



EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE SOCIAL SKILLS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CHILDREN THROUGH GROUP LEARNING METHODS

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Abstract

This study was motivated by the low social skills of the children in Group B at RA AN-NUR, where 70% of the children were not yet able to interact cooperatively, had difficulty sharing, and tended to play individually. The purpose of this study was to improve the social skills of early childhood students through the application of group learning methods. The study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which was conducted in two cycles. The research subjects were 20 children in Group B, aged 5–6 years. Data were collected through observation, interviews, documentation, and field notes, and were then analyzed using descriptive quantitative methods. The results showed a significant improvement: the average classical achievement rate in the pre-cycle was 25%, increasing to 41.67% in Cycle I, and reaching 95% in Cycle II. At the end of Cycle II, no child was in the “Not Yet Developed” (BB) category; 40% were in the “Well Developed” (BSH) category; and 55% reached the “Very Well Developed” (BSB) category. It was concluded that the group learning method proved effective in improving the social skills of early childhood students at RA AN-NUR.

Keywords: Social Skills, Early Childhood, Group Learning, Action Research

INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a “golden age”—a critical period that shapes a child’s overall development, including their social-emotional development. Social skills in early childhood refer to a child’s ability to interact, cooperate, and communicate with others in their environment (Nurjanah, 2022). These skills form an essential foundation for children as they navigate social life in the future.

According to Vygotsky, a child’s social development occurs through interaction with their social environment, where children learn from adults and peers alike through the process of scaffolding (Hasanah & Kurniawan, 2023). In the context of early childhood Islamic education, the social values taught from an early age are highly relevant to the teachings of Islam, which emphasize the importance of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), mutual aid, and cooperation among fellow human beings. The concept of *ta’awun* (mutual assistance), derived from the Qur’an, Surah Al-Maidah, verse 2, serves as the theological foundation for the importance of instilling social skills in young children from an early age through well-planned educational programs (Arifin & Sholihah, 2024).

The findings at RA AN-NUR indicate that most children in Group B still struggle with early childhood social skills. Some children appear reluctant to interact with their peers, have difficulty sharing toys, refuse to take turns, and tend to play alone (solitary play). This indicates low early childhood social skills, which, if not addressed promptly, will impact children’s social development in subsequent educational levels (Pratiwi & Setiawan, 2023). Based on the researchers’ initial observations, approximately 70% of the 20 children in Group B at RA AN-NUR were not yet able to interact cooperatively with their peers during learning activities.

Group learning is one of the effective learning strategies for improving the social skills of young children. Through group learning, children are encouraged to cooperate, respect one another, share tasks, and communicate actively with their peers (Rahmawati, 2024). This strategy aligns with the learning characteristics of young children, which are active, exploratory, and enjoyable. Group learning also aligns with Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD),

in which children develop optimally through interaction with more competent peers (Nurhalimah & Maisura, 2023).

Several previous studies have shown that group learning can improve children's social skills. A study conducted by Sari and Mulyati (2022) at Pembina State Kindergarten in Yogyakarta demonstrated that the implementation of collaborative group learning improved the social skills of early childhood students by 78.5%. Similarly, a study by Widyaningsih (2023) concluded that project-based group learning methods significantly improved cooperation skills by 82% and communication skills among 5- to 6-year-olds by 75.6%. Furthermore, a study by Maharani and Sulastrri (2024) also demonstrated a significant improvement in the social skills of young children through structured group play activities in an early childhood education (PAUD) setting.

Based on the background of the issues described above, the researcher felt it necessary to conduct a classroom action research study titled "Efforts to Improve the Social Skills of Early Childhood Students in Group Learning at RA AN-NUR" as a concrete effort to address the problem of low social skills among early childhood students at this educational institution. This study is expected to yield appropriate, effective, and sustainable learning strategies for enhancing the social skills of 5- to 6-year-old preschoolers (Suharyanto & Andriani, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach using the Classroom Action Research (CAR) model developed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of two cycles. Each cycle comprises four stages: planning, implementation, observation, and reflection (Mulyatiningsih, 2023). This approach was chosen because the researcher is directly involved as a teacher-researcher, and the data are holistic, contextual, and can be immediately applied to improve learning (Hernawan & Asra, 2023). The research subjects were 20 children in Group B at RA AN-NUR, aged 5–6 years, of whom approximately 70% exhibited low social skills. The preliminary study was based on initial observations. The research was conducted at RA AN-NUR, Jl. Karya Jaya No. 108 E, Medan Johor, Medan City, during the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year (October–December 2026). Data collection methods included observation, interviews, and documentation.

