

Role Play Method for Children's Social Skills: Knowledge, Practice, Skill and Challenges of Teachers

Nur Aishah Sofiea Mohd Nasir¹, Nur Amirah Sidek*², Siti Sarah Saharuden³, A'ina Athirah Ahmad Sabri⁴

¹Kolej Ketengah,

²Universiti Islam Pahang Sultan Ahmad Shah,

³Taska Anak Ibu Impiana Casa,

⁴Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia, Malaysia.

Corresponding Author: amirah@unipsas.edu.my

Received 30 September 2025, Revised 20 October 2025, Accepted 31 October 2025, Published 30 November 2025

ABSTRACT

This research investigated teachers' knowledge, practices, and challenges when implementing role play to support the social skills of 4-year-old children in a kindergarten setting. A total of three kindergarten teachers and six children participated in this research. It was conducted at a kindergarten located in Dungun, Terengganu. The research instruments used in this study are interviews and checklists. Teachers acknowledged that role-play can support children's social skills in communication, friendship, and sharing equipment during activities. The children were observed during role-playing with their peers. This research showed an increased frequency of communication and helping friends while playing. It also indicated that children were more likely to communicate with teachers, while role-playing demonstrated that the adult's role is essential in implementing the role-play method to support children's social skills and values. However, this research also revealed that the teachers faced challenges during the implementation of role-play for children, such as insufficient time and limited funds to conduct role-play in kindergartens.

Keywords: *role play, social skills, early childhood education, children's development*

How to Cite:

Mohd Nasir, N. A. S., Sidek, N. A., Saharuden, S. S., & Ahmad Sabri, A. A. (2025). Role-play method for children's social skills: Knowledge, practice, skills and challenges for teachers.: Kaedah main peranan dalam kemahiran sosial kanak-kanak: pengetahuan, amalan, kemahiran dan cabaran guru. *Jurnal Evolusi*, 6(2), 11–22.

<https://doi.org/10.61688/jev.v6i2.448>

Copyright: © 2025 The Author(s)

Published by Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia.

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

INTRODUCTION

Many preschool children experience problems sharing materials, especially during group activities (Hasan & Zaini, 2021). They often fight to the point of disrupting teaching and learning sessions. According to Kit Yee & Syed Akbar (2017), sharing skills are skills that need to be learned by children. The classroom will become unmanageable since students' ability to work with partners, independently or in small groups needs direct supervision from an adult.

Thus, various teaching and learning approaches have been outlined in the National Preschool Curriculum Standard Handbook (KSPK) to attract children to explore and learn. One of them is the play approach. The play approach provides pleasure and supports the development of cognitive, physical, emotional, intellectual, language, and social aspects in children. Children can have the opportunity to learn in a conducive, joyful, free, and meaningful environment through play, as this approach covers six strands of children's development, as stated in KSPK. According to Ramlah Jantan (2013) and Mohammad et al. (2021), children can cultivate their social skills and master various developmental areas, such as physical, emotional, language, and social development, through play activities. This is because, when playing, children can interact with the environment, understand the real world and practice speaking and listening to other people's opinions.

Role play is one of the play approaches that reflects real-life experiences, in which children empathise with the characters they play (Hasan & Zaini, 2021). This is supported by Suud et al. (2017), who stated that role play is an effective way for children to learn and practice social skills. In role-playing activities, children will have the opportunity to express their feelings and develop their imagination about the characters they are playing. Exposure to role play will help children develop their decision-making and critical-thinking abilities, as well as a growth mindset (Hasan & Zaini, 2021). Teachers need to spend more time teaching children in small groups, so the children must be able to stay engaged and productive without constant attention. This is one way to help children cope with their social development: role-play activities that require perspective. Role play allows children to act out different scenarios and encounter others' perspectives, which can help them develop empathy and understanding. It clearly shows that children can learn to see things differently and understand other people's feelings and thoughts by putting themselves in others' shoes.

