

# GENDER STEREOTYPES IN TOY SELECTION AND THEIR IMPACT ON EARLY CHILDHOOD SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

Gender stereotypes in toy selection for early childhood have been shown to influence children's socio-emotional development. Toys categorized by gender indirectly limit children's exploration space in optimally developing their social skills and emotional abilities. This study aims to synthesize empirical findings on the relationship between gender stereotypes in toy selection and their impact on early childhood socio-emotional development. The method used is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with reference to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. The literature search was conducted through three databases, namely Scopus, Google Scholar, and ERIC, with a publication year range of 2018-2026. A total of 20 articles met all inclusion criteria and were analyzed using thematic synthesis reinforced by bibliometric analysis through the bibliometrix tool in RStudio. The results of the study indicate four main themes: gender stereotypes in toy selection are formed from a very early age; parents, teachers, and the media are the most influential agents of gender socialization; gender-based toys have a significant impact on children's empathy, emotional regulation, and social competence; and this phenomenon is reinforced by patriarchal values and gender bias in educational practices in Indonesia. These findings emphasize the importance of inclusive and gender-stereotype-free play environments to support optimal children's social-emotional development.

Keywords: gender stereotypes, toy selection, social-emotional development.

## INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional development during early childhood serves as a crucial foundation that determines the overall quality of an individual's growth and development. The ability to manage emotions, build social relationships, and develop empathy, which forms between the ages of 0 and 6, has been shown to significantly contribute to children's future academic readiness, mental health, and social success (Kornienko and Rudnova, 2025). One of the earliest mediums playing a role in the formation of these skills is play involving toys. Children's engagement with toys can have a profound impact on their cognitive, emotional, and social and psychological development; social play with peers has even been shown to activate brain regions involved in processing social cues and developing socio-emotional skills such as empathy and emotional language abilities (Bhattacharya and Taneja, 2024). Ironically, toys as a medium for such development are not socially neutral. For a long time, toy choices for children have been shaped by strong gender stereotypes, where girls are steered toward dolls and cooking sets, while boys are steered toward vehicles and construction toys (Kollmayer et al., 2018). Such social constructions are not merely a matter of preference; they touch on the very core of how children build an understanding of themselves, their social groups, and the world around them from the earliest ages.

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of gender stereotypes in toy selection unfolds within a unique socio-cultural landscape. Deep-rooted patriarchal values in many Indonesian families also influence how parents select and provide toys to children based on their gender. Girls are typically given clothing and accessories in pink, while boys receive toys like robots or action figures, which indirectly shape gender roles sociologically and psychologically from an early age (Sary et al., 2023). Furthermore, findings in early childhood education settings indicate that teachers holding strong gender stereotypes tend to provide more opportunities for physical play to boys and more social-emotional activities to girls, resulting in an imbalance in social-emotional development outcomes between the two (Churiyah

and Hasibuan, 2024). This situation indicates that gender stereotypes in the context of toys and play do not originate solely from the family environment but are also reinforced by educational institutions.

Recent studies document that gender stereotypes in toy preferences emerge much earlier than previously assumed. Children's understanding of gender stereotypes is formed before the age of two, and by ages three to four, most children are already able to reliably classify toys into categories for girls or for boys (T. L. King et al., 2021). Parents play a central role in this process of gender socialization; their choice of toys and their responses to children's play activities are key factors determining how strongly gender stereotypes are ingrained in children (Kollmayer et al., 2018). In line with this, longitudinal research reveals that gender-based play patterns have tangible long-term effects; masculine play patterns beginning in preschool have been shown to predict children's career interests during adolescence (Kung, 2021). Collectively, these findings indicate that toy choices framed by gender stereotypes are not merely fleeting preferences but carry long-lasting developmental consequences.