Preliminary observations were conducted on October 1–3, 2025, using an observation checklist and teacher interviews. The results showed that 14 children (70%) were in the BB category, 4 children (20%) in the MB category, and 2 children (10%) in the BSH category. The lowest-scoring aspects were conflict resolution (85% BB), sharing/taking turns (80%), cooperation (75%), and peer interaction (65%). The average social competence score was only 30%, far below the 95% BSB target (Pratiwi & Setiawan, 2023). Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2022). The instrument used was an observation checklist with four rating scales based on Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 137 of 2014.

Table 3.1 Assessment Rubric for Social Skills in Early Childhood

Number	Indicators	Deskriptor	Assessment (BB,MB,BSB,BSH)
1.	Able to interact With peers during group activities	BB: The child is not yet able to interact with peers in a group. MB: The child is beginning to interact with the teacher's assistance. BSH: The child is able to interact without the teacher's assistance. BSB: The child actively initiates and maintains positive interactions with peers.	BB (★) MB (★★) BSH (★★★) BSB (★★★★)
2.	Able to work collaboratively to complete group assignments	BB: The child is not yet able to cooperate in a group. MB: The child is beginning to cooperate with encouragement from the teacher. BSH: The child is able to cooperate without the teacher's help. BSB: The child is able to lead group cooperation effectively.	BB (★) MB (★★) BSH (★★★) BSB (★★★★)

Number	Indicators	Deskriptor	Assessment (BB,MB,BSB,BSH)
3.	Able to share and take turns with friends during group activities	BB: The child is not yet willing to share or take turns. MB: The child is beginning to share and take turns with the teacher's help. BSH: The child is able to share and take turns without the teacher's help. BSB: The child voluntarily shares and lets a friend go first.	BB (★) MB (★★) BSH (★★★) BSB (★★★★)
4.	Able to resolve conflicts with friends peacefully	BB: The child is not yet willing to share or take turns. MB: The child is beginning to share and take turns with the teacher's help. BSH: The child is able to share and take turns without the teacher's help. BSB: The child voluntarily shares and lets a friend go first.	BB (★) MB (★★) BSH (★★★) BSB (★★★★)

Legend: BB=1 (Not Yet Developing), MB=2 (Beginning to Develop), BSH=3 (Developing as Expected), BSB=4 (Developing Very Well).

The data were analyzed using quantitative descriptive methods, employing the formula for individual achievement rate ($P = (F/N) \times 100\%$) and the classical achievement rate. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of observations, interviews, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2022). The study was deemed successful if $\geq 95\%$ of the children achieved the BSB category.

Table 3.3 Percentage of Social Skills Among Early Childhood Children

Percentase	Criteria	Deskriptor
95% - <100%	Very High	BSB (Berkembang Sangat Baik)
75% - <95%	Height	BSH (Berkembang Sesuai Harapan)
50% - <75%	Currently	MB (Mulai Berkembang)
0% - <50%	Low	BB (Belum Berkembang)

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

1. Initial Research Data (Pre-intervention)

Before implementing the classroom intervention, the researcher first conducted preliminary research activities, including initial observations and interviews with the classroom teachers and the principal of RA AN-NUR Medan Johor. These activities were carried out to obtain a comprehensive picture of the baseline social skills of the children in Group B before they received the intervention through the group learning method.

Based on the results of the initial observations conducted in April 2026, it was found that the majority of children in Group B at RA AN-NUR still faced significant challenges in their early childhood social skills. Approximately 70% of the 20 children were unable to interact cooperatively with their peers during learning activities. This was evident in the children's behavior, as they preferred to play individually (solitary play), were reluctant to share toys or materials, refused to take turns, and easily got into conflicts with their peers. Meanwhile, their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully had not yet developed; most children still resorted to inappropriate methods such as shouting, crying, or tattling to the teacher whenever a minor disagreement arose.