This play-based approach provides ample evidence of children's learning. However, the difficulties teachers face when using a play-based approach to teaching and learning in preschool can be explored by drawing on several previous studies. This research aims to explore teachers' competence in implementing the role-play approach, covering their knowledge, skills and practice in a kindergarten setting. The template is designed to assist authors in presenting their work in a way that is easy for reviewers to assess. Having a standard template will also assist in the eventual publication process should the paper is accepted. Submitting an article that is easier for the reviewer to read will help expedite the review process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Play-based learning, encompassing both structured and unstructured activities, is a cornerstone of early childhood education globally. Structured play involves guided activities with specific learning objectives, often led by educators, to teach particular skills or concepts. Unstructured play, on the other hand, is child-directed and spontaneous, allowing children to explore and learn at their own pace. According to Robinson et al. (2019) and Fatai et al. (2014, both forms of play are essential in creating a balanced and effective early learning environment. The findings indicated that unstructured play enhances children's cooperative skills, builds knowledge through imitation, and helps them gain new insights through trial and error.

In Malaysia, early childhood education is governed by the National Preschool Curriculum Standard (KSPK), which aims to foster holistic development in children aged four to six. However, despite the curriculum's emphasis on emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, and physical growth, the practical application of play in kindergartens remains inconsistent. Kindergartens in Malaysia prioritize academic learning over social and emotional development, primarily due to teachers' limited knowledge and skills in implementing social-emotional learning strategies in the classroom (Mohamed et al., 2019;

Yunus & Mohamed, 2019). This gap in teacher preparedness contributes to the underemphasis of social-emotional learning in early childhood education. Kassim, Radzi, and Mustafa (2024) emphasized the critical role of kindergarten teachers in developing children's social skills, which are essential for school readiness. There is a need for structured social-emotional learning modules to support teachers in fostering children's social-emotional skills (Mohammad & Mohamed, 2023).

Role play is a pedagogical approach that enables children to develop social skills and engage meaningfully with the world around them. By stepping into different roles, children practice empathy, communication, and problem-solving in a safe, imaginative environment. Such activities also support emotional development, allowing children to explore feelings and social dynamics (Hasan & Zaini, 2021). Research indicates that role play can significantly influence emotional regulation, particularly in helping children recognize and manage their own emotions (Bennett & Bingley, 2023). Similarly, Mohammad et al. (2021) reported that role play improved self-control and socio-emotional development in 5-year-old children, highlighting its potential to reduce impulsivity and promote positive self-regulation.

In the context of language learning, role play has been effectively used to teach English as a second language (ESL) to preschoolers. Research by Mohd Nihazram and Masnan (2020) demonstrated that role-play activities facilitated language acquisition by providing contextual learning experiences, thereby enhancing children's English language skills. However, while teachers acknowledged the benefits of this approach, they faced challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and a lack of structured implementation strategies. Similarly, Ismail and Ibrahim (2020) identified additional barriers, including rigid curriculum structures, lack of administrative support, and cultural perceptions that undervalue play as a legitimate form of learning. These factors collectively hinder the effective integration of play-based learning, including role play, into the kindergarten curriculum. While role play is acknowledged as a vital pedagogical approach for fostering children's social and emotional development, its consistent implementation in Malaysian kindergartens remains limited. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate teachers' knowledge, practice and challenges when implementing role play, particularly in the context of supporting children's social skill development.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive qualitative study that incorporated interviews and checklist observations. Through interviews, the researchers identified teachers' perceptions of their knowledge, practices and skills in this role-play technique for developing children's social skills in the classroom, as well as the challenges they encountered during role-play activities. By reviewing the checklist, the researchers can identify the social skills that occur among children during role-play activities. The researchers chose a kindergarten that is located in the city of Dungun, Terengganu. This kindergarten was selected because it has 4-year-old classes, the classes use the 'playschool' concept, and a total of six children are enrolled on the classes. This meets the kindergarten criteria set by the researcher. In this sample selection, the sample was chosen based on several criteria, namely children entering kindergarten for the first time, those who find it difficult to get along with friends, and those who find it challenging to share toys with friends.

