

Playing Plasticine to Develop Social Emotional of 5-6 Years Old Children

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ABSTRACT

Both aspects of social and emotional development the relationship to one another. It is impossible to ignore the social aspect when talking about emotional development, and vice versa. When discussing social development, emotional elements are always involved. These two aspects are important components of psychology. At the Islamic Kindergarten Satria Hasanudin, this study aims to conclude how playing with modeling clay can develop children's social and emotional skills. The study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach through interviews, observations, and documentation. The children from group B at Islamic Kindergarten Satria Hasanudin, totaling 22 students, are the subjects of this research. By engaging in this activity, students can enhance their sense of empathy, cooperation, create an active classroom atmosphere, and foster care which is closely related to social and emotional aspects. The findings from this study can have a positive impact on the development of children's social and emotional skills, which can be utilized as an effective type of play to develop emotional regulation and enhance feelings of social concern. Therefore, this activity is recommended to be integrated into the learning process in early childhood education settings.

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood experiences a sensitive period where they begin to be sensitive to stimuli from the environment. At this stage, children are not yet social and need guidance to reach maturity in social relationships, including adjusting to other people and group norms (Sukatin et al., 2019). Kate Middleton (2025) emphasizes the importance of investing in the development of early childhood social and emotional skills. She states that these skills are vital for future mental and physical well-being, and that society must play an active role in supporting this development. The development of social and emotional intelligence in early childhood does not take place by itself, but requires the role of adults around it, such as teachers and parents. Methods that can be applied to develop this aspect include through games and routine habituation (Rahmi, 2019). The ability to behave socially needs to be educated since children are young. The inhibition of children's social development early on can cause difficulties in self-development later in life. Therefore, cooperation between

parents and teachers is very important in helping children's social development (Rohayati, 2018)

One of the official forms of Early Childhood Education is Kindergarten, which is a type of Early Childhood Education Unit that provides teaching to children aged four to six years (Fuadi, 2021). PAUD aims to support the growth and development of children physically and mentally so that they are ready to continue to the next academic level. Through education for very young children, it is recommended that they have the potential to develop all their potential, including in moral, religious values, social-emotional, physical, language and artistic aspects. Motivated children will tend to show the development of creativity during the learning process in the classroom. Creatively designed learning can attract children's interest and help them understand and develop the material better. Therefore, the role of creative educators is very important in teaching and learning activities (Virmayanti et al., 2023).

Early childhood education (ECE) institutions have a strategic role as a place of learning as well as a vehicle for meaningful play. Play is not just a recreational activity, but the main learning method that supports children's holistic development. Through play, children learn to recognize rules, discipline, responsibility, and develop independence. It also introduces them to the concepts of rules and social structures that are important in everyday life (Nurhusnaina et al., 2024). Play is a powerful method to enhance the talents possessed by children. So that later it will form various important abilities in their future lives. Through play activities, children gain experience in recognizing the surrounding environment. In addition, play also stimulates children to complete various developmental tasks, and becomes a strong basis for developing problem-solving skills in the future (Nurhayati et al., 2021)

Optimizing the full potential of the six aspects of development, educators need to focus on two areas, namely the formation of behavior through habits and increasing basic understanding. The habituation method is an effective approach in instilling character values in early childhood. Through routine, spontaneous, and exemplary activities, children can internalize positive behaviors such as honesty, responsibility, and discipline. Research by (Mulianah et al., 2024) shows that consistent application of the habituation method can improve honest character in children aged 5-6 years. In addition, a study by (Mila et al., 2023) revealed that the implementation of the habituation method at Al-Azka Integrated Islamic Kindergarten in Jambi City succeeded in instilling the character of responsibility in early childhood. Behavior formation can be done with habits that include increasing religious and moral values, as well as social and emotional aspects.

On the other hand, the formation of basic competencies includes growth in language, motor skills, cognitive and art, which are important foundations for children's readiness to enter the next level of education. (Maisarah et al., 2020). The ECD curriculum is designed to support children's growth and development as a whole, covering aspects of religious and moral values, physical-motor, cognitive, language, social-emotional, and art. The General Guidelines for the Implementation of Quality ECD also emphasize the importance of basic understanding for ECD service providers. This understanding includes the learner profile that needs to be achieved by the end of participation in PAUD, which includes various aspects of child development (Kemendikbud, 2022). With play activities can serve as a place for

children to demonstrate their intellectual, physical, social, and emotional abilities. Children are able to engage in diverse experiences through play activities, which involve their own development, social interactions, and connections with the environment (Huda, 2019).

