

**Implementation of Traditional Dragon Snake Games in Stimulating
Children's Social-Emotional Abilities at Dharma Wanita Kindergarten
Unhas**

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ABSTRACT

Traditional games are part of the nation's cultural heritage, passed down from generation to generation and still frequently found in children's daily play activities. Traditional games generally provide enjoyable experiences for children, even if they involve simple equipment or even just physical movement. Despite their simplicity, traditional games offer numerous positive benefits for child development, including improving social skills. Through play, children learn to interact with peers, cooperate, and understand the rules of the game. Playing is an inseparable activity in a child's life, because through playing, children can express themselves and develop various aspects of development. In the process of growth and development from childhood to adulthood, every individual must have and continues to interact with various forms of play as part of the formation of their character and social skills. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe in detail the implementation of the traditional dragon snake game and how the game is used to stimulate children's social and emotional abilities at Darma Wanita Kindergarten, Hasanuddin University. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study emphasizes understanding the process and behavior of children during the activity, rather than on measuring data in numerical form. The subjects of the study were children at Darma Wanita Kindergarten, Hasanuddin University. who participated in the traditional dragon snake game activity.

Keywords: Social Emotional Skills; Traditional Dragon Snake Game; Stimulus

ABSTRAK

Permainan tradisional merupakan bagian dari kekayaan budaya bangsa yang diwariskan dari generasi ke generasi dan masih sering dijumpai dalam aktivitas bermain anak sehari-

hari. Kegiatan permainan tradisional umumnya memberikan pengalaman yang menyenangkan bagi anak, meskipun dilakukan dengan alat yang sederhana atau bahkan hanya melibatkan aktivitas gerak tubuh. Di balik kesederhanaannya, permainan tradisional memiliki berbagai manfaat positif bagi perkembangan anak, salah satunya dalam membantu meningkatkan kemampuan sosial. Melalui aktivitas bermain, anak dapat belajar berinteraksi dengan teman sebaya, bekerja sama, serta memahami aturan yang berlaku dalam permainan.. Bermain merupakan kegiatan yang tidak terpisahkan dari kehidupan anak, karena melalui bermain anak dapat mengekspresikan diri dan mengembangkan berbagai aspek perkembangan. Dalam proses tumbuh kembang dari masa kanak-kanak menuju dewasa, setiap individu pasti pernah dan terus berinteraksi dengan berbagai bentuk permainan sebagai bagian dari pembentukan karakter dan kemampuan sosialnya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif yang bertujuan untuk menggambarkan secara rinci pelaksanaan permainan tradisional ular naga serta bagaimana permainan tersebut digunakan untuk menstimulasi kemampuan sosial emosional anak di TK Darma Wanita Universitas Hasanuddin. Pendekatan kualitatif dipilih karena penelitian ini menekankan pada pemahaman proses dan perilaku anak selama kegiatan berlangsung, bukan pada pengukuran data dalam bentuk angka. Subjek penelitian adalah anak-anak di TK Darma Wanita Universitas Hasanuddin. yang berpartisipasi dalam kegiatan permainan tradisional ular naga.

Kata Kunci: Kemampuan Sosial Emosional; Permainan Tradisional Ular Naga; Stimulus

INTRODUCTION

Children in the future, both in academic contexts and social life (Denham et al., 2012). Social-emotional competencies include the ability to recognize and manage emotions, develop empathy for others, build and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). Erikson (1963) in his theory of psychosocial development emphasized that children aged 3-6 years are in the stage of "initiative versus guilt" where they learn to take initiative, interact with peers, and develop a sense of social competence.

Longitudinal research shows that children with strong social-emotional skills at an early age have better outcomes in academic achievement, mental health, and career success in adulthood (Jones et al., 2015). In contrast, deficits in social-emotional competence in childhood are associated with an increased risk of behavioral problems, academic difficulties, and mental health disorders later in life (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015).