In this study, the researcher also interviewed kindergarten teachers to gather information on their perceptions of implementing role-play activities to develop the social skills of 4-year-old children. The selection of these kindergarten teachers as a sample is based on several criteria, namely, that they have more than a year of kindergarten teaching experience and knowledge of early childhood education and management. In addition, the researcher used an audio recording to gather perceptions during the interview. The checklist observation was used to assess the development of children's social skills during role-play activities. This checklist observation is based on Jaslinah Makantal (2014). However, this checklist has been modified in accordance with the KSPK learning standards and the researcher's study needs. This checklist is used when children engage in role-playing activities and is marked according to how often they complete the set items.

For the interviews, the researcher has selected three teachers as research respondents: Teacher A (TA), Teacher B (TB), and Teacher C (TC). TA is a permanent teacher who has served for thirty years. TB is a teacher who teaches four-year-old children. TC is also a teacher at a kindergarten for 4-year-olds and has served for 2 years. This study was conducted in two

sessions with the children. During the study, children's photos were taken to help the researcher examine social skills within the sample, and all information obtained was recorded in the provided research instrument. A total of six 4-year-old children were observed. The role-play theme, 'playing toys', is set by the researcher based on the children's interests.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

[This study is to explore teachers' perception regarding role play. Interview questions and children's observations are recorded for further explanation. Based on the analysis of the interview transcripts, themes can be extracted from the interview questionnaire regarding teachers' perceptions of role-playing.

Knowledge about role play

All teachers agreed that role play made a great contribution to social interaction and language, and increased their skills during play.

“Role play learning is very important for young children because it supports their social interaction and allows them to develop various skills through play.” (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Role play learning tu memang penting untuk aaa kanak-kanak, ia sangat bagus dan dalam pada masa yang sama kanak-kanak boleh belajar berinteraksi, bersosial dan dapat meningkatkan kemahiran mereka dalam role play.”)

“Role play learning is highly effective for children as it helps them develop essential skills, particularly communication and language abilities, as well as other related competencies.” (Teacher B)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Pembelajaran secara role play ini sangat berkesan kepada kanak-kanak. Ini kerana dapat membantu kanak-kanak belajar kemahiran seperti komunikasi, berbahasa dan banyak lagi.”)

“Role play activities are beneficial for children because they allow learning to take place through play. These activities also help improve children's social skills, especially for those who are usually alone at home, as their behaviour becomes more positive when role play is implemented in the classroom.” (Teacher C)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Main peranan ini sangat bagus kepada kanak-kanak kerana mereka boleh belajar sambil bermain dan meningkatkan kemahiran sosial mereka, terutamanya kanak-kanak yang bersendirian di rumah, yang akan berubah apabila main peranan diterapkan dalam kelas.”)

All teachers understand their role in implementing role play by modelling, giving explanations, facilitating the teaching of themes, and playing along with them.

“Teachers play an important role by first demonstrating the role to children and clearly explaining the function of each character. For example, when introducing the role of a doctor, the teacher explains who a doctor is and what they do. This includes clarifying that a doctor's responsibilities are not limited to hospitals but also involve engagement with the wider community.” (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Guru sebagai tunjuk mula-mula perlu menunjukkan dan menerangkan fungsi sesuatu watak. Contohnya seperti doktor, guru perlu menjelaskan siapa doktor dan apa tugas doktor, serta menerangkan bahawa tugas doktor bukan hanya di hospital tetapi juga melibatkan peranan dalam masyarakat.”)

“Teachers should first act out the role that children are expected to learn. This approach helps children imagine the role more clearly and increases their enthusiasm for performing characters that interest them. Through this process, teachers can also identify children’s interests.” (Teacher B)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Guru seharusnya melakonkan watak yang hendak dipelajari terlebih dahulu supaya kanak-kanak lebih mudah berimajinasi, bersemangat untuk melakonkan watak yang mereka minati, dan guru dapat mengenal pasti minat kanak-kanak.”)