One example of play activities at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten is using plasticine. Plasticine is a medium used in learning and playing activities with children. Most children enjoy the soft texture of wax as it is fun to touch and easy to manipulate or reshape. Through playing with plasticine, children easily produce a variety of shapes and transform them into different sizes, and appearances (Kholbu et al., 2023). In playing with plasticine candles, there are many aspects of child development that can be honed. One of them is the art aspect, where children can channel their imagination to create various shapes according to their wishes. Children also learn to choose and combine colors to make the resulting work more interesting. In addition, they can experiment by combining various colors according to their creativity. The shaping process also helps improve children's social-emotional skills. So that children are encouraged to think more creatively and deeply in order to produce more interesting works (Dini, 2022). Plasticine can also be rolled, cut and molded using plasticine toy molds. In this way, children can use their senses in the surrounding environment, improve cooperation between hands and eyes, understand the existence of objects permanently, and explore ideas about space and time (Lasompo, 2022). The use of plasticine play in early childhood learning not only supports the development of children's creativity, but also plays a role in fostering their social and emotional skills. In this activity, children are encouraged to collaborate, share tools and respect the work of their peers. Plasticine making provides a relaxed and fun learning experience, leading to increased confidence in children's ability to express themselves (Fatimah, et al., 2023).

Playing with plasticine with friends can improve children's social skills and provide opportunities for children to learn to collaborate and share with others (Endang, 2020). Interacting in a plasticine play setting also supports children to develop social and emotional skills. The lack of utilization of plasticine play methods in learning in PAUD can be caused by various factors, such as limited understanding of educators about its benefits, lack of supporting facilities and infrastructure, and the tendency to use more traditional learning methods (Meningkatkan et al., 2024)

The development of social interaction and management of children's emotions includes abilities, competencies, and achievement of learning outcomes related to recognition of the immediate environment, natural environment, community environment, roles in society, and appreciation of social diversity. In addition, this aspect also includes emotional development, personality formation, and the ability to build connections with others (Khairunnisa et al., 2023) . The role of the teacher is an important factor in measuring the emotional and social development of each child (Fitriya et al., 2022). Discussions about social development will always involve emotional elements, because both are an integral part of a complete psychological unity. (Lubis, 2019). The environment in this kindergarten has a positive influence on the children's environment, so that children feel comfortable. An environment that is friendly, pressure-free, and encourages collaboration will increase the benefits of plasticine play therapy in developing social emotional (Khalimatus & Mudlikah, 2025).

Therefore, it is important to foster and develop these two aspects, both socially and emotionally balanced in children. (Syafi'i & Solichah, 2021).

Group B was found to have a positive impact on their fine motor skills through plasticine art activities, as researched by (Watulingas & Wantah, 2021). Meanwhile, according to observations carried out by (Rusanti, 2022) concluded that playing with plasticine media can help children improve their creativity and hone coordination between hands and eyes. Children have the ability to express their ideas through the use of plasticine freely and as they wish. Previous research shows that exploration-based play activities, such as plasticine play, can include children's engagement in the learning stage and encourage them to think more creatively (Maatoke et al., 2025). However, this study emphasizes more on improving social skills and emotional management in children aged 5-6 years. This potential includes independence, concern for others, mutual support, cooperation, interaction, building a sense of cohesiveness in the classroom, managing good feelings, and skills to explain the purpose of the results that have been made. Referring to this, the author is interested in conducting a study on how the use of plasticine can benefit the development of social relationships and management of children's emotions with the title "Playing Plasticine to Develop Social Emotional Children 5-6 Years Old". The aim is to examine and explain the function of plasticine play to develop children's social and emotional development at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten Semarang.