The impact of gender stereotypes in toy selection on children's social-emotional development is beginning to receive serious attention. Children's belief that peers prefer toys aligned with gender stereotypes can limit their exploration of cross-gender behaviors and hinder the development of broader skills (R. A. King et al., 2020). This situation has direct implications for social-emotional development, given that the types of games played determine the social context in which children learn to empathize, negotiate, share, and manage emotions (Kornienko and Rudnova, 2025). When children's play spaces are constrained by gender stereotypes, the potential of play as a medium for fostering social-emotional competencies is likewise diminished, with consequences that extend into adulthood (Nakajima et al., 2020).

Recent research has also begun to highlight the cross-cultural dimensions of this issue. Gender differences in the social-emotional development of young children are consistently reported, yet they are contextual and not uniform across cultures; parenting has been shown to be the primary mediating factor, with socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and cultural norms serving as supporting factors (Tondowala, 2026). These findings are highly relevant to Indonesia as a country with high cultural diversity and strong traditional values that continue to influence daily parenting practices. At the family level, Indonesian parents remain the primary agents in internalizing gender stereotypes in children through the ways they provide guidance regarding gender roles and identities from an early age (Rofiah and Diani, 2022). At the institutional level, gender bias in early childhood education in Indonesia is systemic and is still reflected in how teachers interact and in the selection of play materials in early childhood education centers (Zulkarnaini and Adriany, 2021).

Although the literature on this topic continues to grow, there are three significant research gaps. First, there is a knowledge gap: studies that systematically synthesize the relationship between gender stereotypes in toy selection and their specific impact on the social-emotional development of young children remain very limited. Most studies examine general differences in toy preferences without delving into their impact on the social-emotional domain, and they employ highly varied methods, making it difficult to compare findings across studies (Davis and Hines, 2020). Second, there is a striking population gap: nearly all available empirical studies were conducted in Western and East Asian countries, leaving the Southeast Asian context, including Indonesia, largely underrepresented in existing literature syntheses. Third, there is a methodology gap: most studies still rely on cross-sectional methods using parent or teacher reports, necessitating a more comprehensive and systematic synthesis approach (Tondowala, 2026). These three gaps collectively underscore the urgency of conducting a more comprehensive study.

Based on these gaps, this article aims to conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of empirical studies examining the relationship between gender stereotypes in toy selection and their impact on the social-emotional development of young children. The novelty of this article lies in its integration of two variables, gender stereotypes in the context of toys and social-emotional development, which have traditionally been studied separately, into a unified synthesis supported by bibliometric analysis, as well as its connection to the Indonesian sociocultural context. The findings of this study are expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of gender studies in early childhood education, while also serving as a practical guide for parents, early childhood educators, and policymakers.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as its research design. An SLR is a method of systematic, transparent, and replicable research aimed at identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing all relevant research findings related to a specific topic (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). The implementation of the SLR in this study followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which serve as the international standard for reporting systematic reviews. The research process was carried out through three main stages: planning, conducting literature searches and selection, and data analysis and synthesis (reporting), as is commonly applied in SLRs in the field of early childhood education.

The literature review was conducted using three electronic databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center). These three databases were selected because they offer extensive coverage of scientific literature in the fields of education, developmental psychology, and gender studies. Additionally, this study was supplemented with a bibliometric analysis using the Bibliometrix package, which was run via the Biblioshiny interface in RStudio. Bibliometric analysis was used to map the intellectual structure of the reviewed literature, including a co-occurrence network and a thematic map, which allow for the visual and quantitative identification of research trends and gaps. The keywords used were organized into two main clusters combined with the Boolean operator AND. The first cluster includes the terms “gender stereotype,” “gender-typed toy,” “toy selection,” “gendered toys,” and “toy gender stereotypes”; while the second cluster includes “social-emotional development,” “early childhood,” “preschool children,” “social-emotional development,” and “young children.” The search was conducted in English and Indonesian.