“As teachers, it is important to actively engage in children’s world so that role play activities can further enhance their imagination. Children can understand the activities more easily when teachers provide clear guidance. Teachers should not immediately assign activities without support; instead, they need to guide children to ensure that role-play activities are carried out effectively.” (Teacher C)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Sebagai seorang guru, perlu melibatkan diri dalam dunia kanak-kanak supaya aktiviti main peranan dapat meningkatkan daya imaginasi.”) Guru tidak boleh terus memberikan aktiviti tanpa bimbingan, sebaliknya perlu membimbing kanak-kanak agar aktiviti main peranan berjalan dengan baik.”)

Practice of the role play

There are different ways of implementing role play. Two teachers focus on the theme approach and group activity.

“Role play activities are often conducted in groups and organised as friendly competitions between groups. For example, one group may be assigned the role of doctors, while another group performs the role of teachers. While one group performs, the other group observes. Through observation, children learn what each role involves. By rotating roles, children exchange ideas, experience different characters, and learn from one another.” (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Aktiviti main peranan dijalankan secara berkumpulan dan berbentuk pertandingan antara kumpulan. Contohnya, satu kumpulan diberikan watak doktor dan satu lagi watak cikgu. Kumpulan yang menonton akan memahami peranan watak tersebut, dan melalui pertukaran watak, kanak-kanak dapat bertukar idea serta pengalaman.”)

“I conduct role play activities such as drama, selling activities, and pretend play. These activities encourage children to communicate, play together, and interact within groups. Group-based activities are important as they support children’s social development, enabling them to enhance their social skills through role play.” (Teacher C)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Aktiviti main peranan seperti drama, jual beli dan main pondok-pondok dijalankan secara berkumpulan supaya kanak-kanak dapat berkomunikasi, bermain bersama dan membangunkan perkembangan sosial serta kemahiran sosial mereka.”)

One teacher stresses modelling positive values during the role play.

“The activity begins by placing toys in the centre of the classroom and allowing children to play together. Through this activity, teachers can guide children to practise sharing, communicating, apologising, and recognising appropriate behaviour. These interactions allow teachers to demonstrate and reinforce positive social skills during play.” (Teacher B)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Mula-mula mainan diletakkan di tengah kelas dan kanak-kanak dibenarkan bermain bersama. Melalui aktiviti ini, guru boleh membimbing kanak-kanak untuk berkongsi, berkomunikasi, meminta maaf, dan memahami tingkah laku yang sesuai semasa bermain.”)

Skills of the teacher for role play

Since all teachers use role play in their classes, there are some skills they already have expertise in. They know how to handle role play efficiently and attract children's attention before role play happens. Three teachers believed that well-prepared and suitable teaching aids make a significant contribution to role play.

"Before conducting any activity, teachers need to plan carefully to ensure that children achieve the intended learning outcomes. For example, if the role-play activity focuses on a doctor, children should clearly understand the responsibilities and functions of that role. Teaching materials also need to be sufficient and appropriate to support children's developmental needs." (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: "Sebelum menjalankan aktiviti, guru perlu membuat perancangan yang rapi supaya murid memahami apa yang dipelajari, contohnya peranan doktor.") Bahan mengajar juga perlu mencukupi dan sesuai dengan perkembangan kanak-kanak.")

"In my view, teachers should plan activities in advance and prepare sufficient materials to support children's social interaction, ensuring that the activities can be conducted smoothly." (Teacher B)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: "Sebagai guru, aktiviti perlu dirancang terlebih dahulu dan bahan disediakan secukupnya bagi memastikan aktiviti sosial kanak-kanak berjalan dengan lancar.")

"Teachers need to plan the activities for the day in advance and prepare adequate materials so that children do not experience conflict or competition over resources during role play. Teachers should also select engaging activities to ensure that the sessions run smoothly and that children do not feel bored." (Teacher C)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: "Guru perlu merancang aktiviti lebih awal dan menyediakan bahan yang mencukupi supaya tiada perebutan semasa aktiviti main peranan. Aktiviti yang menarik juga penting untuk mengelakkan rasa bosan dalam kalangan kanak-kanak.")