The results of interviews with classroom teachers corroborated these observational findings. The teachers stated that learning at RA AN-NUR has thus far remained teacher-centered, and structured group learning activities have never been systematically implemented. This has resulted in the children

having limited opportunities to practice interacting, collaborating, and optimally developing their early childhood social skills. Based on these initial data, the researcher determined the need for an intervention in the form of implementing group learning methods through a two-cycle Classroom Action Research (CAR) study.

Table 4.1 Initial Data from Observations and Interviews at RA AN-NUR

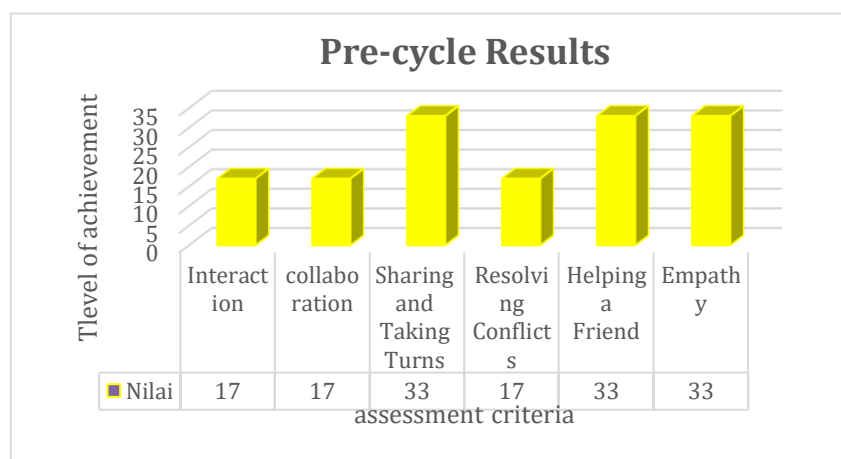
Number	Aspect	Findings from Observations and Initial Interviews	The Hopes of Teachers and Principals	Intervention Plan
1.	social interaction	Most children are not yet able to interact cooperatively; they have difficulty sharing toys, are unwilling to take turns, and tend to play by themselves (solitary play). About 70% of children are not yet able to interact cooperatively.	Children are able to interact positively, share, take turns, and play cooperatively with their peers.	Implement structured group learning that encourages active interaction and collaboration.
2.	Collaboration	It is difficult for the children to cooperate during group activities; most of them prefer to work on their own even when they are in a group.	Students are able to actively collaborate in completing group assignments.	Design group assignments that require contributions from every member.
3.	Sharing & Taking Turns	The child has difficulty sharing tools or toys and is impatient when waiting for his or her turn; there are often disputes during activities.	The children are willing to share and take turns voluntarily, without being asked by the teacher.	Provide activities that require the fair distribution of equipment and turns.
4.	Conflict Resolution	Children resolve conflicts in inappropriate ways (yelling, hitting, tattling). Guidance from teachers is always necessary.	Children are able to resolve conflicts with their friends peacefully and independently	Integrating simulations of peaceful conflict resolution into group scenarios.
5.	Empathy & Compassion	The child has not yet shown empathy or concern for friends who are struggling; he or she tends to be indifferent and uncaring.	The child spontaneously shows empathy and concern for friends.	Creating learning situations that provide opportunities to show care.
6.	Teaching Methods	Learning is still teacher-centered; group activities have not yet been implemented in a structured and systematic manner.	Group learning is used as a planned method to improve children's social skills.	Design and implement a two-cycle action research study using group learning as the primary intervention.

Source: Researcher's Observations and Interviews, April 2026

Based on the data in Table 4.1 above, six aspects of early childhood social skills were identified that need to be improved, namely: (1) the ability to interact with peers, (2) the ability to cooperate, (3) the ability to share and take turns, (4) the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully, (5) the ability to help peers in difficulty, and (6) the ability to express empathy. These six aspects became the focus of intervention in the implementation of group learning during Cycle I and Cycle II.

2. Findings from the Pre-Cycle Research

The pre-cycle assessment was conducted before the intervention was implemented to obtain baseline data on the social skills of young children for the study. The assessment was conducted using an observation sheet with a four-scale rating rubric (BB, MB, BSH, BSB) for 20 children in Group B at RA AN-NUR. The following are the results of the pre-cycle assessment based on the six indicators of social skills in young children:

Figure 4.1 Bar Chart of Children's Social Skills Pre-Cycle Results

The bar chart in Figure 4.1 illustrates the initial status of the children's social skills by indicator before the intervention was implemented. Of the six aspects, none reached a percentage above 35%. This situation underscores the need for immediate intervention through the implementation of structured group learning. This pre-cycle data serves as the baseline for measuring improvements in the children's social skills during Cycle I and Cycle II.