Article selection was conducted in two stages: initial screening based on titles and abstracts, followed by screening based on full-text articles. The established inclusion criteria include: (1) articles published between 2018 and 2026; (2) articles written in English or Indonesian; (3) articles specifically addressing gender stereotypes in the context of children’s toy or game selection and their relationship to the social-emotional development of young children; (4) the article is the result of empirical research, a systematic review, or a conceptual study published in an indexed scientific journal or indexed conference proceedings; and (5) the article is available in full text. The exclusion criteria include: (1) articles in the form of editorials, opinions, or letters to the editor; (2) articles that only discuss gender in general without any connection to toys or children’s social-emotional development; (3) articles that focus on children over six years of age as the primary subjects; and (4) duplicate articles found in more than one database.

Based on the initial search process, a total of 567 articles were identified across all databases used, with 72 articles from Scopus, 476 from Google Scholar, and 19 from ERIC. After removing 51 duplicate records, 516 articles remained for the screening stage. Screening based on titles and abstracts resulted in the exclusion of 465 articles, leaving 51 reports sought for retrieval. Of these, 5 reports could not be retrieved, yielding 46 articles assessed for eligibility based on the full text. From this stage, 26 articles were excluded for failing to meet one or more inclusion criteria, specifically, 12 articles did not specifically link gender stereotypes in toy selection to social-emotional development, 9 articles focused on children above six years of age as the primary subjects, and 5 articles did not meet the document type criteria. Consequently, a total of 20 articles met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. The entire selection process is visualized in a PRISMA 2020 flowchart as presented in Figure 1. Data analysis was performed using thematic synthesis, a technique that allows researchers to identify recurring themes across studies and draw broader conclusions beyond a mere summary of individual findings.

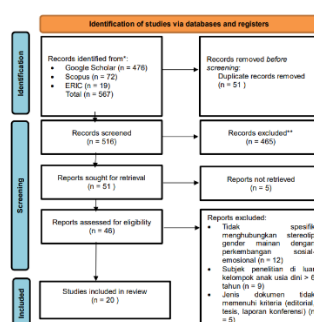
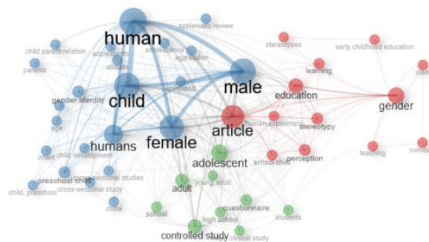


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flowchart

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

## Bibliometric Analysis

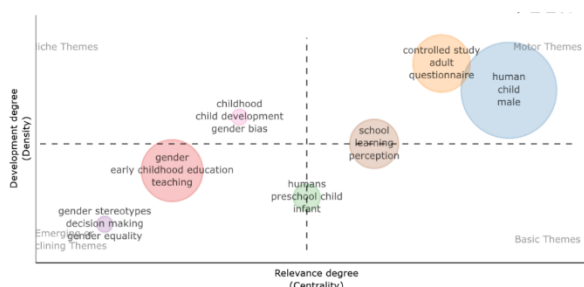
Before examining the findings from each article thematically, a bibliometric analysis was first conducted using the Bibliometrix software in RStudio to map the research landscape on gender stereotypes in the selection of toys for young children. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach used to map patterns, trends, and relationships between concepts within a field of study based on scientific publication data. The two types of analysis performed were co-occurrence networks and thematic maps, both generated from article data obtained through Scopus.



**Figure 2. Co-occurrence Network**

The results of the co-occurrence network analysis present a visualization of the network of relationships among keywords that frequently appear together in the reviewed literature (see Figure 2). This network is divided into three main clusters. The blue cluster is the largest and densest, with main nodes consisting of the keywords human, child, male, female, and humans, indicating that studies on children from a biological gender perspective are the most frequently researched theme in the international literature. Within it, supporting keywords such as "infant," "child development," "preschool child," "gender identity," and "child-parent relationship" are also found, indicating that research on gender in children is primarily conducted within the age range from infancy to preschool, with child development and family relationships as the main focus.