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that play is the main activity that promotes children's cognitive and social development. Through the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky explained that children develop optimally when engaging in collaborative play activities with peers or adults who provide scaffolding. Traditional group games provide a natural context for social-emotional learning because they require children to negotiate, compromise, follow rules, and manage emotions in dynamic social situations.

Parten (1932) in the theory of the stages of social play explained that cooperative play, in which children work together to achieve a common goal, is the highest form of social play that develops complex interpersonal skills. Bandura (1977) through social

learning theory also explains that children learn social-emotional behavior through observation and modeling of peers during play activities.

Traditional games are part of the cultural heritage that is inherited across generations and contains the noble values of the community (Danandjaja, 2002). In Indonesia, traditional games such as dragon snake, engklek, gobak sodor, and congklak have been played for centuries and have unique characteristics that support the holistic development of children. Bishop and Curtis (2005) explain that traditional games are often inherently designed to teach social skills, cooperation, and emotion regulation through clear rule structures and intense group interactions.

However, along with the development of technology and modernization, traditional games are increasingly marginalized by digital games and gadgets (Nur, 2013). This shift is alarming because it reduces the child's opportunities to engage in direct social interactions that are important for social-emotional development. Research by Lavega et al. (2014) shows that traditional games are more effective in improving social skills and positive emotions compared to individual or technology-based games.

The dragon snake game is a traditional game that is popular in various regions in Indonesia with a variety of rules. In general, the game involves children forming a long line by holding hands, then walking around singing, and trying to avoid the "guards" who try to catch the tail of the line. The structure of the game uniquely integrates several elements that support social-emotional learning:

1. Group cooperation: Children should move in sync and maintain the integrity of the line
2. Emotional regulation: Children learn to manage tension when they are close to being caught and accept consequences when they exit the game.
3. Perspective taking: Children experience various roles (line members, guards) that build empathy
4. Communication and negotiation: Children must coordinate and communicate for game strategy

Although some studies have explored the benefits of traditional gaming in general (Iswinarti, 2017; Kurniati, 2016), there is still a gap in the deep understanding of the specific mechanisms by which certain traditional games, such as dragon snakes, facilitate children's social-emotional development. Previous research by Sitorus et al. (2023) explored dragon snake games in the context of elementary schools, but there has been no research that focuses on its implementation at the kindergarten level with an in-depth analysis of the social-emotional learning process that occurs.

In addition, the challenges of implementing the play approach in Indonesia's early childhood education are still significant. Research by Hasbi and Sallu (2024) identified that many PAUD institutions still prioritize cognitive academic achievement over social-emotional development through play. Teachers' lack of understanding of how to effectively facilitate traditional games for specific learning purposes is also an obstacle (Siantajani, 2020).

This study formulates problems, namely 1) What is the process of implementing the traditional dragon snake game at Dharma Women's Kindergarten, Hasanuddin University?. 2) What aspects of social-emotional abilities are stimulated through dragon snake games? 3) How do social-emotional learning mechanisms occur during the dragon

snake game? 4) What are the challenges and supporting factors in the implementation of dragon snake games for children's social-emotional development?

This study aims to: 1) Describe in depth the process of implementing the traditional dragon snake game at Dharma Women's Kindergarten, Hasanuddin University. 2) Identify aspects of social-emotional abilities that develop through dragon snake play. 3) Analyze the social-emotional learning mechanisms that occur during the game using relevant theoretical frameworks. 4) Identify the factors that support and hinder the effective implementation of dragon snake games

This research is expected to contribute to enriching the literature on social-emotional learning through traditional games with Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective and Bandura's social learning theory in the Indonesian context. Social-emotional development refers to the child's ability to understand and manage emotions, develop healthy relationships with others, and behave according to social norms (Goleman, 1995). Denham (2006) identified three main components of emotional competence in early childhood: (1) emotional expression, (2) emotional understanding, and (3) emotion regulation.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the central role of play in child development, particularly in mediating social and cognitive learning. The concept of ZPD explains that children can achieve a higher level of development when playing with peers or having support from adults. In the context of group play, scaffolding occurs naturally when a more competent child helps a friend who needs support. Parten (1932) classified social play in six stages, with cooperative play being the most complex form in which children work together for a common goal. Dragon snake games fall into this category because they require intensive coordination and cooperation.

