

Improving Children's Social Interaction Through Group Work Method in Group B of Gunung Bale State Kindergarten

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to improve children's social interactions through the application of the group work method in Group B of Gunung Bale State Kindergarten, Donggala. Conducted in July 2025, the research involved 15 children—7 boys and 8 girls—and employed a classroom action research design consisting of four stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research process was divided into three phases: pre-action, Cycle I, and Cycle II, to observe the extent of change in children's social interaction skills. The observed aspects included helping each other, cooperation, understanding conversations, and communication. The results revealed a significant improvement from the pre-action stage to Cycle II. The percentage of children categorized as "Very Well Developed" increased from 23.33% in Cycle I to 45.00% in Cycle II, while those in the "Not Yet Developed" category decreased from 35.00% to 3.33%. These findings demonstrate that the group work method effectively enhances children's social interaction skills and serves

as an alternative learning strategy in early childhood education.

Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a crucial foundation for developing an intelligent and resilient generation. ECE emphasizes the establishment of fundamental aspects that foster physical growth (fine and gross motor coordination), intelligence (thinking skills, creativity, emotional and spiritual intelligence), socio-emotional development (attitudes, behaviors, and religious values), as well as language and communication, all adjusted to each child's unique developmental stage (Nurani et al., 2020; Wahyuni & Azizah, 2020).

One of the essential efforts to improve both physical and psychological abilities of children is by integrating social interaction activities into every learning experience (Nurhayati et al., 2020). A method that can be effectively applied to enhance children's social interactions is the group work method. Through this approach, children are encouraged to be more active in interacting with peers—such as exchanging ideas, cooperating, and communicating.

In the learning activities of Group B at Gunung Bale State Kindergarten, Donggala Regency, observations revealed problems related to social interaction development. Several children were unable to adjust to new peers, reluctant to help friends, unwilling to cooperate, unable to understand the content of conversations, and still experienced difficulties in communicating effectively (Agusniatih & Manopa, 2019;

Said & Tangia, 2025).

Social interaction is a fundamental aspect of human life. Without interaction, it would be difficult for individuals to live and function within society. For young children, social interaction is particularly important, as it shapes their ability to adapt and engage in social life. According to Henderson and Atencio (in Ballerina, 2020), children learn through social interactions with peers, siblings, parents, and teachers. Social interaction among children refers to the relationship between a child and their environment, such as interactions with peers, family, and teachers.

The family serves as the first and foremost environment for children's development. Within the family, children are introduced to the broader world and learn to develop their potential, internalize social values, adopt healthy living habits, and practice discipline (Makhmudah, 2018). Therefore, parents are expected to cultivate children's potential by providing a supportive environment that allows them to grow into intelligent, creative, independent, and faithful individuals who will later become strong human resources (Salam & Mei, 2019).

According to Hurlock (in Safitri et al., 2024), children's social behavior patterns include imitation, competition (such as fighting over toys), cooperation, sympathy, empathy, social support, discipline, sharing, and friendly behavior. This aligns with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014 concerning the

National Standards for Early Childhood Education, which states that children aged 3–4 years are expected to participate in group activities (such as picnics), wait patiently for their turn, show tolerance, work in groups, respect others, build cooperation, and recognize differences in emotions (e.g., when a friend is afraid while they are not). Fitri and Rusdiani (2024) also noted that social behavior includes friendship, cooperation, group participation, responsibility, and tolerance.

Social interaction must be cultivated from an early age. For example, when interacting with peers at school or in the community, children must learn to accept others, recognize age similarities, show interest in joint play, and interact with friends from various backgrounds (Kurnia, 2020).

According to Gillin and Gillin, social interaction is a dynamic social relationship involving individuals and groups. Such interaction cannot occur without two key elements: social contact and communication. Contact serves as the first stage of social interaction (Hajar, 2021).

Previous studies have emphasized similar findings. Research by Ihlas (Khotimah et al., 2025) showed that teachers play a vital role in developing children's social skills through play-based learning and role modeling, supported by both the school and parents. However, challenges such as individual differences and communication barriers can hinder social interaction, requiring adaptive and collaborative approaches. Another study by Fidesrinur (Prabandari & Fidesrinur, 2021) found that cooperative play methods increased children's

collaboration skills, such as teamwork, patience, sharing, and following classroom rules.