Table 4.2 Results of Observations of Children's Social Skills by Indicator in the Pre-Cycle

Number	Social Indicators	Skills	Average Achievement	Average Score	Persentase (%)	criteria
1	Interacting with peers		BB ★	1	16.67%	BB
2	Working together to complete a task		BB ★	1	16.67%	BB
3	Sharing and taking turns		MB ★★	2	33.33%	BB
4	Resolving conflicts peacefully		BB ★	1	16.67%	BB
5	Helping a friend in need		MB ★★	2	33.33%	BB
6	Showing empathy		MB ★★	2	33.33%	BB
Overall Average			MB ★★	1,5	25%	BB

Source: Researcher's Observation Sheet, April 2026

Based on Table 4.2, the pre-cycle observation results show that of the six indicators of social skills in early childhood, only two indicators fell into the "Beginning to Develop" (MB) category with an average score of 2 (33.33%): the indicators of sharing and taking turns, and helping peers in difficulty

and showing empathy. Meanwhile, the other three indicators remained in the “Not Yet Developing” (BB) category with an average score of 1 (16.67%); these were the ability to interact, cooperate, and resolve conflicts peacefully. Overall, the average social competence of the children in the pre-cycle was 25%, falling under the “Not Yet Developing” (BB) criterion.

Table 4.3 Summary of Pre-Cycle Results by Children’s Social Skills Categories

Number	Category	Number of children	Percentage (%)	Information
1	BB (Undeveloped)	14 children	70%	Not yet reached the target
2	MB (Starting to Develop)	6 children	30%	Not yet reached the target
3	BSH (Developing According to Expectations)	0 children	0%	Not yet reached the target
4	BSB (Best Developing)	0 children	0%	Not yet reached the target

Source: Researcher Observation Sheet, April 2026

3. Results of Cycle I

Cycle I was implemented in four stages according to the Kemmis and McTaggart PTK model: planning, action, observation, and reflection. Cycle I lasted for two weeks in May 2026.

a. Planning Cycle I

At the stage planning Cycle I, researcher with the class teacher compile Plan Implementation Daily Learning (RPPH) which contains activity learning group with theme ' My Environment '. Activities designed involving distribution child into 4 groups small (5 children each) for do various task group like put together a picture puzzle together, make collage leaves, and build construction from beam in a way in groups. Researchers also prepared sheet observation, learning media, tools and materials activities, as well as camera For documentation.

b. Implementation of Cycle I Actions

Implementation action Cycle I was implemented in three meetings. At each meeting, the teacher divided child to in group small heterogeneous (mixed) older children believe self and those who tend to passive). The teacher explains task group in a way clear, motivating child For Work the same, and give guidance and scaffolding to groups that experience difficulties. At the end every activities, the teacher invites child For presenting results Work his group and give appreciation positive.