The red cluster occupies a strategic position as a conceptual bridge between the blue and green clusters. Its main nodes include "article," "gender," "education," "stereotypes," "learning," and "early childhood education." The presence of stereotypes and early childhood education within the same cluster indicates that the relationship between gender stereotypes and early childhood education is already recognized as a distinct theme within the international academic community, although it still requires further development. The smaller green cluster includes adolescent, adult, questionnaire, and controlled study, suggesting that some gender-related literature also addresses older age groups using a survey approach.



**Figure 3. Thematic Map**

The thematic map divides the themes in the literature into four quadrants based on relevance (centrality) and development (density) (see Figure 3). The top-right quadrant, or motor themes, is occupied by the human, child, and male clusters, indicating that research on biologically based gender in children already has a very strong literature base. The lower right quadrant, or "basic themes," is occupied by the clusters "school," "learning," and "perception," indicating fundamental themes that have not yet developed in specific ways.

The quadrant most relevant to this study is the lower-left quadrant, or "emerging themes," which is occupied by the clusters of gender, early childhood education, and teaching. Although these clusters have a relatively high frequency of occurrence, their density levels, which remain below average, indicate that studies specifically linking gender to early childhood education have not yet been

thoroughly developed in the literature. This condition empirically confirms the research gap identified in the introduction. In the same quadrant, the clusters of gender stereotypes, decision-making, and gender equality are in the earliest stages of development, indicating that the themes of gender equality and stereotypes still require significantly greater research attention. Overall, the results of this bibliometric analysis reinforce the justification for this study while providing a clear map of its position within the evolving body of knowledge on gender and early childhood education.

### Characteristics of the Analyzed Articles

Based on the selection process using the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, this study included 20 articles that met all inclusion criteria, comprising seven articles from Indonesia and thirteen articles from international contexts, with a publication span from 2018 to 2026. A thematic analysis of all the articles yielded four interrelated main themes, namely: (1) the formation of gender stereotypes through toys from an early age; (2) the role of parents and the environment as agents of gender socialization; (3) the impact of gender-based toys on children's social-emotional development; and (4) a portrait of gender socialization through toys in the Indonesian context. The complete characteristics of all analyzed articles are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. List of Articles Analyzed in the Systematic Literature Review**

No	Author and Year	Title	Method	Key Findings
1	Davis and Hines (2020)	How Large Are Gender Differences in Toy Preferences? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Toy Preference Research	Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis	Meta-analysis of 75 studies (113 effect sizes) found that boys strongly prefer masculine toys and girls prefer feminine toys ( $d \geq 1.60$ ). The difference increases with age and is influenced by measurement methods.
2	King et al. (2021)	Gender Stereotypes and Biases in Early Childhood: A Systematic Review	Systematic Review	Review of 21 studies involving children aged 3–5 years found that children already recognize and apply gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are flexible and strongly influenced by the sociocultural environment.
3	Kollmayer et al. (2018)	Parents' Judgments about the Desirability of Toys for Their Children: Associations with Gender Role Attitudes, Gender-Typing of Toys, and Demographics	Quantitative Survey (N=324)	Parents with egalitarian attitudes still tend to select toys based on gender stereotypes. There is a gap between values and actual toy-selection decisions.
4	Kung (2021)	Preschool Gender-Typed Play Behavior Predicts Adolescent Gender-Typed Occupational Interests: A 10-Year Longitudinal Study	Longitudinal Study (10 Years)	Gender-typed play behavior at age 3.5 significantly predicts occupational interests at age 13.
5	van der Pol et al. (2018)	Peer Toy Play as a Gateway to Children's Gender Flexibility: The Effect of (Counter)Stereotypical Portrayals of Peers in Children's Magazines	Experimental	Exposure to cross-gender play images promotes greater flexibility in toy choices, while stereotypical portrayals reinforce rigidity.
6	King et al. (2020)	Counterstereotyping Can Change Children's Thinking about Boys' and Girls' Toy Preferences	Experimental (4 Experiments, N=373)	Counterstereotyping messages delivered by teachers effectively changed children's perceptions regarding toy preferences.
7	Lipowska and Łada-Maško (2021)	When Parents Go Shopping: Perspectives on Gender-Typed Toys	Quantitative Survey	Most parents still consider gender when choosing toys, although younger parents show greater openness.