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of traditional games in child development. Iswinarti (2017) found that traditional games increase the emotional intelligence of children aged 7-9 years. Lavega et al. (2014) in an experimental study showed that cooperative traditional games generate higher positive emotions than competitive or individual games. Sitorus et al. (2023) identified that dragon snake games improve the social skills of elementary school students, but the study did not analyze in depth the learning mechanisms that occurred.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with an instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995). The case study was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, specifically the implementation of dragon snake games and their impact on children's social-emotional development. This design is in line with the research goal of understanding the "how" and "why" of a phenomenon, not just "what" happens (Yin, 2018). Location: Dharma Women's Kindergarten Hasanuddin University, Makassar, South Sulawesi. This school was chosen because it has adequate play facilities and teachers who are open to the implementation of traditional play approaches.

Child Participants: 24 children (13 girls, 11 boys) from group B (ages 5-6 years) who participated in the dragon snake game activity. All children come from middle-class socio-economic backgrounds, with parents who are mostly lecturers, staff, or students of Hasanuddin University. Inclusion criteria: children who are actively attending school,

do not have significant developmental disabilities, and have parental permission to participate.

Teacher Informant: Three classroom teachers who are directly involved in facilitating the game (Teacher A: 15 years of teaching experience; Teacher B: 8 years of experience; Teacher C: 5 years of experience).

Sampling Techniques: Purposive sampling is used to select classes and teachers who are willing and experienced in the implementation of play-based learning.

Data Collection Procedure

1. Structured Observation

Frequency: Six sessions of dragon snake games are conducted over three weeks (two sessions per week), each of which is 30–40 minutes long. **Observer:** Two researchers conducted simultaneous observations to improve reliability. **Focus of observation:** Children's social behavior (interaction, cooperation, communication), emotional expression, response to rules, conflict resolution, and participation patterns. **Instrument:** Structured observation guidelines based on SEL components from CASEL (2020) with specific behavior checklist (attached in appendix). **Note-taking:** Descriptive and reflective field notes, as well as video recording for more in-depth analysis

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Informants: Three classroom teachers and six parents (selected based on variations in children's participation rates). **Time:** Interviews were conducted after the fourth and sixth observation sessions, lasting 30–45 minutes each. **Guidance questions:** Include perceptions of the child's social-emotional behavior changes, implementation challenges, and facilitation strategies (interview guide attached). **Recording:** Audio recording with the consent of the informant, then transcribed verbatim

3. Documentation

Video recording: Six game sessions were recorded for microanalytic analysis of social interactions. **Photo:** Visual documentation of children's activities and emotional expressions. **School documents:** Daily lesson plan (RPPH) related to play activities

The research instrument is in the form of Social-Emotional Behavior Observation Guidelines: Developed based on the framework of CASEL (2020) and the Denham Affect Knowledge Test (Denham, 1986), covering 25 behavioral indicators grouped in five SEL dimensions

1. **Teacher Interview Guide:** 15 open-ended questions about perception, facilitation strategies, and observation of children's behavior change
2. **Parent Interview Guide:** 10 questions about changing children's social-emotional behavior at home
3. **Researcher Reflection Sheet:** Standard format for reflective notes after each observation session

This study uses thematic analysis following the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) with six stages: 1) Familiarization with data: Listening to recordings, reading transcripts repeatedly, and watching observational videos to gain a holistic understanding. 2) Generating initial codes: Systematic encoding of data using NVivo 12 software to identify interesting features of the data. 3) Searching for themes: Grouping codes into potential themes based on emerging patterns. 4) Reviewing themes: Checking the theme's suitability with the code and the overall data set. 5) Defining and naming themes: Analyze each theme in-depth and make a clear definition. 6) Producing

the report: Compile an analytical narrative with the support of relevant data citations. Inter-rater reliability: Two researchers independently coded 30% of the data, with a consensus rate (Cohen's Kappa) of 0.82, indicating good reliability.