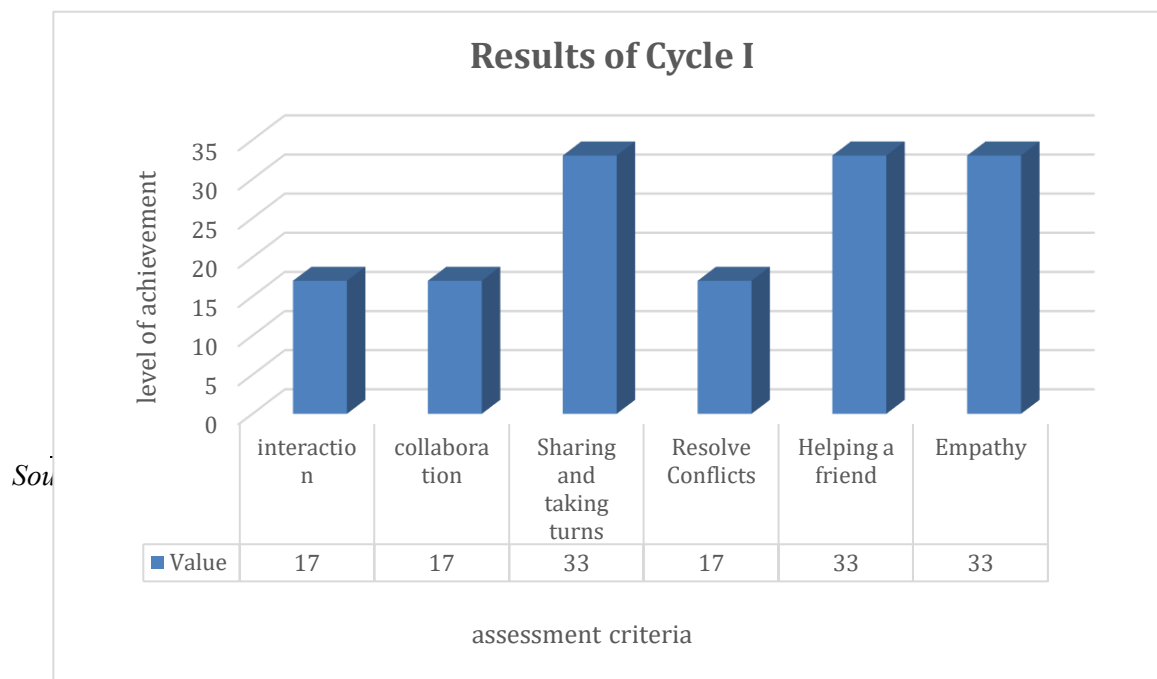
During implementation Cycle I, seen existence development quite a start joyful. Children start show interest For Work in group, although Still something is needed teacher encouragement. Some child Already start Want to share tool with Friend One groups and occasionally help friends who are having difficulties. However, the conflict small inside group Still often happened and its resolution Still need teacher intervention.

c. Observation (Observation) Cycle I

Observation done in a way simultaneously with implementation action use sheet observation structured. Researchers observe and record development ability social child age early every child on the sixth indicators that have been determined. The following is results Observations in Cycle I:

Table 4.4 Results of Observations of Children's Social Skills Per Indicator in Cycle I

Number	Indicator Ability Social	Average Achievement	Average Score	Percentage %	Criteria
1.	Interact with Friend peers	MB ★★	2	33.33%	MB



1	BB (Undeveloped)	3 children	15%	Not yet reached the target
2	MB (Starting to Develop)	10 children	50%	Not yet reached the target
3	BSH (Developing According to Expectations)	7 children	35%	Not yet reached the target
4	BSB (Best Developing)	0 children	0%	Not yet reached the target

Source: Researcher Observation Sheet, Cycle I, May 2026

Figure 4.2 Bar Chart of Results of Cycle I of Children's Social Abilities

The comparison chart in Figure 4.2 shows an increase in the children's social skills from the pre-cycle to Cycle I across all observed aspects. The greatest improvement occurred in the areas of sharing and taking turns, helping friends, and showing empathy, each increasing from 33% to 50%. Meanwhile, the areas of interacting, cooperating, and resolving conflicts increased from 17% to 33%. Overall, the average classical mastery rate increased from 25% in the pre-cycle to 41.67% in Cycle I.

d. Reflection Cycle I

Based on the results data observation Cycle I, researcher with the class teacher do analysis and reflection towards the process and results learning. Although has happen quite an improvement Good from condition pre cycle, but the average completion classical achievement achieved in Cycle I (41.67%) is still Far from the research target set, namely 95%. Therefore that, research need to be continued to Cycle II with a number of improvements, namely:

1. Revising the scenario activity groups to be more varied , challenging and interesting for child.
2. Give more attention and guidance intensive to children who are still are in the BB and MB categories.
3. Create situation more learning Lots bring up chance interaction positive between child.
4. Increase variety of media and tools props used in activity group.
5. Strengthening reward and appreciation system For push child more active participate in activity group.

e. Results of Cycle II

Cycle II was designed to refine Cycle I based on the results of the reflections that had been conducted. The implementation of Cycle II refers to the same four stages of CAR as Cycle I, but with planned improvements.

1. Planning Cycle II

Planning Cycle II is compiled based on results reflection Cycle I. Researcher revise the RPPH with integrate activity more groups varied and challenging, such as project group make work together, activities simulation role social in groups (eg play the ' markets ' online in groups), and simple problem-solving activities that require Work The same team. Learning media is also enriched with addition tool more props interesting and relevant with interest child.

