



## IMPROVING CHILDREN'S COLLABORATION SKILLS THROUGH FUN COOKING ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AGED 5–6

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### Abstract

This study aims to improve the cooperation skills of children aged 5–6 years through fun cooking activities. The research employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection stages. The subjects of this study were 15 kindergarten children aged 5–6 years at RA Rahmatullah Tanjung Morawa. Data were collected through observation and documentation. To ensure data validity, this study applied triangulation techniques (methods and sources) and expert judgment for instrument validation, while reliability was supported through inter-observer agreement. Data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative methods by calculating the percentage of children's cooperation skills in each cycle. The results showed a consistent improvement in children's cooperation skills, increasing from 35.42% (pre-intervention) to 60.93% (Cycle I) and 93.22% (Cycle II). These findings indicate that fun cooking activities effectively enhance children's cooperation skills by promoting interaction, communication, and shared responsibility. In conclusion, fun cooking activities provide meaningful and engaging learning experiences that support the development of cooperation skills in early childhood.

Keywords: fun cooking, cooperation skills, early childhood, classroom action research, social development.

### INTRODUCTION

Early childhood education (PAUD) serves as the primary foundation for shaping a child's character, attitudes, and basic skills to navigate subsequent stages of development. During this period, children are in their "golden age," a time when they are highly receptive to various forms of stimulation, including those related to social development. One of the key social skills that should be developed early on is the ability to cooperate. This skill enables children to interact positively with their social environment, such as sharing, taking turns, respecting peers' opinions, and completing tasks collaboratively within a group. According to Pello & Zega (2024), social interactions from an early age play a crucial role in fostering collaborative skills, social adaptation, and children's future success in social life. In line with this, Yunianingsih & Rohita (2024) state that young children's ability to cooperate can develop optimally through learning activities that involve active interaction and the use of engaging media, making it easier for children to understand the importance of working together in a group.

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Translation:

"And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and transgression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in punishment." (Q.S. Al-Ma'idah: 2) (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

According to Quraish Shihab's interpretation, this verse explains that the cooperation commanded here is not merely a joint activity, but must be directed toward actions that bring benefit (*maslahah*) and be guided by moral values so as not to deviate from justice and truth. This principle shows that cooperation is part of the formation of noble character and positive social attitudes.

In the context of early childhood education, the value of *ta'āwun* (mutual cooperation) is highly relevant, as children are in the early stages of social development, where they begin to learn how to interact, share roles, help one another, and work collaboratively with their peers. Through the habituation of cooperative activities in the learning process, children not only develop social skills but are also instilled with values of empathy, responsibility, and concern for others in accordance with Islamic teachings (Shihab, 2002).

By ages 5–6, children are expected to begin demonstrating simple cooperation in group activities. However, in practice, many children still struggle with this. Egocentric behaviors such as wanting to win at all costs, fighting over toys, refusing to share, and lacking patience while waiting for their turn are still commonly observed. This situation indicates that children's cooperative skills have not yet developed optimally and require appropriate stimulation through planned learning activities (Kanza et al., 2025). Shofiah & Fauzi (2023) states that during the preschool years, children need direct experiences in group activities to develop empathy, communication skills, and the ability to cooperate. Without optimal stimulation, children may face obstacles in forming social relationships and achieving readiness for the next level of education.

One approach to stimulate children's collaborative skills is through active, contextual, and enjoyable learning activities. Fun cooking is a form of learning that directly engages children through real-life experiences. In this activity, children participate in various tasks such as selecting ingredients, dividing tasks, taking turns using tools, and completing the activity together. This process encourages children to communicate, collaborate, and help one another within the group. Ramadhani et al. (2025) states that fun cooking activities are effective in enhancing cooperation skills, adherence to rules, and collaborative skills in early childhood. Additionally, Habibi (2022) explain that fun cooking activities also contribute to children's social-emotional, language, motor, and independence development. In line with this, Nurlaili (2019) emphasizes that experience-based learning activities, such as group practice activities, can serve as an effective means not only of developing but also of authentically assessing children's social skills.