Source triangulation: Data from children, teachers, and parents

Triangulation methods: Observation, interviews, and documentation

1. Member checking: Interview transcripts and initial interpretations are confirmed with the informant.

2. Prolonged engagement: Observation for three weeks with various game situations

Transferability (transferabilitas):

1. Thick description: Rich contextual descriptions of settings, participants, and processes.

2. Purposive sampling: Information-rich case selection

Dependability:

a. Trail audit: Complete documentation of the research process from data collection to analysis.

b. Peer debriefing: Regular discussions with two early childhood education experts

Confirmability:

a. Reflexive journal: Researchers document biases, assumptions, and personal reflections.

b. Raw data preservation: All raw data (recordings, transcripts, field notes) is stored for auditing

RESEARCH RESULTS

Thematic analysis of observation, interview, and documentation data resulted in four main themes that illustrate how dragon snake play stimulates children's social-emotional abilities: (1) Increased Peer Interaction and Cooperation, (2) Development of Emotion Regulation and Acceptance of Rules, (3) Formation of Empathy and Sportsmanship, and (4) Strengthening Self-Confidence and Self-Expression. Each theme will be elaborated with the support of rich empirical data.

Theme 1: Increasing Interaction and Cooperation Between Peers

Dragon snake games consistently create situations that require children to interact intensively and cooperate with peers. The structure of the game that requires children to form long lines by holding hands and moving synchronously demands high group coordination.

Physical Coordination and Verbal Communication:

Observations show that in the first session, the children's line is often cut off because someone walks too fast or slowly. However, as the session progressed, the children began to develop communication strategies:

"Slow down, it's going to break!" (Aisyah, 5 years old, session 3, field note)

"Rafi, don't pull it off! We have to be together!" (Zahra, 6 years old, session 4, field note)

Teacher A observed this development: "At first they walked alone, no matter the friends behind. Now they have started to remind each other, even those in front occasionally turn their heads to make sure the line is still intact."

Emergent Role Sharing and Leadership:

Interestingly, on several occasions natural leadership from children emerged:

"Farel in front always says 'let's turn fast!' or 'now take it slowly'. Other friends followed his direction. This shows the emergence of leadership skills naturally." (Teacher B, interview, session 5). Video documentation shows that Farel (6 years old) who was at the front of the line consistently gave verbal and gestural directions to his friends, and the response of friends who followed his directions showed trust and cooperation.

Negotiation and Conflict Resolution:

Small conflicts about the division of roles (who is the guard, who is at the front of the line) provide an opportunity for the child to learn to negotiate:

"In the second session, there were three children who wanted to be guardians. At first, they scrambled, but then the teacher suggested them to suit (scissors-stone-paper). They agreed and accepted the results well. The next session, when a similar situation arose, they immediately sued without being asked." (Field note, sessions 2 and 4). Zahra's parents reported a change in behavior at home: "Zahra is now more able to get along with her sister. If we used to fight over toys before, now he says 'let's just suit it' or 'you first, later I'll do it'."

Theme 2: Development of Emotion Regulation and Acceptance of Rules

Dragon snake games with clear rules (the line must be intact, the caught must come out) provides a context for the exercise of emotion regulation, especially in the face of frustration and disappointment.