According to Brown, group work refers to various techniques used by two or more students to perform tasks that involve collaboration and self-initiated communication. Nunan defines group work as a task or exercise completed by students working together in small cooperative groups. McDonough and Shaw describe group work as a classroom structure designed to facilitate interaction regardless of the lesson content. Sutikno (in Nurdayati et al., 2021) explains that group work is a joint effort by two or more individuals to complete a task or achieve a goal collectively for mutual benefit.

The application of the group work method gradually influences children's social behavior because it does not merely involve assigning tasks. Instead, it helps develop social attitudes such as helping others, cooperation, and discipline. For example, helping behavior is reflected when a child lends a colored pencil to a friend who lacks one, while cooperation appears when children work together to tidy up classroom materials. Discipline, on the other hand, is shown when children follow class rules and manage their time properly during activities (Kurnia, 2023).

Field observations indicated that many children still lacked adequate social interaction skills, which could negatively affect their communication abilities and participation in social life later on. The learning methods used in kindergartens often failed to engage children

actively, as most were teacher-centered and focused on listening rather than interaction. Therefore, the researcher was motivated to conduct a classroom action research project by implementing the group work method in Group B of Gunung Bale State Kindergarten to improve children's social interactions.

Methods

This study employed a classroom action research (CAR) design using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Rukminingsih et al., 2020). The research design consisted of four key components: planning, action, observation, and reflection.

1. Planning

Planning was the initial step taken before implementing the action. The activities carried out at this stage included:

- Selecting indicators related to children's social interaction to be developed through the group work method;
- Designing the Daily Lesson Plan (RKH);
- Determining the time schedule for implementation;
- Preparing learning media to be used;
- Preparing observation sheets for teachers and students; and
- Revising plans for the next cycle if the expected results were not achieved in the previous one.

2. Action Implementation

At this stage, learning activities were conducted using the **group work method** to improve children's social interaction skills. The

implementation followed the previously prepared lesson plan (RKH) and emphasized cooperative participation during group tasks.

3. Observation

Observation was conducted by teachers at Gunung Bale State Kindergarten to monitor both teacher and student activities during the learning process. The observation focused on how children interacted socially, particularly in helping each other, cooperating, and communicating effectively within their groups. Observation sheets were used as the main instrument for data collection.

4. Reflection

Reflection was carried out to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each cycle and to identify necessary improvements for the next stage. This step aimed to enhance the effectiveness of the actions implemented.

The research subjects consisted of 15 children from Group B of Gunung Bale State Kindergarten, comprising 7 boys and 8 girls. This group was chosen because their level of social interaction was observed to be lower than that of other groups. The kindergarten was also selected because it was the researcher's teaching placement, which facilitated both the teaching and research processes.

The data collection techniques used in this study were observation and documentation. The data obtained from observation sheets in both cycles were analyzed qualitatively to understand the improvement process and then presented descriptively.

To evaluate children's development, four performance categories

were used:

- **Very Well Developed (VWD),**
- **Well Developed (WD),**
- **Developing (D), and**
- **Not Yet Developed (NYD).**

To determine the level of improvement, the results from Cycle I were compared with the pre-action stage, and Cycle II results were compared with those of Cycle I. The data were then presented in percentages using the following formula from Sudijono (2019:43):

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

where:

P = percentage achieved,

f = frequency, and

N = total number of children.

The pre-action stage was conducted to determine the children's initial abilities through classroom observation. This was used as a baseline to identify areas requiring improvement in social interaction. Observations focused on three primary aspects of social interaction: **helping each other, cooperating, and communicating.**

Table 1. Indicators of Children's Social Interaction Skills

Variable	Indicator	Sub-Indicator
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Social Interaction Ability	Helping Each Other	Children demonstrate helping behavior toward friends and those around them.
	Cooperation	Children show the ability to work with peers during group activities.
	Communication	Children communicate clearly, politely, and respond appropriately to peers.

The instruments developed based on these indicators served as the main tools for observing, assessing, and developing children’s social interaction abilities in educational and social contexts. These instruments measured how well children could establish relationships and interact with their peers. The three main indicators—helping each other, cooperating, and communicating—represented the core dimensions of social interaction expected to develop through the group work method.

Result and Discussions

The implementation of this study aimed to observe the social interaction behavior of children through the use of the **group work method** in Group B of Gunung Bale State Kindergarten, in order to describe how the application of this method influences the improvement of children’s social interactions. This research was

conducted in two cycles with four stages in each: (1) Planning, (2) Implementation, (3) Observation, and (4) Reflection. Observations were carried out during the activities of both Cycle I and Cycle II.

