50
4	Complying with agreed game rules	1.50 (BB)	3.50 (BSB)	+2.00

5	Able to control emotions during play	1.50 (BB)	3.00 (BSH)	+1.50
6	Showing empathy / helping friends	1.00 (BB)	3.00 (BSH)	+2.00
7	Daring to express opinions & communicate	2.50 (MB)	4.00 (BSB)	+1.50
8	Resolving disputes/conflict constructively	1.00 (BB)	3.00 (BSH)	+2.00
	Classical Mean	1.56 (BB)	3.31 (BSH)	+1.75

Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026. Note: BB = Not Yet Developing; MB = Beginning to Develop; BSH = Developing as Expected; BSB = Developing Very Well.

Table 1 shows that all indicators improved from Cycle I to Cycle II, with increases ranging from 1.50 to 2.00 points. The largest increases occurred in cooperation (indicator 2), rule compliance (indicator 4), empathy (indicator 6), and conflict resolution (indicator 8), each rising by 2.00 points. Notably, by the end of Cycle II every one of the eight indicators reached at least the Developing-as-Expected category (score ≥ 3.00), which is the attainment expected of children aged 5–6 years under the STPPA. The emotion-control and conflict-resolution indicators, which lagged behind earlier, also reached this milestone after the reinforcement provided in Cycle II.

Table 2. Distribution of Developmental Categories and Classical Mastery Percentage Between Cycles

Cycle	BB	MB	BSH	BSB	Mean Score	Mastery (BSH+BSB)
Cycle I	8 (50%)	7 (43.8%)	1 (6.2%)	0 (0%)	1.56	6.25%
Cycle II	0 (0%)	2 (12.5%)	7 (43.8%)	7 (43.8%)	3.31	87.5%

Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026. Number of assessments per cycle = 16 (8 indicators $\times$ 2 sessions).

Table 2 confirms a significant shift in category distribution. In Cycle I, half of the assessments were still in the Not Yet

Developing category and none reached the Developing-Very-Well category. In Cycle II, the Not Yet Developing category disappeared entirely (0%), and the majority of assessments were in the Developing-as-Expected (43.8%) and Developing-Very-Well (43.8%) categories. This shift is marked by an increase in classical mastery from 6.25% to 87.5%, an increase of 81.25 percentage points. To provide a visual picture of the between-cycle comparison of each indicator, the data are presented as a bar chart in Figure 1.

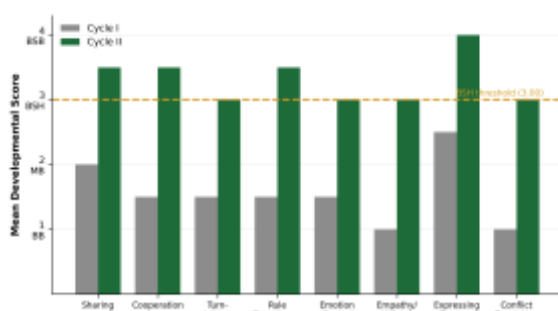


Figure 1. Comparison of the Mean Achievement of Each Social-Emotional Indicator Between Cycle I and Cycle II
Source: Researcher's observation data, 2026. The dashed line marks the Developing-as-Expected threshold (score 3.00).

Figure 1 shows that in Cycle I not a single indicator reached the Developing-as-Expected threshold (score 3.00); two indicators—empathy and conflict resolution—were even at the lowest point (score 1.00). In Cycle II, all eight indicators reached or exceeded that threshold, with the courage-to-express-opinions indicator reaching the maximum score of 4.00. This pattern shows that the improved action in Cycle II worked evenly across all aspects of children's social-emotional competence, bringing every skill up to the age-appropriate milestone.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that group play activities are effective in developing the social-emotional competence of Group B children. The increase in the mean score from 1.56 to 3.31 and the surge

in classical mastery from 6.25% to 87.5% show that children initially dominated by not-yet-developed behaviour successfully moved toward behaviour that develops as expected and develops very well. This result aligns with Vygotsky's view that play creates a zone of proximal development, where children practise higher social skills through interaction with peers [9], and reinforces the findings of Ananda and Fadhilaturrahmi that collaborative games can improve children's social-emotional competence [14].

The difference in achievement between Cycle I and Cycle II offers an important lesson about action design. In Cycle I, activities were still introductory profession-themed role play, so children's interaction did not yet truly demand cooperation and problem solving. As a result, improvement appeared only in the courage to communicate, while empathy and conflict resolution—higher-order social-emotional skills—had not yet grown. This is consistent with Parten's gradation of play, in which genuine cooperative play demands a structure of common goals and binding rules [10]. In Cycle II, when children faced the station-and-railway building game and the firefighting simulation that demanded coordination and task division, cooperation and empathy skills rose sharply. This finding strengthens Wulandari and Suparno's results on the contribution of problem-based learning to cooperative character [20] and Gillies's review of the effectiveness of cooperative learning in fostering social skills [11].

The addition of visual behaviour-poster media and a group behaviour agreement in Cycle II appears to have been an important reinforcing factor. The behaviour posters served as concrete visual reminders for children of the expected behaviour, such as sharing, taking turns, and helping friends, so that habituation did not depend solely on the teacher's verbal instructions. This emotion-based approach and structured learning environment align with Hyson's idea of an emotion-centred curriculum [7]. The full

two-point increase in the empathy indicator also aligns with the finding of Fauzi, Purwati, and Gandana that role play can instil empathy in young children [21], as well as Harianja and colleagues' research reporting a significant rise in social-emotional development through role play [16].