Two teachers believed they were able to manage group activity and skillfully conduct different types of themes.

Children tend to enjoy group activities, especially when organised as friendly competitions. For example, one group may be assigned the role of doctors while another group performs the role of teachers. While one group performs, the other observes, allowing children to understand the responsibilities of each role. By rotating roles, children exchange ideas, experience different characters, and learn collaboratively." (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: "Kanak-kanak lebih suka aktiviti berkumpul yang dijalankan dalam bentuk pertandingan. Contohnya, satu kumpulan memainkan peranan sebagai doktor dan satu lagi sebagai guru. Kumpulan yang memerhati akan memahami peranan tersebut, dan melalui pertukaran watak, kanak-kanak dapat bertukar idea dan pengalaman.")

“As a teacher, I plan the activities in advance and ensure that sufficient materials are prepared to prevent conflict among children during role play. I also select engaging activities so that the sessions can run smoothly without children feeling bored.” (Teacher C)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Guru perlu merancang aktiviti lebih awal dan menyediakan bahan yang mencukupi supaya tiada perebutan semasa aktiviti main peranan. Aktiviti yang menarik juga penting untuk memastikan aktiviti berjalan lancar tanpa rasa bosan.”)

One of the teachers can model values by using toys in role play. The teacher manages to share good values during role play.

“The activity begins by placing toys in the centre of the classroom and allowing children to play together. Through this process, teachers can guide children to practise sharing, communicating, apologising, and recognising appropriate behaviour. These moments provide opportunities for teachers to model and reinforce positive social interactions.” (Teacher B)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Aktiviti dimulakan dengan meletakkan mainan di tengah kelas dan membenarkan kanak-kanak bermain bersama.”) Melalui aktiviti ini, guru boleh membimbing kanak-kanak untuk berkongsi, berkomunikasi, meminta maaf sekiranya melakukan kesalahan, serta menunjukkan tingkah laku sosial yang sesuai.)

Challenges of using role play to teach social development for children at kindergarten

Time constraint

Based on the interview, all teachers agreed that time constraints are the major challenge in assisting the children. The challenge identified in this study is the lack of time to implement role-playing learning. From the three teachers' point of view, they said they lacked the time to apply both areas of learning in the classroom, namely, children's academic and social learning. This will also interfere with children's academic performance if the teacher overemphasises' role-play learning in the classroom. There is also information from the three respondents indicating that they not only teach but also have to attend various meetings with teachers outside working hours. It will affect the teacher's time to be with family members at home. Sometimes they also do not have time to be with their families because they have to quickly research creative role-play teaching and learning activities to give to the children the next day. According to the researcher, the challenge of time allocation is indeed present for preschool teachers in their efforts to implement a play-based approach to teaching and learning. This is also supported by Abdul Rashid & Mohamed (2023), who stated that a long-term allocation is needed to ensure that children can play while also exploring knowledge.

“One of the main challenges faced by teachers is time constraints. Teachers need to balance academic instruction with social, physical, and holistic development, and often do not have sufficient time to focus on all these aspects effectively.” (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Salah satu cabaran utama ialah kekangan masa kerana guru perlu memberi tumpuan kepada akademik, sosial, fizikal, jasmani dan rohani, namun masa yang terhad menyukarkan pelaksanaannya.”)

Financial constraints

Two teachers agreed that teaching aids play an important role in setting up role-play efficiently, considering both quality and children's development. Another interesting challenge here is the influence of the environment. The space helps make children more comfortable playing with their friends. However, they lack the funds to provide teaching aids and prepare a comfortable space for children. The respondents also said that they had to be thrifty in spending to buy teaching aids and sometimes had to buy cheap and low-quality materials. Besides that, the researcher found that a number of children fought

over the game tools while playing. This is because the teacher provides limited teaching aids to the children. Abdul Rashid & Mohamed (2023) also presented the highlighted challenges, which are limited finances, the syllabus, insufficient space, expectations from the Department of Education, discipline problems that arise after play, and expectations from parents about students' academic achievement, all of which evidently hinder children's development. Teachers also tend to use formal and traditional methods, namely whiteboards and worksheets, due to a lack of funds.