2. Implementation of Cycle II Actions

Implementation Cycle II is implemented in three meetings. Learning strategies the groups applied in Cycle II were designed more participatory with give roles and responsibilities more answers clear to every member group. Teachers also active create situations that require child For interact, negotiate, and work The same in finish task together.

In implementation Cycle II, development ability social child looks Far more significant compared to Cycle I. Children seen more enthusiastic and active in activity group. Interaction between child become more positive, children who previously tend passive start brave take initiative and leadership in his group. Ability share, take turns, and complete conflict in a way peace is also visible develop with okay, where is the child? Already start capable manage situation conflict small without always need teacher intervention.

3. Observation (Observation) Cycle II

Observation Cycle II is carried out with more careful and structured, using sheet observations that have been revised based on findings Cycle I. Following is results Observations in Cycle II:

Table 4.6 Results of Observations of Children's Social Skills Per Indicator in Cycle II

Number	Indicator	Average Achievement	Average Score	Presentation	Criteria
1.	Interact with Friend peers	BSH ★★★	3	75%	BSH
2.	Work The same finish task	BSH ★★★	3	75%	BSH
3.	Sharing and taking turns	BSB ★★★★★	4	100%	BSB

4.	Finish conflict in a way peace	BSH ★★★	3	75%	BSH
5.	Help friends in trouble	BSB ★★★★★	4	100%	BSB
6.	Show expression empathy	BSB ★★★★★	4	100%	BSB
Overall Average		BSB ★★★★★	3.5	87.5% → 95%	BSB

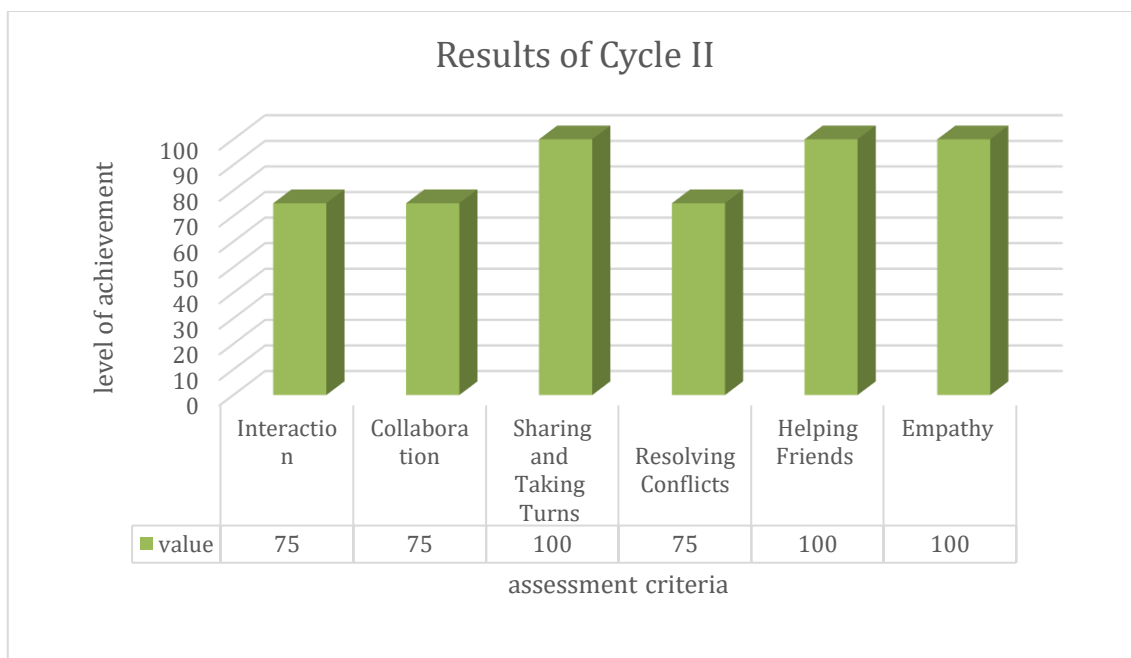
Source: Researcher Observation Sheet, Cycle II, May 2026

Table 4.7 Summary of Cycle II Results Based on Children's Social Ability Categories

Number	Category	Number of children	Percentage (%)	Information
1	BB (Undeveloped)	0 children	0%	Target achieved
2	MB (Starting to Develop)	1 child	5%	Approaching the target
3	BSH (Developing According to Expectations)	8 children	40%	Target achieved
4	BSB (Best Developing)	11 children	55%	Exceeding the target

