



## Application of the Project Method in Efforts to Improve Early Childhood Social Development

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this research is to improve social development at an early age through the application of the project method in Kindergarten.

**Methodology:** The methodology used was classroom action research with three cycles, involving 15 group B kindergarten children as research subjects. The research procedure follows the Suharsimi Arikunto model which consists of planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting. The data collected was analyzed using quantitative data analysis techniques and expressed as a percentage.

**Main Findings:** The main finding of this study is that the application of the project method can improve children's social development. Through project activities, children can be involved in socialization and collaboration activities with peers. The project method helps develop social skills and cooperative skills in children. A curriculum that pays attention to activities and experiences that involve cooperation, effort coordination, and conflict resolution among children can provide satisfactory results for their social development.

**Novelty/Originality of this study:** This research contributes to new knowledge about the use of project methods in enhancing early childhood social development. In the context of early childhood education, the project method can be an effective approach to facilitating a child's social development. This research also shows the importance of a learning environment that supports children's social development and the role of educators in monitoring and providing guidance that is beneficial to their environment.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Children, especially early childhood, are the most optimal period for development [1]. Child development in the first years is very important and will determine the next child's development [2]. Early childhood are children who have great curiosity and enjoy adventure by exploring the environment around them. Such characteristics need to be understood by educators so that they can provide an appropriate learning environment to develop the potential of children.

Kindergarten is a coaching effort aimed at children from birth to the age of 6 (six) years which is carried out through the provision of educational stimuli to help physical and spiritual growth and development so that children have readiness to enter further education [3]. Children who have entered the world of education,

especially Kindergarten, will interact with the environment in which they are, interact with their peers and with adults. As explained by Sofyan that children aged 4 to 8 years are a phase of personal relations with the social environment [4]. In this social environment, children acquire the ability to behave, are able to socialize, and can adapt to peer groups and they can learn to work together in play activities.

In early childhood education, children learn while socializing. Children learn a lot of knowledge and skills through interaction with their environment. Language skills, social-emotional abilities, and other abilities develop rapidly when children are given the opportunity to socialize with friends, objects, toys, and people around them. We as adults need to monitor and provide useful guidance for the surrounding environment.

Through social interaction, children will gain experience so that they can build their knowledge. This is in accordance with the opinion Susanto that children build their knowledge through social interaction and learning with adults [5]. Social development needs to be developed for children from an early age so that later children can have good social behavior. According to Kusnadi et.al, explained further that socialization is a process in which individuals (especially children) train their sensitivity to social stimuli, especially the pressures and demands of life (their group), learn to get along and behave like other people, and behave in their sociocultural environment [6].

Social development is the process of forming one's personality and the process of forming the ability to behave in accordance with the values and norms in society. As stated by Musyarofah, that social development is a process of learning to adapt to group norms, morals and traditions, to merge into one unit and to communicate and cooperate with each other [7]. There are several Developmental Achievement Levels (TPP) related to children's social development. The level of achievement of these developments includes showing one's ability to adapt to situations, knowing one's own feelings and managing them fairly, obeying class rules, being responsible for one's behavior for the good of oneself and others and behaving prosocially.

Based on the results of observations made in group B at Kindergarten, there were 15 children whose social development had to be improved. This can be seen when observing children who have not been able to show their abilities. When the teacher gives a game that must be completed together, the child cannot adjust the situation with other friends. The researchers also observed that there were children who preferred to play alone compared to playing with their peers, regardless of what other friends were experiencing. In addition, the researchers also observed that when playing, children could not obey the rules, children still wanted to master toys in class and could not share toys with other friends, as a result, there was often fighting over toys. Children are still difficult to cooperate. This can be seen when the teacher instructs children to build a building from blocks together or in groups, children still experience difficulties in carrying out group activities that require the participation of all children and children's egocentric attitude is still high.

To improve the social development of children in Kindergarten, teachers can use various learning methods. According to Mursid, learning methods in Kindergarten include playing methods, field trips, conversations, demonstrations, projects, storytelling, and assignments [8]. Among these methods are methods that provide opportunities for children to be able to carry out group assignments, children can work together with friends, children want to play with friends, and children can obey rules including using the project method. According to Moeslichatoen revealed that "the project method is one way of providing learning experiences by confronting children with everyday problems that must be solved in groups" [9]. According to Aslina et.al, comparing the effects of developmentally appropriate teaching practices with developmentally inappropriate practices in the development of social competence of kindergarten students, showed that developmentally appropriate practices provide a true context for children to develop skills used in collaborating and coordinating their efforts, an important element is project work [10].

Based on this opinion, it can be interpreted that this project method is one way to solve problems related to children's social development. The advantages of this project method include children being involved in a joint activity that spurs children with social problems and children can interact with their friends so that the child's social development can increase. It is assumed that the application of this project method can accustom children to interacting with each other, as well as accustom children to choosing, designing and leading work in achieving common goals. As explained by Masitoh and Djoehaeni, one of the abilities that can be developed through the use of the project method is the ability to socialize and work together [11].