Another challenge relates to teaching aids, as some materials are not always appropriate for children's age and developmental level.” (Teacher A)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Salah satu cabaran ialah alat bantu mengajar yang kadangkala tidak sesuai dengan umur dan tahap perkembangan kanak-kanak.”)

“Limited classroom space also poses a challenge, as children may feel constrained during play activities. This can result in role play activities becoming disorganised and less structured.” (Teacher B)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Ruang kelas yang sempit menyebabkan kanak-kanak berasa terbatas semasa bermain, sekali gus menjadikan aktiviti main peranan tidak teratur.”)

“The quality of teaching materials is another concern, as some resources may not be durable or suitable for long-term use.” (Teacher C)

(Original quote in Bahasa Melayu: “Kualiti bahan atau peralatan tidak semestinya baik dan tahan untuk jangka masa panjang.”)

Implication of role play in the classroom.

This observation supports teachers' knowledge, practice, and skills in implementing role play.

Table 3

Children's observation based on criteria.

No	Criteria	Theme	Observation	
			Before	After
1.	Children like to playtogether	Play together	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, like to play together	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, like to play together
2.	Children like to share with others	Sharing	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes to sharing with others	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes to sharing with others
3.	Children like to communicate withfriends	Communicate	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, like to communicate with friends	There were 5/6 respondents who said yes, like to communicate with friends
4.	Children like to dogroup activities	Group activity	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, they like to do group activities	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, they like to do group activities

5.	Children like to help their friends when doing difficult tasks activities	Help friend	There were 3/6 respondent who said yes, they would like to help their friends when doing difficult activities	There were 4/6 respondent who said yes, like to help their friends when doing difficult activities
6.	Children always apologize when they make mistakes	Apologize	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes, always apologize when they make mistakes	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes, always apologize when they make mistakes
7.	Children like to be friends with other friends	Like friend	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, they would like to be friends with other friends	4/6 respondents said yes to liking to be friends with other friends.
8.	Children like to ask the teacher during play activities	Communicate with the teacher	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes, like to ask the teacher during play activities	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, like to ask the teacher during play activities
9.	Children like to be alone while doing play activities in class	Play alone	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes, they like to be alone while doing play activities in class	There were 3/6 respondents who said yes, they like to be alone while doing play activities in class
10.	There is an increase in attendance when doing role-play activities on the day	Increase the attendance	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, an increase in attendance if doing role play activities on the day	There were 4/6 respondents who said yes, an increase in attendance if doing role play activities on the day

Based on the collected data, children gained certain values from role play: communication, sharing with others, and relationships.

Communication

The first value that was demonstrated is communication. During role-play, children interact more with other children and are more likely to be engaged if the teacher plays an active role. This is supported by respondents' statements that also said role-playing learning can improve children's communication skills. It can also help children be braver in communicating with people around them in the future. Role-play learning is also an approach that requires children to act out appropriate situations. Based on data obtained during observation, the theme of communication is the highest-rated item among the sample throughout this study. This success is due to two factors: the theme factor, which children are really interested in, and the equipment factor, namely the quality of the play equipment. It turns out that, through this role-playing activity, children with communication difficulties begin to show positive changes in how they socialise with friends. Through this association, these children will also imitate their friends' behaviour. This coincides with Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory on imitation. Children tend to imitate the behaviour shown by their peers. This is the driving force behind children's success in improving their communication skills. Based on the first theme, the researcher concluded that if teachers consistently provide opportunities for children to communicate while playing, their communication skills will be good. This is because children who are exposed to a language-rich environment have the potential to acquire a larger vocabulary and learn new words at a faster rate than those less exposed to such environments (Barnes et al., 2017).

