



Enhancing Early Childhood Social-Emotional Development Through Cooperative Flag Relay Play Activities

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ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji peran permainan estafet bendera dalam mendukung perkembangan sosial-emosional anak usia dini di TK Miftahul Jannah. Kemampuan sosial-emosional penting untuk membantu anak berinteraksi, bekerja sama, mengelola emosi, dan beradaptasi dengan lingkungan sosial. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan desain studi kasus. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara guru, dan dokumentasi pada anak usia 5–6 tahun. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permainan estafet bendera mampu meningkatkan kemampuan kerja sama, komunikasi, kepatuhan terhadap aturan, kesabaran menunggu giliran, serta hubungan positif antar teman sebaya. Anak juga terlihat lebih percaya diri, antusias, bertanggung jawab, dan mampu mengendalikan emosi selama kegiatan berlangsung. Guru menyatakan bahwa permainan kelompok menciptakan suasana belajar yang aktif dan menyenangkan. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa permainan estafet bendera merupakan strategi pembelajaran berbasis bermain yang efektif untuk mendukung perkembangan sosial-emosional anak usia dini secara bermakna, interaktif, dan menyenangkan di lingkungan pembelajaran taman kanak-kanak. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis bermain dapat menjadi strategi yang efektif dalam mengembangkan keterampilan sosial-emosional anak usia dini.

Kata Kunci : Anak Usia Dini; Perkembangan Sosial-Emosional; Permainan Estafet Bendera

ABSTRACT. This study aims to examine the role of the flag relay game in supporting the social-emotional development of early childhood at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten. Social-emotional skills are essential in helping children interact, cooperate, manage emotions, and adapt to their social environment. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and documentation involving children aged 5–6 years. The findings revealed that the flag relay game improved children's abilities in cooperation, communication, rule-following, turn-taking, and building positive peer relationships. The children also demonstrated increased self-confidence, enthusiasm, responsibility, and emotional regulation during learning activities. Teachers stated that group play activities created a more active and enjoyable learning atmosphere. The study concludes that the flag relay game is an effective play-based learning strategy for fostering the social-emotional development of early childhood in a meaningful, interactive, and enjoyable kindergarten learning environment. The results of this study indicate that play-based learning can be an effective strategy in developing the social-emotional skills of early childhood.

Keyword : Early Childhood; Social-Emotional Development; Flag Relay Game

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Received 20 Mei 2026, Accepted 30 Juni 2026, Published 30 Juni 2026

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is an individual who is in a period of growth and development which is unique and only occurs once in a lifetime, namely in the age range of 0-6 years which is known as the golden age [1], [2]. Children are in a sensitive phase, where they absorb information very quickly through their five senses because their physical and psychological functions are maturing and they are ready to respond to environmental stimulation [3], [4]. Providing appropriate educational stimulation has a significant impact on optimizing children's growth and development.

Early childhood development is a process of physical and psychological change towards maturity which is characterized by increasing abilities in more complex body structures and functions [1], [5]. One important aspect that needs to be developed is social emotional, namely the child's ability to interact, understand feelings, and adapt to their social environment [6], [7]. Children's social and emotional development is an integrated skill that encompasses interactions with peers, adults, and the wider community, as well as the ability to respond to the environment and behave according to social norms, as reflected through empathy, communication, cooperation, and the skills to recognize and manage emotions and adapt behavior to the demands of the situation. Early childhood is an ideal time to develop social and emotional skills so that children can become adaptive individuals in the future[8].

Children's social and emotional development can be done through play activities, especially cooperative games that involve interaction between children in achieving common goals [9]. Playing together provides opportunities for children to learn to work together, share roles, and interact socially. Cooperative play is a play activity characterized by cooperation in achieving a specific goal[10]. One form of cooperative play that can be used is the flag relay, which involves taking turns running in groups to reach the finish line together [11], [12]. Through this game, children can develop cooperation, communication, and emotional control skills.