No	Author and Year	Title	Method	Key Findings
8	Eisen et al. (2021)	Parents' and Children's Gendered Beliefs about Toys and Screen Media	Observations and Surveys	Parents' beliefs about educational value influence children's access to and use of toys. Parents function as gatekeepers of play experiences.
9	Özkan-Kunduraci (2025)	"Cause They're Girls/Boys": Preschool Children's Play and Toy Choices	Qualitative Case Study (N=50)	Children aged 48–72 months exhibit strong gender-based toy preferences and justify them through gender identity.
10	Bhattacharya and Taneja (2024)	Toys for Children and Adolescents: Gendered Preferences and Developmental Utilities	Literature Review	Pretend-play toys stimulate empathy, emotional language, and social understanding.
11	Simon and Nader-Grosbois (2021)	Preschoolers' Empathy Profiles and Their Social Adjustment	Quantitative (N=63)	Cognitive empathy significantly predicts social adjustment and positive peer relationships.
12	Kornienko and Rudnova (2025)	Non-Therapeutic Play to Support Children's Emotional Development	Literature Review	Pretend play and social play support emotional regulation, perspective-taking, and negotiation skills.
13	Sandseter et al. (2023)	Risky Play in Children's Emotion Regulation, Social Functioning, and Physical Health: An Evolutionary Approach	Theoretical Review	Physical play contributes to emotional regulation and social functioning. Restricting play based on gender may hinder development.
14	Nakajima et al. (2020)	Gender Gaps in Cognitive and Social-Emotional Skills in Early Primary Grades: Evidence from Rural Indonesia	Quantitative Longitudinal	Girls in rural Indonesia outperform boys in social-emotional skills by more than 0.1 standard deviations.
15	Churiyah and Hasibuan (2024)	Pengaruh Stereotip Gender Guru PAUD terhadap Perkembangan Fisik Motorik dan Sosial Emosional Anak Usia Dini	Quantitative Survey	Teachers' gender stereotypes affect treatment of children and contribute to unequal social-emotional development.
16	Zulkarnaini and Adriany (2021)	Analysis of Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education in Indonesia	Literature Review	Indonesian PAUD institutions still reproduce traditional gender views through curriculum, materials, and teacher interactions.
17	Rofiah and Diani (2022)	Pendidikan Keluarga dalam Pengenalan Identitas dan Peran Gender pada Anak Usia Dini	Descriptive Qualitative	Families act as the primary agents in introducing gender identity through toys, clothing, and household responsibilities.
18	Sary et al. (2023)	Pentingnya Peran Orang Tua dalam Membentuk Identitas Gender	Literature Review	Parents shape children's gender identity through gendered selection of activities, toys, and attributes.
19	Tondowala (2026)	Gender dan Perkembangan Sosial Emosional Anak Usia Dini dalam Perspektif Lintas Budaya melalui Systematic Literature Review	Systematic Literature Review	Social-emotional development is strongly influenced by cultural contexts, limiting direct generalization across countries.
20	Wirahandayani et al. (2023)	The Effect of Role-Playing Methods on Social-Emotional Development in Preschool Children	Systematic Review (PRISMA)	Role-playing methods effectively improve empathy, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior regardless of gender.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: The Formation of Gender Stereotypes Through Toys from an Early Age

One of the most striking findings of this review is how rapidly the process of gender stereotyping occurs in children. Contrary to the common assumption that children only begin to understand gender differences upon entering school age, several studies in this review indicate that this process begins much earlier. Davis and Hines (2020), through a meta-analysis of 75 studies with a total of 113 effect sizes, concluded that boys exhibit a significantly stronger tendency to choose masculine toys, while girls show a stronger preference for feminine toys, with effect sizes classified as large ( $d \geq 1.60$ ). This figure is not merely a statistic; it reflects how deeply and strongly gender-based toy preference patterns are already ingrained in children's behavior even before they are able to articulate them verbally.