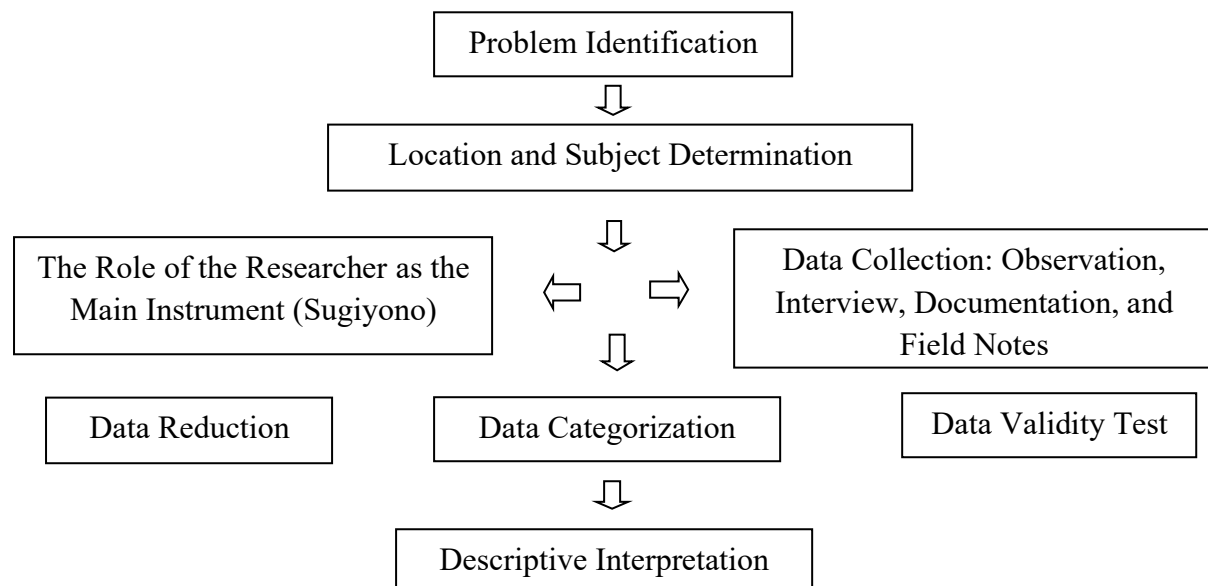
METHODS

In this study, the approach applied is qualitative through the application of the case study method to analyze in depth how plasticine play activities to develop social and emotional in children aged 5-6 years. This research was conducted at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten Semarang in October 2024 and involved 22 students from group B, totaling 15 boys and 7 girls. In qualitative methods, the researcher plays the role of the main instrument, information is obtained through various means (triangulation), analyzed using an inductive approach, and the results focus more on understanding meaning than general conclusions (Sugiyono, 2019).

Information was collected by directly observing the plasticine play activities carried out by the children in the kindergarten, semi-structured interviews with the teachers who facilitated the activities, documentation in the form of photos and videos to analyze movements and activities, and field notes made during the process. The research instruments covered the introduction of plasticine by the teacher, the process of implementing play activities, and the obstacles encountered. Interviews were conducted using guidelines to explore the teacher's experience during the activities.

Data analysis was carried out in several stages, starting from reviewing all data obtained from various sources such as information from interviews, observation notes, and photos. Data was reduced by summarizing the core information, keeping the essence of the process and important statements. The data was then categorized based on similar characteristics. Data validity was tested through various techniques, such as extending researcher involvement, in-depth observation, triangulation, discussion with peers, adequate references, negative case studies, and validation by participants. Interpretation was done descriptively-analytically to answer the problem formulation, by building relationships between categories that emerged from the data.

Chart 1. Qualitative Research Procedures with Case Study Methods



RESULTS

Children will go through stages of learning to build social bonds with their peers and the environment around them. By having social skills that are appropriate for their stage of development and age, children can easily interact and become more acclimatized to the social environment (Rakhmawati, 2022). In this case, Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten uses plasticine play media in groups to improve social and emotional factors in child development. The application of plasticine play activities to strengthen the social and emotional abilities of children aged 5-6 years. This activity was carried out by Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten educators involving group B children (5-6 years old) as many as 22 children. Activities were carried out on October 24 to November 25, 2025 which were carried out in the classroom. This activity is carried out to help children develop social (interacting, cooperating, sharing, respecting) and emotional (expressing feelings, managing emotions, building self-confidence) abilities through fun plasticine play activities and involving group interaction. The implementation of activities includes three stages, namely observation, interviews and documentation. These three stages are implemented by educators during plasticine play activities at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten Semarang.

a. Early Stage Activities

In the early stages, all students line up in front of the class to enter and do the prayer habituation in the hall. After the prayer habituation is complete, the teacher brings the children into the classroom. Once in the classroom, the teacher's first step is to greet the children to create a comfortable atmosphere and welcome them. Then the teacher and students do ice breaking together, to greet them energetically with a smile. The teacher also asks how they are today to build a pleasant atmosphere. With great joy, the teacher then gives directions to the children about the learning while playing activities that will be planned for that day.