Cycle I

After conducting initial observations, the teacher then began implementing classroom actions to improve children’s social interaction through the group work method. The results can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Recapitulation of Observation Results in Cycle I

No.	Catego	Observ	Total	Average (%)
ry		ed Aspects		
		Helping Each Other	Cooperati on	Communicati on
		F	%	F
1	★★★★	4	26.67	3
2	★★★	3	20.00	3
3	★★	3	20.00	5
4	★	5	33.33	4
Tot		15	100	15
al				

Based on Table 2 above, the results show that in the aspect of **helping each other**, 4 children (26.67%) were in the category of *Very Well*

Developed. Meanwhile, those who showed *Well Developed* ability were 3 children (20.00%), and 3 children (20.00%) were in the *Developing* category. Furthermore, 5 children (33.33%) were in the *Not Yet Developed* category in terms of helping behavior.

In the aspect of **cooperation**, there were 3 children (20.00%) in the *Very Well Developed* category, 3 children (20.00%) in the *Well Developed* category, 5 children (33.33%) in the *Developing* category, and 4 children (26.67%) in the *Not Yet Developed* category.

In the **communication** aspect, 4 children (26.67%) were *Very Well Developed*, 2 children (13.33%) were *Well Developed*, 3 children (20.00%) were *Developing*, and 6 children (40.00%) were *Not Yet Developed*.

If presented in the form of a histogram, the observation of social interaction before the implementation of the group work method in Cycle I can be illustrated as follows:

(Figure 1. Histogram of Children's Social Interaction Before the Application of the Group Work Method in Cycle I)

From the percentage results obtained in Cycle I, it is clear that the total percentage of "Very Well Developed" and "Well Developed" categories reached only 43.33% (24.45% + 17.77%), indicating that the action had not yet achieved the expected level of success. Therefore, improvements were made in Cycle II.

Reflection of Cycle I

In the implementation of Cycle I, there was an increase in children's

social interaction ability compared to the pre-action stage. However, this improvement was not yet significant because some children still did not show optimal development in aspects such as helping, cooperating, understanding the content of conversations, and communicating. Teacher activities were also still categorized as *Developing*, indicating that the criteria for success had not yet been achieved.

Based on findings and discussions with peers, it was decided to make improvements in the learning process to overcome the weaknesses and increase the effectiveness of the actions in the next cycle.

Cycle II

The results of observations in Cycle I and Cycle II generally showed that children were able to improve their social interaction abilities more effectively in the second cycle, based on the established indicators. The results of the second cycle can be seen in the following table.

Table 3. Recapitulation of Observation Results in Cycle II

No.	Catego ry	Observ ed Aspects	Total	Average (%)
		Helping Each Other	Cooperati on	Communicati on
		F	%	F
1	★★★★	5	33.33	7
2	★★★	4	26.67	5

No.	Catego ry	Observ ed Aspects	Total	Average (%)
3	★★	5	33.33	3
4	★	1	6.67	0
Tot al		15	100	15

Based on Table 3 above, in the **helping each other** aspect, from 15 children, 5 (33.33%) were categorized as *Very Well Developed*, 4 (26.67%) as *Well Developed*, 5 (33.33%) as *Developing*, and only 1 child (6.67%) as *Not Yet Developed*.

In the **cooperation** aspect, 7 children (46.67%) were *Very Well Developed*, 5 (33.33%) were *Well Developed*, 3 (20.00%) were *Developing*, and none were *Not Yet Developed*.

In the **communication** aspect, 7 children (46.67%) were *Very Well Developed*, 5 (33.33%) were *Well Developed*, 2 (13.33%) were *Developing*, and 1 child (6.67%) was *Not Yet Developed*.

If presented in the form of a histogram, the observation of children’s social interaction before and after the application of the group work method in Cycle II can be illustrated as follows:

(Figure 2. Histogram of Children’s Social Interaction After the Application of the Group Work Method in Cycle II)

Discussion

Based on the results of observations and data analysis from the pre-action, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages, the findings can be discussed as follows:

Cycle I:

The implementation of the group work method with the theme of *plants* began to show improvement, although it had not yet reached the desired target. Prior to the research, discussions with peers were held regarding the research plan and preparations for classroom observation. Teachers and peers collaboratively designed the learning activities and conducted interviews with the children to identify their social behavior in four aspects: helping each other, cooperating, understanding conversation content, and communicating.