Beyond its social benefits, fun cooking provides meaningful and holistic learning experiences. Children not only learn to recognize various food ingredients but also grasp simple mathematical concepts such as counting and measuring, while developing fine motor coordination. Annisa & Pangaribuan (2024) emphasize that early childhood learning must be developmentally appropriate that is, aligned with the child's developmental stage, involving real-world experiences, and encouraging active engagement in a fun environment. This approach also aligns with 21st-century educational demands that emphasize mastery of the 4C skills, particularly collaboration and communication.

Several previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of fun cooking activities in enhancing children's social skills. A study conducted by Rahmawati et al. (2025) showed that fun cooking activities have a significant impact on improving the social skills of children aged 5–6 years, particularly in terms of cooperation and group interaction. These findings are supported by Humairah et al. (2025), who state that simple group cooking activities can foster a spirit of mutual assistance, respect for peers' opinions, and the ability to complete tasks together cohesively. Thus, fun cooking activities serve not only as life skills training but also as an effective learning strategy for developing cooperation skills through concrete experiences. According to Khadijah & Amelia (2020), group-based learning helps children get used to working toward a common goal, allowing the values of cooperation to take root naturally. With the right guidance from teachers, fun cooking activities can serve as an enjoyable yet meaningful tool for optimizing the physical, motor, and social development of young children. Thus, fun cooking activities not only function as life skills training but also as an effective learning strategy for developing cooperation skills through real-world experiences.

Theoretically, learning through fun cooking activities aligns with Khilmiyah & Wiyono (2025) perspective, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in children's learning processes through the concept of the zone of proximal development. Through collaborative activities, children receive support from teachers and peers, enabling their social and cognitive abilities to develop gradually through meaningful interactions.

Based on initial observations at RA Rahmatullah Tanjung Morawa, the collaborative skills of 5–6-year-old children still need improvement. The children are not yet fully capable of collaborating in group activities, such as sharing tasks, waiting for their turn, and completing activities together. As a religious-based educational institution, RA Rahmatullah has the potential to integrate Islamic values

into the learning process, such as the attitude of mutual assistance (ta'awun), sharing, discipline, and patience. Fun cooking activities serve as a relevant learning alternative because they not only stimulate cooperation skills but also instill Islamic character values in a practical way.

Based on the above discussion, fun cooking activities are viewed as an appropriate learning strategy to enhance the cooperation skills of young children. Therefore, this study aims to improve children's cooperation skills through fun cooking activities among 5–6-year-olds at RA Rahmatullah Tanjung Morawa. This study is expected to contribute to the development of effective innovative learning, particularly in enhancing children's cooperation skills and supporting the continuous improvement of early childhood education quality.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach aimed at improving the quality of learning through concrete actions in the classroom. CAR is a systematic research method designed to enhance teaching practices through repeated action cycles (Arikunto et al., 2015). The research was conducted collaboratively and participatively, meaning that the researcher worked together with classroom teachers at RA Rahmatullah Tanjung Morawa during the stages of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. The study involved 15 children aged 5–6 years, consisting of both boys and girls with relatively homogeneous developmental characteristics in terms of cognitive and social abilities.

This study was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, implementation of actions, observation, and reflection. The research design was based on Kurt Lewin's model, which emphasizes iterative cycles to achieve continuous improvement in learning outcomes (Arikunto et al., 2015). In Cycle I, the activities focused on the initial implementation of fun cooking, while in Cycle II, improvements were made based on the reflection results from Cycle I, including more structured task distribution and more complex collaborative activities.

The research instruments included observation sheets, field notes, and documentation. The observation sheets were developed based on indicators of children's cooperative skills, such as participation, task sharing, helping peers, following rules, self-control, and completing tasks collaboratively (Aisyah et al., 2025; Y. Lubis & Ritonga, 2023; Y. W. Lubis et al., 2026; Siti Asiyah & Setiawati, 2025).