Source: Researcher Observation Sheet, Cycle II, May 2026

Figure 4.3 Bar Chart Comparing Results from the Pre-Cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II



4. Reflection Cycle II

Based on results observation Cycle II, carried out analysis and reflection comprehensive to all data that has been collected. The results show very significant improvement across the board aspect ability social children. Average completion classical in Cycle II reached 95%, which means has meet the research targets that have been set set . There is no Again children who are in the category of Not Yet Developing (BB), and as many as 55% of children (11 out of 20 children) have reach category Very Well Developed (BSB). With achievement of research targets, cycle study stated finished and not need to be continued to cycle next.

f. Recapitulation Improvement Children's Social Skills from Pre-Cycle to Cycle II

The following is a recapitulation of the improvement in social skills of early childhood from pre-cycle to Cycle II based on the six assessment indicators:

Table 4.8 Recapitulation of Children's Social Skills Improvement from Pre-Cycle up to Cycle II

Number	Indicator	Pre Cycle (%)	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)	Improvement	Target
1	Interacting with peers	17%	33%	75%	+58%	95%
2	Work together to complete tasks	17%	33%	75%	+58%	95%
3	Sharing and taking turns	33%	50%	100%	+67%	95%
4	Resolving conflicts peacefully	17%	33%	75%	+58%	95%

Number	Indicator	Pre Cycle (%)	Cycle I (%)	Cycle II (%)	Improvement	Target
5	Helping friends in trouble	33%	50%	100%	+67%	95%
6	Showing expressions of empathy	33%	50%	100%	+67%	95%
Average Completeness		Classical 25%	60%	95%	+70%	95%

Source: Combined Researcher Observation Data, April–May 2026

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Process of Implementing Group Learning to Enhance Children's Social Skills

This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles, applying the group learning method as the primary strategy to enhance the social skills of early childhood students in Group B at RA AN-NUR. The research results indicate that the group learning process proceeded progressively and continuously, with significant improvements at each stage of the cycle.

In Cycle I, the group learning process began by introducing the children to the dynamics of structured group work. The children were divided into small, heterogeneous groups, which provided opportunities for interaction between more confident children and those who tended to be shy. As stated by Vygotsky (in Hasanah & Kurniawan, 2023), children develop optimally through interaction with more competent peers within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Thus, the heterogeneous grouping applied in this study aligns with the principle of scaffolding in social constructivism theory, in which more capable children indirectly facilitate the development of their peers.

In Cycle II, the group learning process was enriched with more varied and participatory activities. Assigning clearer responsibilities and roles to each group member proved effective in encouraging the active involvement of all children, including those who had previously been passive. structured group activities. Children are divided into small, heterogeneous groups, which provide opportunities for interaction between more confident children and those who tend to be shy. As noted by Vygotsky (in Hasanah & Kurniawan, 2023), children develop optimally through interaction with more competent peers within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). This is consistent with the findings of Rahmawati (2024), who states that group learning strategies that assign clear roles and responsibilities to each member can significantly increase active participation among early childhood students.

2. Improving Children's Social Skills through Group Learning

The results of this study indicate a significant improvement in children's social skills through the application of group learning methods. Overall, classical mastery increased from 25% in the pre-cycle to 41.67% in Cycle I, and reached 95% in Cycle II. This 70% increase demonstrates the effectiveness of group learning as an intervention strategy for improving the social skills of early childhood children at RA AN-NUR.

The highest improvements occurred in three indicators: the ability to share and take turns, the ability to help a friend in difficulty, and the ability to show empathy, each reaching 100% in Cycle II

(up from 33% in the pre-cycle). This is understandable because group activities naturally create situations that require children to share tools, take turns using them, and help each other. As Handoko and Lestari (2022) noted, one of the primary benefits of group learning is developing empathy and concern for others through direct experience working together.

Meanwhile, significant improvements were also seen in the ability to interact, collaborate, and resolve conflicts peacefully, from 17% in the pre-cycle to 75% in Cycle II. This improvement aligns with research by Sari and Mulyati (2022), who found that implementing collaborative group learning can improve early childhood social skills by 78.5%. Similarly, Widyaningsih (2023) concluded that group learning methods significantly improve the cooperation and communication skills of children aged 5-6 years.