Children expressed enthusiasm and enjoyment during learning activities. In the early stages, improvements were observed across the four aspects, although still moderate. The helping aspect increased from two children in the pre-action stage to four children (26.67%) in Cycle I who were *Very Well Developed*. Three children (20.00%) were *Well Developed*, three (20.00%) were *Developing*, and five (33.33%) remained *Not Yet Developed*.

In the cooperation aspect, two children in the pre-action stage increased to three (20.00%) in Cycle I who were *Very Well Developed*, three (20.00%) *Well Developed*, five (33.33%) *Developing*, and four (26.67%) *Not Yet Developed*. According to Slameto (Listiawati, 2025), cooperation among children emerges naturally during group activities, as such

activities create interdependence and interpersonal relationships.

In the aspect of understanding the content of conversations, improvement was also noted. Three children (20.00%) were *Very Well Developed*, four (26.67%) *Well Developed*, two (13.33%) *Developing*, and six (40.00%) still *Not Yet Developed*.

In the communication aspect, four children (26.67%) were *Very Well Developed*, two (13.33%) *Well Developed*, three (20.00%) *Developing*, and six (40.00%) *Not Yet Developed*.

Overall, there was an observable increase in children's social interaction skills in Cycle I, although not yet optimal. Improvements across all aspects ranged between 20%–23.33%. The increase was attributed to the attractiveness of the group work method, which encouraged active participation. However, several children still exhibited minimal progress due to low motivation or shyness when other teachers were present. To address this, the teacher provided additional motivation, encouragement, and praise, and together with peers decided to proceed to Cycle II for improvement.

Cycle II:

In the second cycle, which also consisted of two actions, there was a significant improvement compared to both the pre-action and Cycle I.

In the **helping each other** aspect, 5 children (33.33%) were *Very Well Developed*, and 4 (26.67%) were *Well Developed*, resulting in a combined improvement of 60.00%.

According to Charles H. Cooley (Octaviany et al., 2018), cooperation arises when individuals are aware of shared interests and possess sufficient understanding and self-control to fulfill those common goals. This was evident among children who showed increased helping and collaborative behaviors.

In the **cooperation** aspect, 7 children (46.67%) were *Very Well Developed* and 5 (33.33%) *Well Developed*, resulting in an 80.00% improvement. However, 20.00% remained *Developing*.

According to Moedijiono (Oktapia, 2014), the group work method emphasizes interaction among group members to complete learning tasks collaboratively.

In the **understanding of conversation** aspect, the number of *Very Well Developed* children rose to 8 (53.33%), an increase of 33.33% compared to the previous cycle. Six children (40.00%) were *Well Developed*, indicating that this aspect was successfully improved in Cycle II.

In the **communication** aspect, 7 children (46.67%) were *Very Well Developed* and 5 (33.33%) *Well Developed*, with an increase of 20.00% compared to Cycle I.

According to Thibaut and Kelly (Maradjabessy et al., 2019), interaction is a reciprocal process in which two or more people influence each other when they are present together, creating mutual outcomes and communication.

In general, the improvement in children's social interaction was

significant in all behaviors observed from Cycle I to Cycle II. Therefore, the researcher and peers decided not to continue to a third cycle.

The researcher realized that in improving the learning process, various challenges were encountered, both from the teacher, the children, learning facilities, and other supporting factors that influenced the success of the learning process. However, these limitations did not hinder the researcher from conducting this scientific activity as part of teacher professionalism and innovation in learning. Through classroom action research, the researcher gained valuable experience and successfully demonstrated that the **group work method** can effectively enhance children's social interaction in early childhood education.

Conclusion

Based on the results of classroom action research conducted in Group B of Gunung Bale State Kindergarten, it can be concluded that the application of group work methods effectively improves children's social interactions. This improvement is evident from the increase in the percentage of children categorized as "Very Well Developed" from 23.33% in Cycle I to 45.00% in Cycle II, while those in the "Not Yet Developed" category decreased from 35.00% to 3.33%. The aspects that experienced the most significant improvement were helping each other, cooperation, understanding the content of conversations, and communication. The learning process through group work encouraged children to interact more actively, collaborate, and communicate effectively with peers. Therefore, the group work method can be used

as an alternative learning strategy to enhance the social interaction skills of early childhood students, fostering positive attitudes such as cooperation, empathy, and mutual respect within the kindergarten learning environment.

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