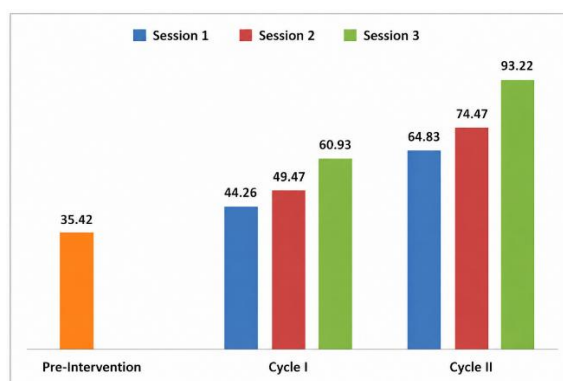
To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques, including triangulation of data sources (teachers and children), methods (observation and documentation), and time (across cycles). In addition, content validity of the instruments was established through expert judgment by early childhood education specialists. Meanwhile, the reliability of the observation instrument was ensured through inter-observer agreement, where the researcher and collaborating teacher independently observed and compared the results to maintain consistency.

Data collection techniques used non-test methods, namely direct observation and documentation. Observations were conducted during the learning activities to monitor children's social interactions, while documentation supported the data in the form of field records and learning outcomes. Data analysis was conducted using a quantitative descriptive approach by calculating the percentage of children's cooperative skills achievement in each cycle. The level of achievement was categorized into developmental criteria to determine the extent of improvement. The analysis aimed to identify whether there was a significant improvement in children's cooperative skills following the implementation of the fun cooking activities (Sugiyono, 2020)

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of three sessions, with the aim of improving the cooperation skills of 5–6-year-old children through fun cooking activities. Based on observations conducted at RA Rahmatullah, the data showed that the children's cooperation skills prior to the intervention were still relatively low.

Figure 1. Graph of the Improvement in Children's Cooperation Skills through Fun Cooking Activities



The figure above shows data on the results of efforts to improve children's cooperation skills through fun cooking activities. This is evident in the pre-intervention phase, with a percentage of 35.42%. This indicates that most children were not yet able to cooperate optimally in group activities, such as sharing tasks, waiting their turn, helping one another, and completing activities together. This low level of cooperation aligns with research findings stating that young children tend to still exhibit egocentric behavior and require stimulation through group activities to develop their social skills.

After implementing the intervention in Cycle I through fun cooking activities, the children's cooperation skills began to show improvement. In the first session of Cycle I, a percentage of 44.26% was recorded, which increased to 49.47% in the second session, and further rose to 60.93% in the third session. This improvement indicates that the children are beginning to adapt to learning activities involving group work, although the results achieved have not yet met the established success indicator of  $\geq 76\%$ . At this stage, the children began to exhibit behavioral changes, such as being willing to cooperate, interacting with peers, and following rules during activities; however, they still required guidance from the teacher. This is supported by research stating that experience-based learning, such as fun cooking, can gradually enhance children's social interaction through active engagement in group activities.

Furthermore, in Cycle II, a more significant improvement occurred. In the first session of Cycle II, the children's cooperation skills reached 64.83%, then increased to 74.47% in the second session, and reached 93.22% in the third session. These results indicate that the children's cooperation skills have developed optimally and have exceeded the established success indicator. The children were able to cooperate well within the group, such as sharing tasks, helping one another, following rules, and completing activities together with full responsibility. This significant improvement indicates that the fun cooking activity is effective in stimulating children's social development, particularly in their cooperation skills, as also found in previous research that group cooking activities can significantly enhance early childhood collaboration skills.

Overall, the results of this study indicate an improvement in children's cooperation skills from the pre-intervention phase to Cycle II. This improvement occurred gradually and consistently, indicating that the implementation of fun cooking activities has a positive impact on children's social development, particularly in the aspect of cooperation. This aligns with the research by Ayuba et al. (2022), which states that fun cooking activities not only enhance cooperation but also effectively foster various aspects of children's development in an integrated manner.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the study, fun cooking activities were found to be effective in improving the cooperation skills of children aged 5–6 years at RA Rahmatullah. The gradual improvement observed from the pre-intervention phase to Cycle II indicates that learning activities involving direct experience and active participation provide significant stimulation for children's social development.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be explained through experiential learning theory (Kolb), which emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through concrete experience, reflection, and active engagement. In this study, fun cooking activities functioned as a form of experiential learning where children were directly involved in meaningful tasks, allowing them to construct social understanding through interaction. This supports the idea that children learn social behaviors more

effectively when they are actively engaged in real-life contexts rather than passive instruction (Kanza et al., 2025; Y. W. Lubis, 2025).