From the description above, the researcher is very interested in conducting research at Kindergarten, in an effort to improve the social development of early childhood through the project method. The purpose of this research is to improve social development at an early age through the application of the project method in Kindergarten.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research is class action research (Classroom Action Research). Because this research was carried out in accordance with the steps in action research which included preparing plans, carrying out actions, observing and reflecting on the results of observations from the results of analysis and reflection at

the end of each activity corrective actions were carried out in the next cycle based on the results of the analysis and reflections made earlier. The research subjects were the children of Kindergarten, group B in the first semester with 15 students. 7 boys and 8 girls.

The research procedure used in this classroom action research follows the Suharsimi Arikunto model which consists of four components: planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting [12]. This research was conducted through three cycles, and each cycle consisted of three meetings with planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting activities.

In the planning stage, the teacher takes steps which include determining learning themes, planning weekly and daily activities, preparing tools or media to be used, allocating time, and preparing observation sheets or assessment instruments. Furthermore, in the implementation stage of the action, the teacher implements the plans that have been made. Learning activities are carried out using the Lotto Color educative tool, and the learning process is observed by observers who are assisted by two collaborators.

The observation stage is carried out to observe the course of the implementation of the action. Observations are made in class simultaneously with the implementation of the action. The data collected at this stage is in the form of quantitative data obtained through observation and properly interpreted. The reflection stage is the contemplation stage of the activities that have been carried out by the teacher and students. At this stage, the data that has been collected during the observation is analyzed to evaluate the weaknesses and strengths of the activity process. The results of this analysis are used as material for reflection to determine whether it is necessary to carry out the next cycle or further research.

Data analysis techniques used in research as a way to collect and analyze data. In this study, the data obtained during the learning process were analyzed using quantitative data analysis techniques to determine the increase in children's social development. Quantitative data in this study are expressed in the form of numbers, which are then processed into percentages (%) [13].

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study discuss improving children's social development through the project method at Kindergarten. The project method is one method that can develop children's social development, because this activity involves children's socialization and cooperation. One of the abilities that can be developed through the use of project methods in kindergarten learning is social skills and the ability to work together. Curricula for young children are best when they provide frequent activities and experiences in which cooperation, coordination of effort, and resolution of conflicts among children is functional, impactful, and fulfilling for them.

The project approach provides frequent and real contexts in which children are assisted in developing a wide range of social knowledge, social skills, social dispositions and feelings in interpersonal relationships. One feature of this approach is that in working on projects on the same topic in one class, children usually work in subgroups investigating subtopics that will contribute to a wide range of research results. And the success of this research has shown the suitability of the theory and the results of research that prove that the project method can improve children's social development. The following table summarizes presentations for Cycle I, Cycle II, Cycle III.

Table 1. Summary of Presentations for Cycle I, Cycle II, and Cycle III

Cycle	Percentage (%)	Criteria
Pre-action	25.60	Starting to Develop
<b>Cycle I</b>		
1st meeting	30.64	Starting to Develop
2nd meeting	34.44	Starting to Develop
3rd meeting	40.76	Starting to Develop
<b>Cycle II</b>		
1st meeting	48.52	Starting to Develop
2nd meeting	56.66	Developing According to Expectations
3rd meeting	62.50	Developing According to Expectations
<b>Cycle III</b>		
1st meeting	72.66	Developing Very Well
2nd meeting	79.24	Developing Very Well
3rd meeting	91.22	Developing Very Well

This can be seen in the increased development of children from the pre-action cycle I, cycle II and cycle III. The following is the percentage of increased social development of children: at the pre-action meeting 25.60% The first cycle was held 3 times with the results of the first meeting percentage 30.64% the second meeting 34.44%, and the third meeting 40.76%, the second cycle the first meeting 47.91%, the second meeting

56.66 % and the third meeting 62.5%, the third cycle of the first meeting 72.66%, the second meeting 79.24%, and the third meeting 91.22%.

Because it is in accordance with the wishes of the researcher, it is no longer necessary to take corrective action steps for the implementation of the next cycle. This study can be concluded that the social development of children in the pre-action percentage results was 25.60% with the criteria starting to develop, in the first cycle the percentage increased to 35.29% with the criteria starting to develop, then the percentage results in cycle II increased again to 55.69% with the criteria developing as expected, and the results of the percentage of cycle III increased to 81.04% with very good development criteria in accordance with the expected indicators so that no improvement was needed.

This research has been carried out as closely as possible by researchers so that the results obtained are as expected. However, in its implementation there are still shortcomings caused by several limitations, one of which is the narrow classroom space making it difficult for children to move and resulting in the class not being conducive. This greatly affects children's concentration in carrying out project activities.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of classroom action research which has been carried out in three cycles, it can be concluded that the social development of early childhood children before being given action through the project method, namely achieving the criteria, has not yet developed (25.60%). The average percentage result in cycle I over three meetings was (35.29%), this achievement was included in the criteria for starting to develop. The average percentage result in cycle II during three meetings was (55.69%) this achievement was included in developing as expected. and the average percentage result in cycle III over three meetings was (81.04%) this achievement was included in the criteria for very good development. Thus the results show that the project method can improve the social development of early childhood. Teachers should design creative and innovative learning processes so that children become interested and their learning will be more conducive and meaningful.

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