Based on observations at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten, Pantan Bili Village, South Aceh Regency, in Group B, 15 children aged 5–6 years old, it was found that some children still experience obstacles in social and emotional development. A total of 10 children were unable to join groups, were less interested in playing with peers, tended to prefer playing alone, and some even left the class during activities. The children also showed less stable emotions, such as being easily angered and offended. This condition does not align with the developmental achievement standards for children aged 5–6 years, which emphasize the ability to play with peers, understand others' feelings, and express emotions appropriately [13]. Consistent with previous research, the application of cooperative learning methods makes a positive contribution to the social-emotional development of young children, as reflected in increased self-awareness, responsibility, and social interaction skills[14]. Play activities have a significant influence on improving the social-emotional skills of young children, as reflected in enhanced interaction, empathy, communication, and emotional regulation abilities[15]. Play-based learning has a positive influence on the social-emotional development of early childhood, which is characterized by an increase in children's ability to manage emotions, build social

relationships, cooperate, empathize, and solve problems through play interactions in the learning environment[16]. The applied learning strategies effectively increased teacher activity, child activity, and the social-emotional development of early childhood significantly[17]. Based on the problems and support from previous research, this study aims to analyze in depth the process of social-emotional development of early childhood through flag relay play activities at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study to in-depth examine the social-emotional development of early childhood through flag relay activities at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten. The qualitative approach was used because the research aims to understand the phenomenon naturally based on the behavior and experiences of the research subjects in a real-life context [18], [19]. Data collection techniques were conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to observe children's activities during the flag relay game, particularly in aspects of social interaction, cooperation, and emotional expression. Interviews were conducted with teachers to obtain more in-depth information regarding the learning process and children's social-emotional development, while documentation in the form of photographs, notes, and archives were used as supporting data for the research.

Data analysis using the Miles and Huberman interactive model includes data collection, data reduction, data verification, and conclusion drawing[20]. Data collection is conducted through observation, interviews, and documentation to obtain data relevant to the research objectives. The collected data are subsequently reduced by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives. The data are then presented in a narrative form to facilitate the identification and interpretation of emerging patterns and meanings. The final stage involves continuous data verification, followed by conclusion drawing to ensure the validity of the research findings[20]. In this study, the researcher acted as the primary instrument (human instrument) directly involved in the data collection and analysis process. Supporting instruments used included observation sheets, interview guidelines, and documentation [21]. The research subjects consisted of children in Group B at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten and the class teacher as the primary informant. This research was conducted at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten as the research location.

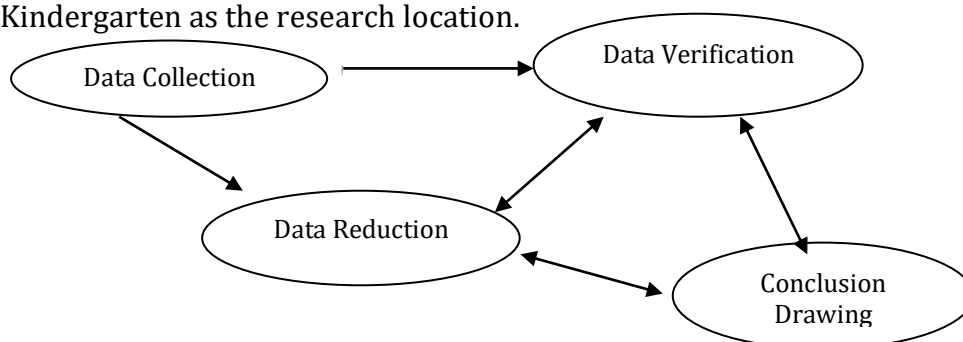


Figure 1. Qualitative Data Analysis Technique

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research analysis shows that the flag relay game plays a significant role in supporting the social and emotional development of early childhood at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten. The game, played in groups, provides children with the opportunity to learn to interact, cooperate, and understand social rules through direct play experiences. This activity not only provides enjoyment for children but also serves as an effective social learning tool, fostering social skills and emotional management.



Figure 2. Results of the Analysis of the Flag Relay Game at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten

In terms of group participation, children demonstrate good development in adapting to their social environment. They are seen to be able to follow the teacher's instructions to form groups and are willing to participate with their peers. This indicates that children are beginning to develop self-confidence and a sense of security when in a group environment. Group participation is an important indicator of early childhood social development because through these activities, children learn to recognize the presence of others, understand togetherness, and reduce egocentric attitudes. During the flag relay activity, children are also seen to be beginning to position themselves within their group and participate in activities together, creating a conducive and enjoyable play environment.