Figure 1. Praying Activity

In the first stage, educators previously developed a teaching and learning program that aims to develop children's interest in learning and exploring through the use of more interesting media. In addition, singing activities were used to support children to become calmer and reduce anxiety during plasticine play activities. Singing also contributes to increasing vocabulary, supporting language development, and improving children's communication skills.

b. Activity Implementation Phase

Educators act as encouragers and guides for children in every activity they do, which is one way to provide support so that children can achieve their development. Therefore, the teacher acts as a guide who seeks to provide the means in the learning process so that children can develop, and one of the actions applied is to include plasticine play activities. Next, the educator will prepare the equipment for plasticine play activities such as plasticine, Styrofoam, ice cream sticks, and other plant decorations. After that, the educator will first explain how to use or how to work from the tools and materials that have been prepared. The educator will form three groups, then start giving the tools and materials that have been prepared. Then, the educator and students agree to follow the rules that have been set and provide stimulation through questions and answers related to the plasticine play activity that has been done before.

This is implemented so that children have the understanding to express and expand their thinking. Here, the children start the activity by playing with plasticine using the equipment that has been prepared. When this activity is carried out, the teacher also has the responsibility to supervise how the children work. Based on the results of the research, it was found that in the implementation of the activity, children were asked to make flowers as part of the theme of the flower garden project on that day. In this activity, the understanding of color plays a role as the main factor that needs to be learned by children.

This activity has a uniqueness that is not found in general learning, namely:

1. Integrates social, emotional and cognitive aspects together.

Children not only play for fun, but they also learn to interact, manage emotions, and channel creativity in a series of activities.

2. Flexible and engaging materials and media

The use of plasticine, Styrofoam, ice cream sticks and nature decorations provides multisensory stimulation that can awaken the imagination and trigger social interaction.

3. Application of small group-based learning methods
Encourage children to learn to work together, understand differences of opinion, convey ideas, and share roles in achieving a common goal.
4. Affective approach through singing activities and discussion of work results
This activity strengthens the emotional connection between teachers and students and among students, as well as providing a space for appreciation of children's efforts.



Figure 2. Plasticine Play Activity

The ability to recognize colors not only supports children in identifying and classifying objects, but also plays a role in the growth of their motor skills, cognitive, social interaction and emotional development. In addition, this ability shows children's achievements in social and emotional areas, such as the potential to make choices and have responsibility for the choices made. Mrs. Diyah as the class teacher also said that at the end of the activity, the researcher will observe how each child works, then the children are asked to tell the results of their work. On this occasion, researchers and teachers can walk around to see how each child works. Next, they conduct a discussion session and invite children to explain the creative works they have made. In the final analysis, the teacher will give the students a thumbs up and recognize their hard work.

The phenomenon seen in the implementation of group plasticine play activities in the context of learning at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten Semarang is as follows:

1. Low social engagement at first
Some children seemed awkward and lacked confidence to start interacting with their group mates. There are children who are more silent, waiting for instructions, or just paying attention without actively participating.
2. Dependence on the teacher during activities
At the beginning of the activity, many children still relied on the teacher to complete the task, showing low independence in group work.
3. Changes in social and emotional behavior during activities
As the group plasticine activity progressed, the children began to show proactive attitudes, such as helping friends, taking turns using the tools, and discussing the plasticine shapes they wanted to make.
4. Children's emotional expression increases positively

Children begin to express feelings of joy, pride, and even frustration verbally and non-verbally when their work does not meet expectations, but they also learn to manage these feelings through teacher guidance.

5. Creating a supportive environment

Teachers and peers become sources of emotional support that help children feel safe, secure and motivated to express themselves and interact in healthy ways.

c. End of Activity Stage

In the final stage or evaluation, the educator carried out several things, including: first, giving directions to the children that the activity was over. Second, the educator and students reflect together by singing. Third, the educator sends greetings and gives advice to the children. After the activity ends, the educator also assesses the results of the teaching and learning process. First, the educator tells the children that the activity is over, then we sing together as a closing that ends with greetings and advice, it can also be a prayer. After the end of the activity, the educator will also conduct an evaluation.



Figure 3. Plasticine Play Result

At this stage, learners are able to understand commands and advice well. When singing, they seem enthusiastic and loud. On the other hand, when following advice and prayer activities, they show a more peaceful, orderly attitude, and have good listening skills. This shows that the children have made progress in understanding each situation. In this case, educators and researchers analyzed the achievements of the stages of plasticine play activities achieved by each child. This action is carried out to recognize the achievement of teaching and learning on that day. According to the researcher's direct study, the learners here have managed to improve their social-emotional skills well. The ability to move is based on learners' ideas and creativity, which allows them to build positive relationships through mutual support.

The main findings of this activity show that plasticine play activities in groups have a positive impact on improving the social emotional abilities of children aged 5-6 years. This can be seen from the increase in children's ability to work together, share tools and materials, express feelings, and show empathy for peers during the play process. Children become more active in interacting, more patient in waiting for their turn, and more open in conveying their ideas and feelings. This improvement is also reflected in the results of

observations made before and after the activity, where there were significant differences in the observed social-emotional indicators.