Social skills

The next theme is social skills. According to the teacher, through role-playing, children can further improve their skills in sharing game tools during play activities. For example, the teacher conducts role-playing activities as a doctor, so the children can learn to help the doctor and nurse and take turns using the doctor's equipment, such as a stethoscope and thermometer. Thus, it can be concluded that children can learn various aspects through play, including patience, cooperation and tolerance. This is supported by a study by Husain Ibrahim (2023), which found that some children still have social skill difficulties, especially with peers and others around them. An educator should play an important role by negotiating so that they share the game equipment. As a result, the children's negative behaviour can be changed into positive behaviour. This coincides with the theory presented by Froebel (1967), which strongly rejected the approach that uses force and punishment. Throughout the study, the children enjoyed carrying out this role-playing activity. The teacher's involvement makes it easier for them to share the equipment, and the teacher's instructions are easy to follow. Good social skills help children communicate, share, take turns and cooperate with others, all of which are essential to making friends. Social skills can also improve preschoolers' problem-solving skills, which are important for academic and social success (Schoon et al., 2021, p.2). Therefore, one way to improve children's sharing skills is through play activities, specifically role-playing.

Friendship

The next theme in the observation is friendship. According to the teacher's responses, role-play activities can improve children's social development by helping them interact and get along with the people around them. All three teachers also said that role-playing activities can provide many benefits to children, for example, learning new words when communicating, socialising and so on. The researcher also noticed that, at the beginning, some children do not like to be friends with others, prefer to play alone, and make friends only with their chosen friends. After that, throughout the classroom role-playing activity, the researcher observed changes in some of the children as they made friends. This is mainly because children will be more likely to play with their friends during role-playing activities, in accordance with Albert Bandura's social learning theory. According to Bandura (1977), social learning is the formation of a model of a person's behaviour through observing other people. Bandura believed that although continuous reinforcement is shown, it can be applied to all types of learning. Therefore, it can be said that Bandura supports the idea that children learn by observing the behaviour of others. It can help children reduce their shyness and lack of courage in maintaining their friendships. According to Hasan & Zaini (2021), role playing helps improve children's cognitive and social interaction skills. This social interaction is also referred to as friendship. This clearly shows that role-playing activities can improve children's social interactions and friendships. At the end of this study, the researcher made a conclusion based on the theme of friendship; by agreeing to this role-playing activity, children can increase their social skills in their friendships.]

CONCLUSION

[Teachers should play a vital role in ensuring that this activity can be carried out smoothly. The support and encouragement of teachers can help improve the social skills of these children. Based on the results of this study, it is clearly shown that this role play can help children make better friendships, share with others, encourage communication, and demonstrate the ability to participate in an activity. Apart from this, there are also other aspects of social skills that children can achieve during this study, such as tolerance. In conclusion, this role-play activity needs to be implemented frequently in children's Teaching and learning. Teachers can also make this role-play activity one of the lessons of teaching and learning in the classroom. Simultaneously, teachers have indirectly created 21st-century learning that emphasises student-centred learning.]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Universiti Poly-Tech Malaysia for providing the resources and support necessary to complete this study. We would also like to thank all participants who contributed their time and insights to this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and peers who offered valuable feedback during the development of this manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could be perceived to influence the work reported in this paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualisation, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the relevant institution. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the research, and all data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Rashid, I. R., & Mohamed, S. (2023). *Cabaran guru melaksanakan pendekatan bermain dalam PdP di prasekolah*. Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 8(6), e002204.
- Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum. (2017). *Kurikulum Standard Prasekolah Kebangsaan: Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (Semakan 2017)*. Bahagian Pembangunan Kurikulum, KPM. <http://bpk.moe.gov.my/index.php/terbitan-bpk/pra-sekolah/category/40-dskp>
- Bennett, N., & Bingley, C. (2023). Role play and emotional regulation: A comparative study in early childhood settings. *International Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 38(2), 75–88.
- Fatai, O. I. A., Faqih, A., & Bustan, W. K. (2014). Children's active learning through unstructured play in Malaysia. *Childhood Education*, 90(4), 259–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00094056.2014.933695>
- Hasan, M., & Zaini, N. (2021). The role of role-playing in child development: Understanding social skills through play. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 32(1), 56–70.
- Hasan, N. D., & Zaini, S. H. (2021). Application of social skills to children through role-playing activities. *Jurnal Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak Kebangsaan*, 10(1), 25–40.
- Husain Ibrahim, W. A. (2023, April 4). *Zaharah binti Osman*. Google Scholar profile. <https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=LFvKkrgAAAAJ&hl=en>
- Ismail, Z., & Ibrahim, A. (2020). Incorporating play-based learning into the curriculum for preschools in Malaysia: Challenges and practical recommendations. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 4(6), 1–9. <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/incorporating-play-based-learning-into-the-curriculum-for-preschools-in-malaysia-challenges-and-practical-recommendations/>
- Jantan, R. (2013). *Faedah bermain dalam perkembangan kanak-kanak prasekolah (4–6 tahun)*. ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303897656_FAEDAH_BERMAIN_DALAM_PERKEMBANGAN_KANAK-KANAK_PRASEKOLAH_4-6_TAHUN
- Jaslinah Makantal. (2014). Perkembangan kemahiran sosial kanak-kanak melalui permainan. *Jurnal Penyelidikan Kent*, 82–101.