In terms of peer play skills, the flag relay activity provides children with hands-on experience in actively participating in group play. Children not only play individually, but also learn to follow game rules, wait their turn, and respect other players throughout the game. The enthusiasm and enthusiasm displayed demonstrate that children feel comfortable and enjoy social activities with their peers. Through collaborative play, children begin to understand that everyone has equal opportunities in the game, fostering mutual respect and tolerance. Furthermore, group play helps children develop self-control skills, ensuring the game runs smoothly and according to established rules.

In terms of peer interaction skills, children's social and emotional development is evident through the emergence of more active communication and social relationships during play activities. Children are seen talking to each other, responding, calling out friends' names, and even providing support to their group members. These interactions demonstrate that the flag relay game can create a social situation that encourages

children to communicate naturally. This interaction skill is important for early childhood because it forms the foundation for building positive social relationships in the school environment and in everyday life. Through communication established during play, children learn to understand their friends' feelings, develop empathy, and build good cooperation within the group. Children also begin to show positive emotional expressions such as joy, pride, and enthusiasm when their group successfully completes the game.

In terms of responsibility and cooperation skills, the flag relay activity provides quite good stimulation for the development of children's social attitudes. Children appear to begin to understand responsibility for tasks given in the game, such as obeying the rules, carrying out their respective roles, and completing the game to the end. A cooperative attitude is evident when children help each other and provide support to group members so that the game's goals can be achieved together. This activity helps children understand that group success is not determined solely by one individual, but requires the cohesiveness and participation of all group members. Furthermore, the ability to wait their turn and follow the teacher's instructions also shows that children are beginning to learn discipline and control their behavior during the activity.

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that the flag relay game is an effective form of group play for developing the social and emotional skills of early childhood. This game provides children with real-life experiences in learning to interact, communicate, cooperate, and understand social rules through a fun play environment. Therefore, the flag relay game can be used as a learning strategy that can optimally support children's social and emotional development in early childhood education environments.

Based on the analysis of learning activities, the flag relay game demonstrated a positive influence on the social and emotional development of early childhood. Through group play, children have the opportunity to learn to cooperate, interact, and follow game rules with their peers. This activity also helps children develop self-confidence, communication skills, and a sense of responsibility during play. Furthermore, the enjoyable learning environment encourages children to be more active and enthusiastic in participating in classroom activities.

The analysis results were reinforced through interviews with teachers, who explained that the flag relay activity increased children's social engagement during the learning process. Interviews with teachers revealed that the children were highly enthusiastic throughout the learning process. The teacher explains that: *"The children were very enthusiastic when participating in learning activities, especially when playing the flag relay with their friends."* The interviews demonstrated that group play activities created a fun learning environment for children. The children actively participated and enjoyed each activity during the lesson.

The teacher also said that: *"Children are happier when learning is done in groups because they can play and work together with friends."* This statement demonstrates that group learning provides opportunities for children to interact and collaborate with their peers. Children appear more confident and active when activities are carried out

together. In addition, the teacher explained that: *"The children have started to listen to the teacher's directions well during the activities."* The interview results showed improvements in the children's ability to follow instructions and understand activity rules. The children appeared more focused when following the teacher's directions during the learning process.

The teacher also said that: *"Children's social and emotional development increased after playing flag relay and group learning activities."* The interviews showed that collaborative play activities have a positive impact on children's social and emotional development. Children learn to wait their turn, cooperate, and interact with their peers during the activities. In addition to discussing child development, the teacher also conveyed several key elements that should be maintained in learning. The teacher explained that: *"Teachers must remain enthusiastic when teaching so that children are also enthusiastic about learning."* This statement demonstrates that teacher enthusiasm has a significant impact on children's learning environment. An active and enthusiastic teacher can increase children's motivation to learn during the activity.