When the eight indicators are examined according to the three competence domains formulated in the introduction, the pattern of improvement becomes easier to interpret. The prosocial competence domain, which includes the willingness to share (indicator 1), cooperation (indicator 2), and empathy or helping friends (indicator 6), showed the most prominent improvement, with an average increase approaching 1.83 points. Cooperation and empathy even rose by a full two points, from the lowest category to Developing as Expected. This shows that the Cycle II group play design, which required children to unite ideas to build a construction together and help one another in the firefighting simulation, truly touched the core of prosocial skills. This finding strengthens Gillies's view that interdependent task structures encourage mutual-helping behaviour among group members [11] and aligns with Fauziddin's results on improving cooperation through group work [15].

The self-regulation competence domain, which includes rule compliance (indicator 4), willingness to take turns (indicator 3), and emotion control (indicator 5), showed a more varied pattern. Rule compliance rose sharply by two points, strongly influenced by the presence of visual behaviour posters and the group behaviour agreement that made game rules more concrete and memorable for children. Willingness to take turns also improved adequately, reaching the Developing-as-Expected category. Emotion control, which had previously lagged, rose by 1.50 points and reached the Developing-as-Expected category in Cycle II after the targeted scaffolding and habituation, although it sat at the threshold of the milestone rather than above it. This

difference in pace indicates that externally structurable behaviour, supported by rules and visual reminders, forms more quickly than internal regulation skills that demand emotional maturity. This observation is consistent with Denham's explanation that emotion regulation develops gradually as children's social experience accumulates [4].

The relational-communicative competence domain, which includes the courage to express opinions (indicator 7) and conflict resolution (indicator 8), showed two contrasting faces in Cycle I but converged by the end of the study. The courage to express opinions developed earlier from Cycle I and reached the maximum score of 4.00 in Cycle II, making it the indicator with the highest achievement. Conflict resolution, by contrast, was the slowest-developing indicator at the start; however, with the modelling of conflict resolution and the collective problem-solving demands of the Cycle II games, it rose by a full two points and reached the Developing-as-Expected category by the end of the study. This shows that, although social-emotional skills do not develop simultaneously—following an order from the expressive toward the regulative, as implied in Parten's gradation of social play [10]—a well-designed tiered intervention can still bring even the slower regulative skills up to the age-appropriate milestone.

Overall, this study makes the practical contribution that the development of early childhood social-emotional competence should be designed in tiers: beginning with the introduction of group play with simple rules, then advancing to games that demand cooperation and problem solving, and reinforced with media and behaviour agreements. This approach addresses the limitation of prior studies that generally relied on a single type of play [13], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], and confirms that the richness of variation and the structuring of game difficulty also determine the success of children's social-emotional stimulation.

Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the understanding that the development of early childhood social-emotional competence cannot be seen merely as a single process, but as a layered development involving the prosocial, self-regulation, and relational domains with different rhythms. The practical implications for kindergarten teachers include at least four points. First, group play activities should be arranged in tiers from simple toward those demanding cooperation and problem solving, so that children gain an adequate ladder of experience. Second, behaviour-habitation media such as visual posters and a group behaviour contract need to be presented to make social rules more concrete and memorable for children. Third, teachers need to give special attention and dedicated strategies to regulative skills such as emotion control and conflict resolution, which were shown to develop most slowly even though they ultimately reached the milestone. Fourth, play themes close to children's lives, such as profession roles and real-situation simulations, were shown to foster meaningful engagement and social interaction, and are therefore worth using as references in designing social-emotional learning activities.

Research Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be stated honestly. First, assessment was carried out at the classical level (the group's dominant attainment per indicator) and not an individual assessment of each child, so the variation in attainment between individuals was not recorded in detail. Second, the study was conducted on one group at one institution with a limited number of subjects (22 children), so the generalization of findings must be done cautiously. Third, the instrument used focused on observable behaviour and was not yet complemented by triangulation with parent interviews or other assessments. Further research is advised to use per-child assessment, more diverse subjects, and data

triangulation to strengthen the validity of the findings.

In addition, the study's time span, limited to two cycles over about one and a half months, did not allow observation of the long-term retention of children's social-emotional behaviour. Although emotion control and conflict resolution reached the expected milestone by the end of Cycle II, they did so at the threshold of the Developing-as-Expected category; ideally they should be followed up through additional cycles or a continued habituation programme to confirm whether these regulative skills are truly internalized. Subsequent research could also develop instruments that are more sensitive to individual behavioural change, for example by combining structured observation sheets, anecdotal records, and photo or video documentation, so that each child's developmental process can be traced more fully. In this way, the contribution of group play activities to early childhood social-emotional development can be tested more rigorously and transferred to broader institutional contexts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that group play activities are effective in developing the social-emotional competence of Group B children at TK Melati, Mestong District, Muaro Jambi Regency. The application of tiered group play—from the introduction of simple role play with basic rules in Cycle I to games demanding cooperation and problem solving reinforced with visual behaviour-poster media in Cycle II—was able to improve children's social-emotional competence consistently. The classical mean score rose from 1.56 (Not Yet Developing) in Cycle I to 3.31 (Developing as Expected) in Cycle II, and classical mastery of the Developing-as-Expected and Developing-Very-Well categories rose from 6.25% to 87.5%, so that the success criteria were met at the end of Cycle II. By the end of the study, all eight indicators had reached at

least the Developing-as-Expected category, consistent with the developmental milestones expected of children aged 5–6 years. The largest improvements occurred in cooperation, rule compliance, empathy, and conflict resolution, while emotion control and conflict resolution, having reached the milestone at its threshold, warrant continued reinforcement. It is recommended that kindergarten teachers make use of varied, tiered, and contextual group play activities, reinforced with behaviour-habituating media, in order to optimally stimulate the social-emotional development of young children.

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