During the pre-intervention phase, the low level of cooperation indicated that children tended to display egocentric behavior, which is consistent with Piaget's theory of cognitive development, particularly the preoperational stage. At this stage, children often have difficulty seeing perspectives other than their own, which affects their ability to cooperate. The lack of structured group activities further limited opportunities for social interaction, reinforcing individualistic behavior patterns. These findings are in line with previous studies (Nisa, 2025; Pratikno et al., 2025; Ritonga et al., 2022; Suyadi & Ulfah, 2021), which highlight that early childhood learners require structured social experiences to transition from egocentric to more cooperative behaviors.

Following the implementation of fun cooking activities, children began to demonstrate increased participation in collaborative tasks. They engaged in sharing roles, taking turns, and completing group tasks collectively. This improvement can also be interpreted through Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction in cognitive and social development. Through guided collaboration and peer interaction, children operated within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where social skills were enhanced through scaffolding provided by teachers and peers.

Compared to previous studies, the findings of this research are consistent with Ahmad et al. (2026), Hasibuan & Sitorus (2023), and Shaulita et al. (2025), which demonstrate that activity-based and experiential learning approaches can enhance children's social interaction and cooperation. However, this study provides a more context-specific contribution by demonstrating how fun cooking activities, when implemented through a structured CAR framework, can systematically improve cooperation skills across iterative cycles. Unlike prior studies that often focus on single interventions, this research highlights the importance of reflection and refinement across cycles to optimize learning outcomes.

The more significant improvement observed in Cycle II suggests that repeated exposure and refinement of the learning strategy played a crucial role in strengthening children's cooperative behavior. At this stage, children not only demonstrated the ability to work together but also showed emerging prosocial behaviors such as helping peers, respecting others' roles, and taking responsibility for group tasks. This finding reinforces previous research (Annisa & Pangaribuan, 2024; Munadhiroh & S, 2025; Nisa, 2025), while also extending it by showing that sustained and structured interventions can lead to deeper internalization of social values.

Furthermore, fun cooking activities provided a contextual and emotionally engaging learning environment, which increased children's motivation and participation. This aligns with Aprianti & Rahmadonna (2026), who argue that enjoyable, hands-on learning experiences promote holistic development. However, this study adds that the effectiveness of such activities is not solely due to their enjoyable nature, but also due to their structured collaborative design, which intentionally fosters interaction, communication, and shared responsibility.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating that fun cooking activities are not only engaging but also pedagogically effective when grounded in experiential and social constructivist principles. The findings emphasize that early childhood learning strategies should prioritize active participation, social interaction, and iterative improvement to effectively develop children's cooperation skills.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussion, it can be concluded that the cooperation skills of children aged 5–6 years prior to the implementation of fun cooking activities were relatively low, with an initial percentage of 35.42%. Following the implementation of the intervention, children's cooperation skills showed a consistent and significant improvement across cycles. In Cycle I, the improvement ranged from 44.26% to 60.93%, while in Cycle II, it increased substantially from 64.83% to 93.22% by the third session. These findings indicate that fun cooking activities are effective in enhancing children's cooperative skills, as they actively engage children in group-based tasks requiring interaction, communication, and shared responsibility.

Beyond improving cooperation skills, this study highlights that fun cooking activities provide meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences that support children's social-emotional development.

The findings reinforce the importance of experiential and collaborative learning approaches in early childhood education.

Practically, this study has important implications for early childhood educators. Teachers are encouraged to integrate fun cooking activities into classroom practices as a structured learning strategy to foster cooperation. To maximize effectiveness, teachers should design activities that involve clear task distribution, encourage peer interaction, and provide guidance or scaffolding during group work. Additionally, creating a supportive and engaging learning environment is essential to ensure that children actively participate and develop positive social behaviors.

However, this study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted in a single educational setting with a limited number of participants, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Second, the data analysis relied on descriptive quantitative methods without more advanced statistical testing, which may limit the depth of interpretation. Third, the study focused primarily on cooperation skills, without exploring other aspects of child development in detail.

Therefore, future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples across different educational settings to enhance generalizability. Further studies may also apply more rigorous statistical analyses and explore the impact of fun cooking activities on other developmental domains, such as language, cognitive, and emotional skills. Additionally, comparative studies between different experiential learning strategies could provide deeper insights into the most effective approaches for promoting young children's social development.

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