This finding is reinforced by T. L. King et al. (2021), who synthesized 21 studies on children aged 3–5 years and found that within this age range, children are not only capable of recognizing gender stereotypes but also actively apply them in daily life, including in the selection and rejection of specific toys. It is important to note that these stereotypes are not permanent; the social and cultural environment has been shown to be the most decisive factor in the direction and strength of these stereotypes, meaning there is a real opportunity to foster more flexible attitudes from an early age if the environment is designed appropriately. Özkan-Kunduraci (2025), in a case study of 50 preschool children in Turkey, found that children not only have strong gender-based toy preferences but are also able to provide emotional and gender-identity-based reasons behind their choices. This indicates that by preschool age, gender stereotypes in play have already developed into part of children's self-identity schemes, rather than merely habits shaped from the outside, and thus require serious attention from early childhood educators.

### Theme 2: The Role of Parents and the Environment as Agents of Gender Socialization

If children are the ones who internalize gender stereotypes, then parents are the first to instill them. Kollmayer et al. (2018) identified an intriguing phenomenon in a survey of 324 parents in Austria: although many parents consciously stated they supported children's freedom to play without gender restrictions, their actual decisions in selecting toys remained heavily influenced by existing gender stereotypes. This gap between held values and actual behavior indicates that gender socialization through toys often occurs below parents' full awareness; in other words, gender stereotypes are unintentionally passed on even by well-meaning parents.

In line with this, Lipowska and Łada-Maško (2021) found in the Polish context that the consideration of a toy's suitability for a child's gender remains a primary factor influencing parental purchasing decisions, although younger generations demonstrate slightly greater openness. Meanwhile, van der Pol et al. (2018) opened up a new dimension by demonstrating that the influence of gender socialization on toys stems not only from direct parent-child interactions but also from the media and visual content children consume daily. Children exposed to more content depicting peers playing across gender lines demonstrate greater flexibility in toy selection, while those exposed to strongly gendered content tend to be more rigid in their preferences. Eisen et al. (2021) add that parents' beliefs about the educational value of toys are significantly correlated with the frequency with which children play with certain types of toys, meaning that parents effectively serve as the first gatekeepers determining how broad or narrow a child's play experience will be.

### Theme 3: The Impact of Gender-Based Toys on Children's Social-Emotional Development

This theme is at the core of this entire study. Bhattacharya and Taneja (2024) reveal that the types of toys children play with directly determine the quality of socio-emotional stimulation they receive. Playing with peers, especially in the form of pretend play, has been shown to activate brain areas involved in processing social cues and developing empathy. These neuroscience findings provide a strong scientific foundation for understanding why toy choices are not merely a matter of aesthetic preference, but rather decisions that have a direct impact on the architecture of children's social-emotional development.

The long-term effects of gender-based play patterns are clearly evident in Kung's (2021) 10-year longitudinal study, which utilized data from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children in the United Kingdom. The study found that children who, starting at age 3.5, engaged predominantly in typically masculine play exhibited a significantly stronger interest in male-typical occupations by age 13. Children who grow up with more flexible play patterns demonstrate broader interests that are not

limited to a specific gender stereotype. Restricting gender-based toys at a very early age can thus act as a constraint that narrows a child's scope for self-exploration far into the future, even into adolescence.

R. A. King et al. (2020), through a series of four experiments involving 373 children aged 4–7, found that children's beliefs about what their peers prefer are heavily influenced by the gender stereotypes they already hold. Children who believe that certain toys are suitable only for a specific gender tend to avoid those toys even if they are actually interested, out of fear of social exclusion. It is this social mechanism that makes the impact of gender stereotypes on socio-emotional development so tangible. A key finding of this study is that counter-stereotype messages delivered by teachers via short videos proved quite effective in changing children's perspectives, signaling strongly that educator-led interventions in early childhood education hold great potential to break the cycle of gender stereotypes from an early age.