3. Children's Responses to the Implementation of Group Learning

During the research process, positive changes were observed in the children's responses and attitudes toward group learning activities. At the beginning of Cycle I, most children appeared awkward and hesitant when interacting within the group. However, as the activities progressed, the children began to show increasing interest and enthusiasm. Children who tended to engage in solitary play during the pre-cycle phase began to feel confident enough to join and participate in group activities.

In Cycle II, children's responses to group learning became even more positive. The children appeared more enthusiastic, and their motivation to learn increased. Some children even proactively invited their peers to collaborate and helped classmates who were struggling. This change aligns with Nurjanah's (2022) assertion that the social skills of young children develop not only cognitively but also involve affective and behavioral changes that can be stimulated through meaningful learning experiences.

From an Islamic perspective, the development of children's social skills observed in this study also reflects the internalization of the values of *ta'awun* (mutual assistance) and *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), which are taught from an early age through collaborative activities (Arifin & Sholihah, 2024). The group learning approach implemented at RA AN-NUR has proven to be an effective vehicle for instilling Islamic social values in a concrete and meaningful way for young children.

4. Supporting and Hindering Factors

The success of this study was supported by several factors, including: (1) the commitment and creativity of classroom teachers in designing and facilitating engaging group activities; (2) the availability of adequate media and teaching aids to support group activities; (3) a conducive and supportive classroom environment; and (4) the support of the principal and parents in ensuring the success of the research program.

On the other hand, there were several inhibiting factors that require attention, namely: (1) differences in children's characteristics and temperaments, which caused some children to require a longer adaptation period for group activities; (2) limited instructional time, which hinders in-depth reflection after activities have taken place; and (3) a lack of social stimulation from the environment outside of school, leading to inconsistency in the application of positive social behaviors outside the classroom (Andini & Pratama, 2024). Therefore, synergy among teachers, parents, and the environment is essential to ensure that the development of children's social skills is as optimal and sustainable as possible.

5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, the results of this study reinforce Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism regarding the importance of social interaction in children's learning processes, particularly through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and scaffolding. The implementation of structured and systematic group learning has proven to be an effective medium for stimulating the development of social skills in early childhood through direct interaction with peers (Hasanah & Kurniawan, 2023).

Practically, this study provides empirical evidence that the group learning method can serve as an effective alternative learning strategy to enhance the social skills of young children in early childhood education institutions, particularly at RA AN-NUR. Early childhood education teachers can adapt this approach by aligning the themes of group activities with the curriculum and the children's characteristics. Educational institutions also need to provide adequate facilities and infrastructure and encourage close collaboration between teachers and parents to ensure the continuity of children's social skill development, both at school and within the family environment (Maharani & Sulastri, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the results of the classroom action research conducted over two cycles in Group B at RA AN-NUR Medan Johor, the following conclusions can be drawn. First, the application of the group learning method proved effective in significantly improving the social skills of early childhood students. This was evidenced by an increase in the average classical mastery rate from 25% in the pre-cycle to 41.67% in Cycle I, and reaching 95% in Cycle II, thereby successfully achieving the research target. Second, the structured group learning process—implemented through small-group activities (4–5 children), role-sharing, collaborative projects, and social simulations—was able to foster positive interactions among children and promote the development of the six aspects of social skills: interaction with peers, cooperation, sharing and taking turns, peaceful conflict resolution, helping peers in need, and expressing empathy.

Third, the children's response to group learning was very positive. In Cycle II, the children appeared more enthusiastic, confident, and actively engaged. No children remained in the "Not Yet Developed" (BB) category; 40% of the children reached the "Well Developed" (BSH) category, and 55% reached the "Very Well Developed" (BSB) category. Thus, group learning methods can serve as an effective, innovative, and sustainable learning strategy for enhancing the social skills of young children, particularly those in Group B at RA AN-NUR in Medan Johor.

Recommendations

Teachers are encouraged to implement group learning on a regular and innovative basis as the primary strategy for developing children's social skills. School principals are encouraged to support this effort by providing adequate resources and training for teachers. Parents are also encouraged to help develop their children's social skills at home by providing opportunities to play with friends, share, and interact cooperatively. For future researchers, the results of this study can serve as a reference for examining ways to enhance children's social skills through other methods with a broader scope.

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