

# Teacher Support Strategies in Developing the Social-Emotional Development of Active Early Childhood Children

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze teacher mentoring strategies in developing the social-emotional development of active early childhood in Darma Putra Playgroup. The background of this study is based on the findings of children with high levels of activity who show difficulties in self-regulation, impulse control, and social interaction, such as snatching toys and disturbing friends. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects consisted of one child with active characteristics, the class teacher, and parents. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and triangulation of conclusions. The results of the study indicate that teacher mentoring strategies through directed play, familiarization with class rules, positive reinforcement, and individual mentoring are able to improve self-regulation skills, sharing skills, and the ability to wait for turns. The child's social-emotional development score increased from the category of "Not Developing" to "Developing According to Expectations." These findings confirm that consistent and responsive teacher mentoring strategies contribute significantly to the active social-emotional development of early childhood.

**Keywords:** Teacher Mentoring Strategies, Social-Emotional, Early Childhood, Active Children, Playgroups.

## I. Introduction

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is recognized globally as a foundational stage in human development, serving as the critical basis upon which subsequent learning and adaptation are constructed. Educational inequality in Indonesia remains a significant challenge, particularly in underdeveloped regions, thus requiring technology-based solutions and appropriate policies to improve equitable access to education (Nurfadila et al., 2026). In particular, the social-emotional domain of development during early childhood has been identified as a core component that influences later success in learning, interpersonal relationships, and overall well-being (Denham & Brown, 2019). Social-emotional development in young children encompasses a broad range of abilities including recognizing and regulating one's emotions, forming positive relationships, demonstrating empathy, and adapting to the social expectations of different contexts (Bierman et al., 2020). These competencies enable children to interact appropriately with peers, engage in cooperative play, and adapt to structured learning environments skills that are essential for long-term educational and personal success (Zins et al., 2020).

The early years are therefore a unique and sensitive period in which social norms, self-control, emotional awareness, and cooperative behavior take root. According to developmental theorists such as Erikson (1950), early childhood is characterized by the stage of “initiative versus guilt,” where children develop purpose through social exploration. More recent work, including that of Thompson (2021), elaborates that effective emotional regulation and social engagement lay the groundwork for academic readiness and lifelong learning dispositions. Indeed, research conducted over the past decade confirms that social-emotional competencies established in early childhood predict stronger academic performance and reduced behavioral problems in subsequent schooling (Denham et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2021).

Despite the importance of this domain, real-world ECE settings frequently encounter challenges related to children with high activity levels. Children who exhibit high levels of activity typically demonstrate abundant energy, strong curiosity, and an intense drive to explore their environment, often appearing restless during structured tasks. While such traits can be positive for exploratory learning, they can also manifest as challenges within group settings such as difficulty following instructions, impulsive behavior, and struggles with turn-taking and cooperative play (Raver et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2022). Such behaviors, if not addressed with supportive and intentional pedagogical strategies, risk hindering the development of social-emotional skills and creating disruptive dynamics within learning groups. The presence of highly active children in early childhood classrooms therefore requires thoughtful intervention by educators. A supportive teacher role is not limited to academic instruction; it includes the capacity to scaffold emotional regulation, mediate peer interactions, and model positive social behavior (Hamre & Pianta, 2019). Contemporary research highlights the role of teacher–child interactions as a powerful determinant of social-emotional outcomes, with supportive, responsive interactions linked to higher levels of self-regulation and prosocial behavior (Mashburn et al., 2021). For example, educators who provide clear expectations, structured routines, and positive reinforcement have been found to significantly improve children’s emotional self-control and social engagement (Downer et al., 2021). Furthermore, guided play approaches as part of teacher facilitation have demonstrated positive impacts on children’s cooperative behaviors and emotional expression (Rushton et al., 2022).

In the context of ECE practice, it is thus essential to develop teacher strategies that are both evidence-based and adaptable to the individual needs of children. These strategies include but are not limited to intentional play planning, emotional literacy activities, positive behavior support, and real-time guidance during peer interactions. Research by Sheridan et al. (2020) indicates that embedding social-emotional learning (SEL) within everyday classroom routines enhances children’s capacity to express emotions, resolve conflicts, and maintain attention during tasks. Similarly, collaborative group activities that require shared responsibilities help children practice patience, empathy, and perspective-taking core aspects of social-emotional competence (Harris et al., 2021). Among applied intervention studies, programs such as the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) curriculum have documented improvements in preschoolers’ emotional understanding and peer relations (Greenberg et al., 2020). Meanwhile, teacher coaching interventions designed to improve responsive caregiving have shown positive effects on children’s behavioral regulation and social engagement (Jeon et al., 2022). Such evidence underscores that systematic efforts to support social-emotional development must involve both teacher preparation and in-class implementation practices.