Table 1. The observed social-emotional indicators

No	Social Aspects Emotional	Focus of Field Observation	Specific Findings
1	Self-Awareness	The child recognizes his/her feelings during play and praise.	The child says "I am happy" or "I can" when successfully completing the work.
2	Emotion Management	The child is able to control emotions when tools are not available or the work is damaged	Does not cry or get angry, but tries to solve the problem or asks friends/teachers for help.
3	Social Awareness	The child understands the feelings of friends and shows empathy.	"Let him go first, he hasn't got it yet" is a sign of empathy and social understanding.
4	Relationship Skills	Children work together, take turns, discuss.	Praising each other's work, and making work together.
5	Responsible Decision Making	The child chooses their own color or shape, then explains why.	"I chose yellow because sunflowers are yellow" shows a personal decision that is accountable.

DISCUSSION

Plasticine play activities at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten allow children to interact thoroughly according to their growth process and age, so students will quickly become familiar with the atmosphere around them. By playing, children gain understanding from experience. The ability to behave in social and emotional aspects, develop creativity, physical motor skills, and so on. Learning processes that involve art activities and the development of imagination and innovation in children can improve their social and emotional factors (Gusmaniarti, 2018). The development of social-emotional traits in children is characterized by their ability to control and display emotions, as well as show positive behavior in group interactions (Puspitasari & Rahma, 2023).

Play activities play an important role in helping the development of social and emotional aspects, such as speech, self-confidence, and courage to interact well (Marwiyah & Wahyuni, 2023). In addition, welcoming activities and using greetings carried out by educators aim to practice social and emotional skills such as empathy, expression, and feelings. At this stage, success in children's social-emotional aspects is shown through positive responses, active participation in questions, enthusiasm, and encouragement in starting activities. Every activity must have factors that support and factors that hinder, among others:

a) Factors that Support Plasticine Play

The tools used are very simple, utilizing materials that are friendly to children and easy to clean. In this plasticine play activity, the situation in the classroom is more active when compared to learning activities such as calistung (reading, writing, counting). This is based on the observer's observation that the children showed more enthusiasm when learning through the play approach than the reading, writing and counting approach. Meanwhile, these activities allow children to create positive relationships when communicating with their friends. The role of educators as supporters was also a major factor in the success of these activities. Teachers play a role in providing encouragement, direction, as well as providing and preparing the needs to support the activities. The completeness of materials and tools also contributed to increasing children's enthusiasm for the activity.

These supporting factors influence the achievement of learning goals, especially in social and emotional development. Conversely, a lack of educator involvement in teaching and learning activities can cause children's growth and development to be inhibited or decreased. It is important for educators to act as a companion to provide guidance, attention and also provide support through positive reinforcement or motivation for each student.

b) Factors that Hinder Playground Play

However, the disadvantage of playing with plasticine is the dirt it creates in the room and on learners' hands. Meanwhile, some learners feel uncomfortable doing this activity because plasticine contains oil. By playing with plasticine, children can learn to understand feelings, improve concentration, express themselves, imagine, and explore. This activity also supports children to develop the ability to contribute with friends and control feelings, which has a good effect on social relationships. Children who feel depressed will vent their emotional problems by molding plasticine, so that negative energy can be channeled safely.

In addition, playing with plasticine can increase children's interest in learning, create an active classroom environment, and train concentration. strengthen cooperation in groups, and build good relationships between friends and teachers. It also teaches tolerance and cooperation in solving problems, such as facing difficulties when molding plasticine. This activity actually has many benefits for developing children's social and emotional aspects. It is clear that this activity improves the atmosphere in the classroom, encourages positive interactions and connections among students, fosters a sense of community in the group, and supports mutual understanding among children. Meanwhile, learners also become more focused in learning. They really understand the instructions given, through this activity children are able to grow according to their age phase.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of plasticine play activities to develop social skills and emotions of children aged 5-6 years at Satria Hasanudin Islamic Kindergarten Semarang, is carried out in three stages, namely the initial stage of the activity, the implementation stage of the activity,

the final stage of the activity. This plasticine play activity helps children become more independent in completing work, developing a sense of empathy, togetherness, and the ability to cooperate with friends through mutual assistance and collaboration. In addition, children are able to follow instructions well, interact with others, create a sense of community, manage emotions, build relationships with friends and teachers, and also describe the meaning of the work they create.

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