Frustration Management:

Observations show variations in the child's response when caught and have to leave the game:

"First session: Rafa cried when he was caught and had to get out. He sat with his back to his friends while pouting. Third session: When caught again, Rafa looks disappointed but not crying. He sat on the edge while watching his friends play. Fifth session: Rafa was caught again but this time he smiled and said 'Well, catch again!' then sat down and clapped to the rhythm of the song." (Field note, Rafa's longitudinal development)

Teacher C explained the strategy used: "When a child is very disappointed, we don't immediately entertain with cliché words. We let him feel his emotions for a while, then we approached him and said 'You're disappointed, huh? Can you be sad for a while. We'll play again later and you can be more careful.' It helps them learn that negative emotions are normal, but we can manage them."

Internalization and Compliance with Rules:

In the early sessions, some children try to "cheat" by removing the handle or running when they are about to be caught:

"Session 1: Must repeatedly remind the rule that hands must not be released. Some children protest 'But I don't want to go out!' Sessions 4-6: Children already understand and accept the rules. Some even remind each other 'Eh, don't let go of your hands, you'll cheat!'" (Teacher A, interview)

Video analysis showed a significant decrease in the frequency of rule violations from an average of 7 times per session in sessions 1-2 to 2 times per session in sessions 5-6.

Self-Control in Competitive Situations:

The dragon snake game creates tension that teaches self-control:

"What is interesting is that when the line was almost caught, the children looked tense but still tried not to let go of their grip. Some even shouted 'Be careful!' but still ran together. This shows they can control the impulse to escape and run on their own, and choose to stay with the group." (Teacher B, interview)

Theme 3: Forming Empathy and Sportsmanship

Dragon snake games with alternate role structures (sometimes as members of the ranks, sometimes as guards) provide an opportunity for children to experience various perspectives.

Perspective-Taking through Role Switching:

Observations show the development of empathy when children experience various positions:

"Session 2: Dimas is a guard and very aggressive in chasing the line. Some of my friends looked scared. Session 4: When Dimas becomes a member of the ranks, he himself must be chased by an aggressive guard. After that he said, 'Wow, I'm really afraid of being chased.' Session 6: When he became a guard again, Dimas was less aggressive, more moderate." (Field note, Dimas longitudinal development)

Teacher A reflected: "This is one of the strengths of traditional games. Children learn what it feels like to be in different positions. When they feel for themselves what it feels like to be chased too aggressively or what it feels like to be caught, their empathy develops naturally."

Social Support and Encouraging Peers:

Spontaneous supportive behavior appears among children:

"Video session 5: When Lina was almost caught and looked panicked, Zahra who was in front of her shouted 'Come on Lina, you can!' while pulling her hand harder. When they finally made it through, they both laughed and high-fived." (Video analysis, session 5)

"When a friend comes out because they are caught and look sad, some children encourage 'Later play again!' or 'You're already good earlier!'" (Field note, sessions 3-6). Aisyah's parents reported: "Aisyah said that she was sad to see her friend leave the game. He said that tomorrow he wanted to take care of his friend so that he would not be caught again. It's a new thing, usually he just focuses on himself."

Sportsmanship and Fair Play:

The development of the concept of fairness and sportsmanship:

"Session 5: There is an interesting incident. Farel was caught but the guards doubted whether it was really hit or not. The other friends said, 'I didn't get hit!' but Farel himself said 'Hit, I'm just out.' It shows great honesty and sportsmanship for a child of their age." (Field note, session 5)

Teacher C: "We didn't expect children of this age to be able to be so sportsmanlike. But it turns out that if the atmosphere of the game is fun and not too competitive, they can be very fair."

Theme 4: Strengthening Self-Confidence and Self-Expression

Dragon snake games that involve singing while moving provide a medium for children to express themselves and build confidence.

Positive Emotional Expressiveness:

Video analysis shows an increase in the expression of positive emotions:

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"The children's faces are radiant, smiling widely, laughing freely. Some children who are usually quiet are seen singing loudly. This is different from other learning activities where they are more reserved." (Field note, sessions 3-6)

Teacher B: "One of the most obvious is the change in Rina who is usually very shy. In the first session she was barely silent while singing. Now he's one of the loudest voices and looks really enjoying himself."