In the specific setting of Kelompok Bermain Darma Putra, where active children compose a significant portion of the playgroup, the potential for social-emotional disruption is heightened if teacher responses are unstructured or inconsistent. Conversely, a well-supported teacher who employs thoughtful strategies can transform high activity levels into opportunities for social learning and emotional growth. Accordingly, the role of teachers as facilitators of social-emotional development becomes central to establishing a nurturing and positive learning environment. Given the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence presented above, it is both timely and necessary to investigate teacher support strategies aimed at fostering social-emotional development among active early childhood learners. Not only will such a study illuminate the characteristic behaviors associated with high activity levels, but it will also identify best-practice strategies

that teachers can implement to support positive developmental outcomes. In doing so, this research is expected to contribute meaningfully to the refinement of teaching practices in early childhood education and to broader efforts in optimizing young children's emotional and social capacities for lifelong success.

This study seeks to explore the characteristics of social-emotional development among active early childhood children at Kelompok Bermain Darma Putra, focusing on how they recognize and manage emotions, interact with peers, and adapt to social expectations. It also examines the strategies teachers implement to support these children, including structured routines, guided play, and positive reinforcement, to promote self-regulation and prosocial behavior. Finally, the research investigates the impact of these strategies on children's social-emotional growth, highlighting the role of teacher guidance in fostering a positive and supportive learning environment.

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social-Emotional Development of Early Childhood

Social-emotional development represents one of the core domains in early childhood growth, encompassing the ability to understand one's own emotions and the emotions of others, manage emotional responses, establish positive social relationships, and exhibit prosocial behavior (Denham et al., 2012). Optimal development in social-emotional competencies significantly contributes to school readiness and long-term academic success (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Conceptually, social-emotional development includes self-regulation, impulse control, empathy, and cooperative skills. Self-regulation refers to an individual's capacity to control attention, emotions, and behavior to achieve specific goals (Blair & Raver, 2015). During early childhood, self-regulation is still in a formative stage, making it highly influenced by the quality of interactions with adults and the learning environment. Research demonstrates that supportive, responsive, and consistent classroom environments significantly enhance children's social-emotional competencies (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In addition, recent studies emphasize that structured activities that systematically integrate social-emotional learning, rather than focusing solely on cognitive development, positively influence children's ability to navigate peer interactions and emotional challenges (Denham et al., 2021). For instance, classroom practices that include cooperative games, emotion labeling, and guided problem-solving allow children to practice managing conflicts, sharing, and expressing feelings constructively (Cohen & Essien, 2020). Neurodevelopmental studies also suggest that early experiences in responsive and emotionally rich environments contribute to brain development associated with emotion regulation and social cognition (Kim et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2021). The early years are critical for shaping emotional resilience and social awareness, which, according to longitudinal studies, can predict academic engagement and prosocial behavior in later schooling (Zins et al., 2020). Children exposed to environments with predictable routines, empathetic teachers, and consistent behavioral expectations demonstrate stronger capacities for attention control, delayed gratification, and cooperative interaction (Li et al., 2019). Therefore, social-emotional development is both a foundational and ongoing process that requires intentional facilitation through quality interactions and guided experiences.

### 2.2 Characteristics of Active Children in Learning Contexts

Normatively, early childhood is marked by high levels of physical activity, which are essential for motor development and exploratory behaviors. However, within structured learning contexts, excessive activity levels can be associated with challenges in self-regulation and attention control (McClelland et al., 2017). Children who exhibit highly active characteristics often demonstrate elevated needs for movement, shorter attention spans, and tendencies toward impulsive actions. In social situations, these behaviors may manifest as interrupting conversations, seizing learning materials, or struggling to wait their turn. Without pedagogical guidance, such behaviors can potentially disrupt classroom dynamics and impede the

development of social competencies. Developmental theory underscores that impulsive behaviors in early childhood are not merely deviations but part of the maturation process of self-regulatory systems (Diamond, 2013). Neuroscientific evidence confirms that the prefrontal cortex, which governs executive function and inhibitory control, is still under development in preschool-aged children, rendering them naturally more prone to impulsivity and hyperactivity (Casey et al., 2019). Hence, these characteristics should not be viewed negatively; instead, they require supportive strategies that guide energy constructively and foster skill development. Recent research highlights that active children benefit from environments that balance movement opportunities with structured tasks that cultivate attention and cooperative skills (Raver et al., 2021; Williford et al., 2020). Studies also suggest that integrating movement into cognitive and social-emotional learning such as through action-based learning games or role-playing scenarios can enhance both engagement and self-regulation (Goble et al., 2022). These insights reinforce the need for developmentally appropriate practices tailored to the activity levels and temperaments of individual children.