- Kassim, R., Radzi, F. A. M., & Mustafa, S. M. S. (2024). Delving into preschool teachers' approaches and knowledge on social skills and its relationship to school readiness. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 14(1), 2546–2555. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i1/20316>
- Kit Yee, W., & Syed Akbar, S. H. (2017). Think-Group-Share meningkatkan kemahiran berkongsi dalam kalangan murid prasekolah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak Kebangsaan*, 6, 48–66.
- Mohamed, S., Satari, N., Sulaiman, N. F., Toran, H., & Yasin, M. H. M. (2019). Preschool teachers' knowledge and practice on social-emotional learning. *Religación: Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 4(19), 207–211.
- Mohammad, N. A., & Mohamed, S. (2023). Teachers' perspective on the needs of a social-emotional learning module for preschoolers. *Research Highlights in Language, Literature and Education*, 5, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.9734/bpi/rhll/v5/4544c>
- Mohammad, S. A., Osman, Z., & Abdul Aziz, A. N. (2021). Children's socioemotional development through role-play activities in teaching and learning at the preschool level. *Jurnal Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak Kebangsaan*, 10(2), 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.37134/jpak.vol10.2.5.2021>
- Mohammad, S. A., Osman, Z., & Aziz, A. N. A. (2021). Perkembangan sosioemosi kanak-kanak melalui aktiviti main peranan dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran di peringkat prasekolah. *Jurnal Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak Kebangsaan*, 10(2), 47–60.
- Mohd Nihazram, N. A. H., & Masnan, A. H. (2020). Role-play in teaching English as a second language in early childhood education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Awal Kanak-Kanak Kebangsaan*. <https://ojs.upsi.edu.my/index.php/JPAK/article/view/4549>
- Robinson, C., Treasure, T., O'Connor, D., Neylon, G., Harrison, C., & Wynne, S. (2019). *Learning through play: Creating a play-based approach within early childhood contexts*. Oxford University Press.
- Schoon, I., Nasim, B., & Cook, R. (2021). Social inequalities in early childhood competences and the relative role of social and emotional versus cognitive skills in predicting adult outcomes. *British Educational Research Journal*.
- Suud, F., Kunci, K., Anak, S., K., & Pendidikan, P. (2017). Pengembangan keterampilan sosial pada anak usia dini (Analisis psikologi pendidikan Islam). *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2). <https://journal.staimsyk.ac.id/index.php/almanar/article/download/11/6>
- Yunus, F., & Mohamed, S. (2019). Encouraging socioemotional development in preschool children through teachers' responsive practices. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 8(4), 864–876.