Courage to Take the Initiative:

Some children who were initially passive began to take the initiative:

"Session 6: When asked 'Who wants to be a guardian?', some children who had never raised their hands before, this time raised their hands. When they were chosen, they looked excited and proud." (Field note, session 6). Rafa's parents: "Rafa is getting braver. Yesterday he told me proudly that he had dared to become a guard. He said his friends said he was cool. This is a confidence boost."

Sense of Belonging and Social Acceptance:

Observations show a growing inclusivity:

"Initially, there was a tendency for children to be more active in grouping themselves with their close friends. But as time went on, they became more open. In sessions 5 and 6, no one protested anymore when paired with anyone. They accept all friends as part of the group." (Teacher A, interview). Video documentation shows Lina (the quietest child) in session 6 being well received in the middle of the line, with friends in front and behind her actively communicating with her and making sure she can follow.

Although this is a qualitative study, structured observations using checklists allow documentation of behavioral frequencies.

Table 1. Here is a summary of the observed patterns:

Social-Emotional Aspects	Volume 1-2	Volume 5-6	Change Patterns
Positive verbal communication	8-12 times/session	25-30 times/session	Significant increase
Rule violations	6-7 times/session	1-2 times/session	Drastic decline
Intense expressions of disappointment (crying, angry)	3-4 children/session	0-1 child/session	Downward
Supportive behavior of friends	2-3 times/session	12-15 times/session	Significant increase
Initiative to take on a role	5-6 children	14-16 children	Increase

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the traditional game of dragon snakes effectively stimulates various aspects of early childhood social-emotional abilities at Dharma Wanita Kindergarten, Hasanuddin University. This section will interpret the

findings through a relevant theoretical lens, compare them with previous research, discuss practical implications, and acknowledge the limitations of the research.

Social-Emotional Learning Mechanism through Dragon Snake Game

The findings on improved coordination and group cooperation can be understood through Vygotsky's concept of ZPD and scaffolding. Dragon snake games create situations where children are in their ZPD for social skills—they can't succeed alone but can thrive with peer support. The example of Farel giving directions to his friends and those who responded by following shows the natural process of peer scaffolding. Rogoff (1990) explained that guided participation in socio-cultural activities allows children to internalize social norms and skills. In the context of dragon snake games, children who are more competent in group coordination (such as Farel) indirectly teach their friends through modeling and verbal guidance. Over time, all children began to internalize this coordination strategy, which can be seen from the decrease in the frequency of disconnected lines from session to session.

Social Learning through Modeling and Vicarious Learning

Bandura's (1977) social learning theory explains that children learn social-emotional behavior through observation and imitation. The case of Dimas who changed his playing style after experiencing firsthand what it feels like to be aggressively chased shows the process of vicarious learning. When children experience the consequences of certain behaviors (both as actors and receivers), they learn to modify their behavior. Furthermore, Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism explains that behavior, personal factors (such as emotions and cognition), and the environment influence each other. Dragon snake play as a social environment shapes the child's behavior (such as cooperation), which then forms positive emotions (joy when it succeeds), which further strengthens the cooperative behavior at the next opportunity.

Emotion Regulation through Repeated Exposure and Habit Formation

The development of emotional regulation seen in Rafa—from crying when caught to accepting with a smile—can be explained through Gross's (2015) theory of emotional regulation. Gross identified several emotion regulation strategies, including situation selection, cognitive reappraisal, and expressive suppression.