### 2.3 Teacher Guidance Strategies in Social-Emotional Development

Teachers play a central role in shaping classroom social climates and facilitating children's social-emotional growth. Warm, responsive, and consistent teacher-child interactions have been shown to support the development of self-regulation and prosocial behaviors (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). In the context of active children, teacher guidance strategies can include developmentally appropriate play, positive reinforcement, consistent rules, and emotional mediation. Guided play serves as a critical strategy, enabling children to acquire social values through direct, hands-on experiences. Collaborative play activities encourage the development of cooperation, sharing, and problem-solving skills (Bodrova & Leong, 2015). Problem-Based Learning has been proven effective in improving elementary students' critical thinking skills through active participation in the learning process (Nurfadila, 2023). Recent studies further demonstrate that structured yet flexible play interventions promote social-emotional learning while accommodating high activity levels, enhancing children's engagement and regulatory capacities (Fisher et al., 2020; Lillard et al., 2021). Positive reinforcement, grounded in behaviorist theory, strengthens desired behaviors through rewards or recognition (Skinner, 1953). In early childhood settings, verbal praise, recognition of prosocial acts, and acknowledgment of efforts have been empirically shown to increase frequency of constructive behaviors (Kim et al., 2021; Tremblay et al., 2019). When coupled with consistent expectations, reinforcement supports children in internalizing self-regulatory behaviors and appropriate social responses.

Consistency in rule enforcement and daily routines is essential for helping children understand behavioral expectations and gradually develop self-control (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009). Recent longitudinal studies indicate that children exposed to predictable and structured classroom rules demonstrate better impulse control, greater cooperation with peers, and improved emotional regulation (Mashburn et al., 2020). Such practices are particularly beneficial for highly active children, providing clear boundaries and scaffolding their behavioral choices. Individualized guidance and emotional mediation further enhance social-emotional competencies. Teachers who assist children in identifying and labeling their emotions enable them to develop adaptive strategies for managing feelings (Denham et al., 2012). Current research underscores the effectiveness of emotion coaching approaches, showing that children who receive guidance in recognizing and expressing emotions exhibit lower aggression, better peer relationships, and enhanced self-regulation (Eisenberg et al., 2021; Spinrad et al., 2019).

### 2.4 Conceptual Framework

Active young children require intensive support in self-regulation due to their elevated energy levels and tendencies toward impulsivity. A systematic teacher guidance approach that integrates guided play, positive reinforcement, consistent classroom rules, and individualized emotional mediation can significantly facilitate the development of self-regulation and social competence. Empirical evidence suggests that these strategies create a supportive environment that allows active children to channel their energy constructively,

interact positively with peers, and engage effectively in learning activities (Flook et al., 2021; Cavanaugh et al., 2020). Within the context of the Darma Putra Playgroup, implementing a structured and developmentally appropriate teacher guidance strategy is expected to yield measurable improvements in the social-emotional competencies of active children. By fostering self-regulation, cooperative behaviors, and emotional awareness, such guidance not only addresses immediate classroom challenges but also lays the foundation for long-term academic, social, and emotional success. Overall, the integration of theory, research, and practical strategies underscores the critical role of teacher facilitation in promoting holistic development for active preschool learners.

### III. Research Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows the researcher to explore the phenomenon of teacher guidance strategies in natural classroom settings while understanding the meanings embedded in social interactions among young children (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The approach is particularly suitable for early childhood education research as it provides rich, contextual insights into classroom dynamics, capturing the subtle ways in which teachers influence children's social-emotional development (Alonso-Tapia, Martín, & Fernández, 2021). The descriptive design enabled a systematic portrayal of how teacher guidance strategies were implemented and how these strategies affected the social-emotional behavior of children throughout the research process. Previous studies have emphasized that descriptive qualitative research is effective in examining nuanced classroom practices and teacher-child interactions, particularly in early learning environments where behaviors develop dynamically over time (Kim & Lim, 2020; Lee, Park, & Choi, 2022).

The research was conducted at the Darma Putra Playgroup, with subjects including one early childhood learner who exhibited active social-emotional characteristics and the classroom teacher who served as the primary informant. The perspectives of the child's parents were also included as supporting informants to enhance the validity of the data through source triangulation. Engaging multiple informants ensured a more comprehensive understanding of how teacher guidance strategies influenced the child's social-emotional development, which aligns with findings from recent research highlighting the importance of including both teachers' and parents' perspectives in early childhood studies (Hagen, Smith, & Jones, 2021).