Simon and Nader-Grosbois (2021) found in a study of 63 preschool children that cognitive empathy significantly predicts the quality of children's social adjustment with peers. Toys that encourage role-playing and caregiving, such as dolls and household play sets, are the types of toys that most effectively foster cognitive empathy. When boys' access to these types of toys is restricted in the name of gender norms, their opportunities to develop empathy and social skills are indirectly limited as well. Kornienko and Rudnova (2025) reinforce this argument by stating that pretend play with peers is the most effective arena for children to develop emotional regulation, negotiation skills, and the ability to understand others' perspectives. Sandseter et al. (2023), from an evolutionary perspective, remind us that physical play, often associated with boys, also offers significant benefits for emotional regulation and social functioning; the issue lies not in the type of toy itself, but in the restrictions that prevent children from accessing a diverse range of play experiences.

#### **Theme 4: A Portrait of Gender Socialization Through Toys in the Indonesian Context**

Findings from articles focused on Indonesia provide a distinctive perspective and enrich our understanding of this phenomenon from a local viewpoint. Nakajima et al. (2020), through a longitudinal study based on empirical data from rural Indonesia, found that girls in the early grades of elementary school outperformed boys by more than 0.1 standard deviations in social-emotional skills. This finding suggests that gender socialization patterns encouraging girls to engage more in social activities and role-playing from an early age actually result in measurable social-emotional advantages. However, on the other hand, this finding also implies that Indonesian boys may be missing out on adequate social-emotional stimulation due to play patterns that are overly dominated by physical and competitive activities.

Churiyah and Hasibuan (2024) add an institutional dimension that is no less important. Their research shows that early childhood education (PAUD) teachers holding strong gender stereotypes unconsciously treat boys and girls differently regarding access to types of play, and this inequality leads to a measurable imbalance in social-emotional development between the two groups. Zulkarnaini and Adriany (2021) expand on this picture by demonstrating that gender bias in early childhood education in Indonesia is systemic, ranging from how teachers interact, the selection of play materials, to the division of roles in classroom activities. At the family level, Rofiah and Diani (2022) as well as Sary et al. (2023) consistently found that Indonesian parents remain the primary agents in internalizing gender stereotypes through the way they select toys and model gender roles to children from a very early age.

Interestingly, Wirahandayani et al. (2023), through a systematic review, found that structured role-playing methods implemented in Indonesian early childhood education settings have proven effective in enhancing children's social-emotional development regardless of their gender. This finding offers hope that with appropriate teaching methods, social-emotional disparities caused by gender stereotypes can be minimized. Tondowala (2026) through a cross-cultural systematic review, cautions that findings from Western countries cannot simply be applied to the Indonesian context without considering unique cultural factors, such as collectivist values, the role of religion, and the strong extended family structures still prevalent in many regions. This simultaneously underscores the need for more specific and larger-scale research on the impact of gender stereotypes in toy selection on children's social-emotional development within the Indonesian context.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

### **Conclusions**

This systematic literature review found that gender stereotypes in toy selection emerge early in childhood and are reinforced by parents, teachers, and sociocultural environments. These stereotypes influence children's social-emotional development by limiting opportunities to develop empathy, emotional regulation, and social competence through diverse play experiences. In Indonesia, gender-biased parenting and educational practices continue to contribute to stereotypical toy preferences. Therefore, gender-sensitive parenting and early childhood education practices are needed to ensure that children have equal opportunities to explore a wide range of play activities that support optimal social-emotional development.

### Suggestions

Further research is recommended to examine Indonesia's unique sociocultural context in greater depth through longitudinal empirical studies, given that most existing literature is still dominated by findings from Western countries that cannot be fully generalized to the Southeast Asian context.

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