Through repeated exposure to the same situation (caught and having to get out), Rafa learned cognitive reappraisal: "Quitting the game doesn't mean I'm a total failure; It's just part of the game and there will be another chance." Teacher support that validates negative emotions while reframing the situation ("It's okay to be sad for a while... Later we will play again, and you can be more careful") shows an effective emotion coaching strategy (Gottman et al., 1996). Thompson (1994) explained that emotional regulation in children develops through external regulation (by parents/teachers) towards co-regulation (with peers) and finally self-regulation. Dragon snake games facilitate this transition: the teacher provides emotional scaffolding at the beginning of the session, then peers start supporting each other ("You're already good!"), and eventually the child can manage his or her own emotions.

Forming Empathy through Perspective-Taking

The findings on the development of empathy are in line with Wellman's (2014) theory of mind understanding which explains that children aged 4-6 years are developing a theory of mind—the ability to understand that others have different thoughts, feelings, and perspectives than themselves. The dragon snake game with a role rotation structure

(alternating as a guard and a member of the line) provides a concrete opportunity for perspective-taking. When Dimas feels what it feels like to be aggressively pursued, he develops affective empathy (sensing the emotions of others) which then guides his behavior at the next opportunity. Hoffman (2000) distinguishes empathy from sympathy: empathy is feeling what others feel, while sympathy is feeling sorry for the suffering of others. Children's behaviors that support a caught friend show a development of sympathy preceded by empathy—they sense their friend's disappointment and are motivated to alleviate it.

The findings of this study are in line with several previous studies but also make a unique contribution:

Iswinarti (2017) found that traditional games increase the emotional intelligence of children aged 7-9 years. The study extended the findings to younger children (5-6 years old) and showed that similar benefits were also found in the preschool age group. Lavega et al. (2014) in an experimental study showed that traditional cooperative games produce higher positive emotions than competitive games. The findings of this study support this with rich qualitative documentation of children's positive emotional expressions during dragon snake play. Sitorus et al. (2023) identified that dragon snake games improve the social skills of elementary school students. This study confirms these findings but with a more in-depth analysis of the learning mechanisms that occur.

Inherently social game structure: Dragon snake games force children to interact intensively because individual success depends on group success. This creates an interdependence that encourages cooperation.

Repeated practice and frequency: The implementation of six sessions over three weeks allows the child to get repeated practice. This consistency is important for the internalization of social-emotional skills. **Safe and supportive environment:** The teachers at Dharma Perempuan Kindergarten create an atmosphere that allows children to make mistakes, express emotions, and learn without fear of judgment. The emotion coaching approach used by teachers is very effective. **Balance between structure and flexibility:** Clear rules of the game provide structure, but there is flexibility in how children express themselves (choosing songs, setting strategies) that provides a sense of autonomy.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The implementation of the dragon snake game successfully stimulated various aspects of early childhood social-emotional abilities, particularly in four main dimensions: (a) peer interaction and cooperation, (b) emotion regulation and acceptance of rules, (c) empathy and sportsmanship, and (d) self-confidence and self-expression.

The social-emotional learning mechanism through dragon snake play occurs through several processes: (a) Zone of Proximal Development and peer scaffolding, where the more competent child helps a friend who needs support; (b) social learning through modeling and vicarious learning, where children learn from observation and direct experience; (c) emotion regulation through repeated exposure and habit formation with the support of emotion coaching from teachers; and (d) the formation of empathy through perspective-taking facilitated by role changes in the game.

Key factors for successful implementation include an inherently social game structure, a safe and supportive learning environment, consistent repeated practice, and

effective teacher facilitation strategies (especially emotion coaching and specific praise for prosocial behavior).

The social-emotional development observed was gradual and progressive, with a significant increase in the frequency of positive communication, a decrease in rule violations, a better ability to manage disappointment, and an increase in supportive behavior of friends from the beginning to the final session.

This study confirms that traditional games, especially dragon snakes, are an effective, accessible, and culturally relevant medium to stimulate early childhood social-emotional development in the Indonesian context. Through an in-depth analysis of the learning process that occurs, this research makes a theoretical and practical contribution to the field of early childhood education.

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Halaman: 13-26

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