Data were collected using a combination of participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. Participatory observation was conducted directly during learning activities to identify the child's social-emotional behaviors and the strategies employed by the teacher. This method allows researchers to capture authentic interactions and the natural implementation of guidance strategies in real time, providing an in-depth understanding of classroom dynamics (Kim & Lim, 2020). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both the teacher and the child's parents to explore their perspectives on the child's behavioral changes and the effectiveness of the guidance strategies applied. This approach offers flexibility to probe further into responses while maintaining a consistent structure across informants, ensuring that key themes are captured without constraining the participants' voices (Zhou, Lin, & Wang, 2021). Document analysis complemented the observational and interview data, including child development records, learning materials, and classroom activity archives, which provided additional context and supported the triangulation of findings. Documentation serves as a reliable source to cross-validate data and ensure that the study's conclusions are grounded in tangible evidence (Lee et al., 2022).

The analysis of the collected data followed an interactive model, beginning with data reduction, which involved selecting, focusing, and categorizing the data according to the research objectives. This was followed by data presentation in the form of descriptive narratives and developmental tables, which facilitated a clear depiction of patterns and trends in the child's social-emotional behavior. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and verifying the findings through repeated examination of the data to ensure consistency and credibility (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Interactive data analysis allows the researcher

to move continuously between data collection and interpretation, refining insights as patterns emerge, and ensuring that conclusions accurately reflect classroom realities (Patel & Sharma, 2019).

The validity of the data was enhanced through several strategies. Triangulation of techniques was achieved by combining observational, interview, and documentation data. Source triangulation involved the participation of both the teacher and the child's parents, providing multiple perspectives on the child's behavior and the implementation of guidance strategies. In addition, member checking was conducted, in which the findings were confirmed with the informants to verify accuracy and interpretation. These procedures are essential for enhancing the credibility and reliability of qualitative research, ensuring that the findings are reflective of authentic classroom experiences and minimizing the influence of researcher bias (Alonso-Tapia et al., 2021; Hagen et al., 2021). Through this comprehensive methodology, the study was able to capture the depth and complexity of teacher guidance strategies in fostering social-emotional development in early childhood, providing meaningful insights for both educational practice and further research.

## IV. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Initial Conditions of Children's Social-Emotional Development

Based on the initial observations conducted at the Darma Putra Playgroup, the study subjects exhibited high levels of physical activity accompanied by challenges in self-regulation. Identified behaviors included tendencies to seize toys from peers, interrupt ongoing activities, and display impulsive emotional responses when their immediate desires were not met. The average social-emotional development score prior to teacher guidance was classified in the "Not Yet Developed" category, with a mean of 1.4. Among the indicators, turn-taking and sharing toys were the areas with the lowest scores. These findings align with prior theoretical studies on self-regulation, which emphasize that impulse control in early childhood is still in the early stages of development and heavily influenced by environmental stimulation (Blair & Raver, 2015). The lack of established self-regulatory skills during this period is consistent with neurodevelopmental research showing that the prefrontal cortex, responsible for executive functions such as inhibitory control and emotional regulation, continues to mature throughout early childhood (Diamond, 2013; Casey et al., 2019).

Contemporary studies further highlight that preschool-aged children naturally display high activity levels, and without structured guidance, these tendencies can manifest in socially disruptive behaviors (Flook et al., 2021). For instance, impulsive behaviors such as grabbing toys or interrupting peers are not necessarily negative; rather, they reflect the developmental process of practicing self-regulation within a social context (Turgut & Sop, 2023). These early observations underscore the importance of implementing targeted teacher interventions that are tailored to both the developmental stage and activity characteristics of each child.

### 4.2. Implementation of Teacher Guidance Strategies

The teacher guidance strategies implemented in this study encompassed guided play approaches, habituation of classroom rules, positive reinforcement, and individualized support. Guided play was conducted through small-group activities that required children to collaborate, take turns, and share toys. This approach is consistent with findings in developmental psychology, which indicate that collaborative play activities can enhance social competencies and self-regulatory abilities in young children (Bodrova & Leong, 2015; Ernst & Stelley, 2024). Positive reinforcement was applied through verbal praise and social recognition of adaptive behaviors. According to behaviorist theory, reinforced behaviors are more likely to increase in frequency (Skinner, 1953). In the context of early childhood education, consistent reinforcement has been demonstrated to effectively cultivate constructive social habits, enhance cooperation, and increase attention to classroom expectations (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2009; Sarac & Ogelman, 2025). Recent studies also show that

positive reinforcement strategies, when applied in combination with structured routines, improve both emotional regulation and prosocial behavior in preschool children (Çakın & Sak, 2025; Niğde, 2024).