The teacher also added that: *"Learning must be tailored to children's interests, and collaborative play activities need to be continually enhanced."* The interviews revealed that interest-centered learning can make children more comfortable and engaged during learning. Collaborative play activities are also considered important because they can help improve children's social skills and cooperation with their peers. Based on research results and interviews with teachers, it can be concluded that learning activities conducted through games and group work have a positive impact on children's enthusiasm and social-emotional development. Teachers also believe that the use of varied learning media, motivation, and learning tailored to children's interests need to be maintained to make the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful for young children.

The research results show that the flag relay game supports the social and emotional development of early childhood, particularly in the ability to cooperate, interact, follow rules, and take responsibility within a group. Children appeared more active in communicating, helping each other, and showing enthusiasm during the activity. These findings are consistent with previous research indicating that cooperative play can support the social-emotional development of young children through social communication, cooperation, and interaction among group members[22]. Direct interaction with peers enables children to develop social habits and positive behaviors. Previous research demonstrates that cooperative learning methods contribute to children's social-emotional development through group activities that promote interaction, responsibility, and positive social behavior[14]. Traditional group games also incorporate values of cooperation, communication, responsibility, and prosocial behavior, including patiently waiting for one's turn and respecting others[7]. The flag relay game in this study demonstrates that group play is an effective medium for developing early childhood social-emotional skills through direct play experiences.

The flag relay game also has a positive impact on children's ability to control their emotions, follow rules, and build better social relationships with their peers. Children

begin to wait their turn, obey teacher instructions, and demonstrate self-confidence when playing with their group. These findings are supported by research demonstrating that structured play interventions are effective in improving emotional regulation, cooperation, and social skills in early childhood through systematically designed play activities[23]. Role-playing methods have also been shown to enhance children's social-emotional abilities by facilitating their understanding of social rules, emotional management, and interaction with their surrounding environment[15]. Learning activities integrated with creative play, rewards and consequences, and group-based activities can further strengthen children's discipline and social-emotional skills, particularly in their ability to follow established game rules[17]. These findings reinforce the research findings that the flag relay game is not only enjoyable for children but also an effective way to cultivate self-control, discipline, and positive social interactions.

The results of this study indicate that play-based learning has a strong relationship with the development of social skills in early childhood. Children have the opportunity to learn empathy, sharing, cooperation, and building social relationships through play experiences with their peers. These results are consistent with previous research indicating that play-based learning has a significant relationship with the development of cooperation, empathy, and sharing skills among kindergarten children[24]. Social-emotional learning programs based on play effectively support children in developing communication skills, emotional regulation, social relationships, and positive behaviors from the preschool stage[25]. Research on social intervention programs based on cooperative play further confirms that structured group play activities can enhance children's sense of responsibility, social interaction, and ability to cooperate with others[26]. Social relationships and interactions established through play activities constitute an important component of the social, emotional, and cognitive learning processes in early childhood[27]. The results of this study imply that the flag relay game is an effective form of play-based learning in developing early childhood social and emotional skills, particularly in the aspects of cooperation, social interaction, discipline, empathy, responsibility, and the ability to control emotions through fun and meaningful group play experiences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the flag relay game is effective in supporting the social and emotional development of early childhood at Miftahul Jannah Kindergarten. Through group play activities, children have the opportunity to learn to work together, interact, follow rules, be responsible, and control their emotions during the activity. Children also show positive developments in their ability to join groups, play with peers, communicate, and build better social relationships. In addition, the fun learning atmosphere makes children more active, confident, and enthusiastic in participating in classroom activities. The results of interviews with teachers also confirmed that the flag relay game is able to increase

children's social engagement and help their social and emotional development more optimally. The results of this study indicate that play-based learning can be an effective strategy in developing the social-emotional skills of early childhood. The flag relay game not only provides fun for children but also helps them understand the values of cooperation, discipline, empathy, tolerance, and responsibility through playing experiences with peers. Teachers are advised to continue implementing varied group play activities that are tailored to children's interests to make the learning process more active and meaningful. Future research is expected to expand the study of other types of educational games with a broader scope of subjects to provide more in-depth research results regarding the social-emotional development of early childhood.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author expresses sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for the completion of this article. The author also extends heartfelt appreciation to all parties who provided support, guidance, and valuable contributions throughout the process of writing this article.

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