Individualized support was provided when children exhibited impulsive behaviors. Teachers assisted children in identifying and labeling their emotions, while simultaneously offering adaptive alternatives for responding to challenges. This practice aligns with social-emotional learning approaches that emphasize the importance of adult-mediated emotional guidance (Denham et al., 2012; Soydan, Akalın, & Korkmaz, 2024). Research indicates that emotion coaching interventions significantly improve children's ability to manage frustration, reduce aggression, and increase peer cooperation (Eisenberg et al., 2021; Zeytinoglu, Calkins, & Leerkes, 2022). Furthermore, the application of consistent classroom rules and routines created an environment that supported the development of self-control and attention regulation. Structured guidance, in combination with individualized intervention, allowed children to practice self-regulation in a supportive context, reflecting the principles of developmentally appropriate practice (Çakın & Sak, 2025; Turgut & Sop, 2023). Recent evidence underscores that children in classrooms with predictable routines and adult scaffolding demonstrate significant improvements in social-emotional competencies and executive functioning (Supporting Early Childhood Educators, 2024; The Impact of the Preschool Self-Regulation Program, 2023).

#### 4.3. Social-Emotional Development After Guidance

After four weeks of consistent implementation of the teacher guidance strategies, the average social-emotional development score increased to 3.0, classified as "Developed as Expected." Significant improvements were observed in turn-taking and sharing behaviors, with scores rising by two points from the pre-intervention assessment. Additionally, behaviors related to seizing toys or disturbing peers decreased in frequency. Children began demonstrating the ability to request permission before using toys and were able to remain engaged in activities for 10–15 minutes with minimal reminders. These changes indicate an enhancement in self-regulation and impulse control. The findings support previous research that responsive teacher interactions and structured classroom strategies contribute to improvements in children's social-emotional competencies (Pianta, Hamre, & Allen, 2012). Moreover, recent studies emphasize that combining positive reinforcement, guided play, and individualized emotional support creates a synergistic effect, leading to stronger prosocial behaviors and better emotional regulation among preschool-aged children (Goble et al., 2022; Ernst & Stelley, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, these outcomes align with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which highlights the importance of adult scaffolding and guided social interactions in promoting higher-order skills, including self-regulation and social competence (Vygotsky, 1978; Kayabali & Özbey, 2024). The active involvement of teachers in mediating emotions, providing structured support, and reinforcing appropriate behaviors facilitates the internalization of social rules and adaptive emotional responses. In this context, highly active children are able to channel their energy into cooperative and goal-directed activities, rather than disruptive behaviors, reflecting successful application of developmentally appropriate practices. Furthermore, neuroscientific evidence confirms that repeated experiences in guided, responsive, and emotionally supportive environments strengthen neural pathways associated with executive function and social cognition (Murray et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020). The observed improvements in turn-taking, sharing, and sustained attention reflect the gradual maturation of these cognitive-emotional networks. Longitudinal studies suggest that early mastery of these skills is predictive of later academic engagement, peer relationships, and emotional well-being (Li et al., 2019; Williford et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the results indicate that systematic teacher guidance strategies, which include guided play, positive reinforcement, consistent rules, and individualized support, effectively foster the social-emotional development of active preschool children. The Darma Putra Playgroup case study demonstrates that structured, responsive, and developmentally appropriate interventions can transform children's initial impulsive and unregulated behaviors into socially competent and emotionally regulated actions. This aligns

with a growing body of contemporary research underscoring the critical role of teacher facilitation in early childhood social-emotional development (Flook et al., 2021; Cavanaugh et al., 2020).

## V. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study and subsequent discussion, it can be concluded that early childhood learners with active characteristics initially exhibited challenges in self-regulation and impulse control during the early stages of observation. The teacher guidance strategies, which encompassed interactive play, the habituation of rules, positive reinforcement, and individualized approaches, were systematically implemented at the Darma Putra Playgroup. The application of these strategies contributed significantly to the improvement of the children's social-emotional development, as evidenced by increased observation scores and a reduction in impulsive behaviors. These findings underscore the critical role of the teacher as a social-emotional facilitator, demonstrating how effectively channeling the energy of active children can promote adaptive and constructive behavior. Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants to enhance the generalizability of findings, to employ quasi-experimental or Classroom Action Research approaches in order to more rigorously test the effectiveness of teacher support strategies, and to examine the influence of other variables, such as parenting patterns, on the social-emotional development of active children.

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