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# APPLICATION OF SNAKE AND LADDER GAMES TO STIMULATE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN AGED 4–5 YEARS

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of the snakes and ladders game in stimulating the social-emotional development of children aged 4–5 years. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach conducted at TK Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 2 Muncar involving 13 children and a classroom teacher as the main informant. Data were collected through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that the implementation of the snakes and ladders game contributed to improvements in certain aspects of social-emotional development, particularly emotional regulation and cooperation, as children began to accept losing and wait for their turns. However, the development of empathy remained limited, while communication and self-confidence tended to be stable. The effectiveness of the game was influenced by the complexity of rules, competitive elements, and the teacher's role in providing scaffolding. These findings imply that while the snakes and ladders game can serve as an alternative learning medium, its design and implementation need to be adjusted to align with children's developmental characteristics to optimize social-emotional outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Social-Emotional Development; Early childhood; Snakes and Ladders Game.*

## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penerapan permainan ular tangga dalam menstimulasi perkembangan sosial-emosional anak usia 4–5 tahun. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif yang dilaksanakan di TK Aisyiyah*

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*Bustanul Athfal 2 Muncar dengan melibatkan 13 anak dan guru kelas sebagai informan utama. Teknik pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif yang mencakup reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa permainan ular tangga berkontribusi terhadap peningkatan beberapa aspek sosial-emosional, khususnya pengendalian emosi dan kerja sama, yang ditandai dengan kemampuan anak menerima kekalahan dan menunggu giliran. Namun, perkembangan empati masih terbatas, sedangkan komunikasi dan kepercayaan diri relatif stabil. Efektivitas permainan dipengaruhi oleh kompleksitas aturan, unsur kompetisi, serta peran guru dalam memberikan pendampingan. Implikasi penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa permainan ular tangga dapat digunakan sebagai media pembelajaran, tetapi perlu disesuaikan dengan desain dan pendampingan agar sesuai dengan karakteristik perkembangan anak.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Perkembangan Sosial-Emosional; Anak Usia Dini; Permainan Ular Tangga.*

## INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional development is one of the important dimensions in early childhood growth and development which includes the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, as well as build positive relationships with others and the surrounding environment (Bigelow et al., 2025; Rahmaniya et al., 2025). In the age range of 0-6 years, known as the period *Golden Age*, the child's brain development takes place rapidly so that the stimulation given during this period will have a long-term impact on the overall quality of the child's development (Fuadia, 2022). In early childhood education, the social-emotional aspects not only shape children's daily behavior, but also affect children's success in learning, adapting in the social environment, and facing various developmental challenges in the future (Fitriya et al., 2022). Children who have well-developed social-emotional intelligence will be better able to cope with stress, solve conflicts, and build harmonious relationships with peers and adults around them (Daulay, 2025; Gonzales, 2022; Liu et al., 2025; Mehmood, 2026).

However, the reality on the ground shows that aspects of early childhood social-emotional development are often overlooked, both by parents and educators, compared to cognitive and language aspects. As a result, many children at an early age have difficulty managing negative emotions such as anger and disappointment, tend to be egocentric, have difficulty cooperating, and are not able to understand other people's perspectives (Wahyudi et al., 2024). Therefore, this condition is a serious concern, that social and emotional skills are increasingly recognized as

predictors of children's success not only in school, but also in adult life, in line with this it is necessary to have a learning approach that is appropriate, fun, and in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood development in order to optimize social-emotional stimulation from an early age.

The paradigm of early childhood education, play is seen as the main medium of learning because it is in harmony with the world and the needs of children's development. Through play, children gain hands-on experience in interacting, negotiating, sharing, waiting for turns, and managing emotions, all of which are core components of social-emotional competence (Widadiyah et al., 2024). Several empirical studies have proven the effectiveness of the play approach in optimizing early childhood social-emotional development. Research Mustapa et al., (2025) showed that group interaction-based play significantly improved cooperative and empathetic skills in preschool-aged children. In line with that, Pello & Zega, (2024) emphasized that stimulation through games involving peer interaction has been proven to be effective in developing aspects of socialization and emotional management of children. Furthermore, a study from Ujaini & Nawangsasi, (2025) concludes that cooperative play makes a real contribution to improving communication skills and self-control in children aged 4–6 years.

One of the games that has long been known and widely applied in the context of early childhood learning is the snake and ladder game. The snake and ladder game is a traditional board game that uses dice and pawns, where players move forward according to the number of dice, gain an advantage if they land on the ladder box, and have to back off if they land on the snake box (Nersa et al., 2024). This game is considered to have the potential to train various social-emotional aspects such as patience waiting for turns, the ability to accept wins and losses sportsmanship, and the skills of interacting in groups. Research Fajri et al., (2023) revealed that the modification of the snake and ladder game with educational content was able to improve the cooperative ability of children aged 4–5 years. The study Marwah et al., (2025) mentioned that the snake and ladder game has proven to be effective as an interactive learning medium that increases children's enthusiasm and social involvement during the game process. With these various potentials, the snake and ladder game can be seen as an interesting alternative learning media to support the stimulation of early childhood social-emotional development, although its implementation still needs to be adjusted to the characteristics and needs of children's development.

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of snake and ladder games in the context of early childhood learning, but there are still research gaps that need

further attention. Most previous studies have tended to focus on cognitive aspects, such as numeracy skills and number recognition, while studies that specifically examined the application of snake and ladder games in stimulating social-emotional development in children aged 4–5 years have been relatively limited. At this age range, the social-emotional aspect has an equally important role in supporting children's readiness to interact and adapt in their social environment. In addition, existing research has not studied much about the dynamics that arise during the process of implementing the snake and ladder game.

These dynamics include children's emotional responses when faced with winning and losing situations, interaction patterns formed between peers, and various obstacles that arise in the game process, such as conflicts, impatience, and children's ability to follow rules. These aspects are important to analyze because they can provide a more complete picture of how games function not only as a learning medium, but also as a space of social experience for children. Therefore, a more in-depth, contextual, and real-on-ground study is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of snake and ladder games in stimulating early childhood social-emotional development.

Based on the background and gaps of the research, this study comes with a novelty in the form of an in-depth and comprehensive analysis of the application of snake and ladder games in the stimulation of social-emotional development of children aged 4–5 years, which includes aspects of empathy, emotional control, cooperation, communication, and self-confidence. This research not only focuses on results, but also examines the process of implementing games, children's behavioral responses, and factors that affect the sustainability of activities. The purpose of this study is to analyze the application of snake and ladder games in stimulating children's social-emotional development, identify social-emotional aspects that develop and experience obstacles, and formulate recommendations related to the use of snake and ladder games as a medium of social-emotional stimulation in early childhood.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type that aims to examine the application of snake and ladder games in stimulating the social-emotional development of children aged 4–5 years. This approach was chosen because it is able to describe phenomena naturally and understand the meaning behind children's social-emotional behavior in the context of ongoing learning (Satar et al., 2025). The research was carried out at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 2

Muncar Kindergarten with informants of children aged 4–5 years in class A1 with 13 children and classroom teachers as key informants. The determination of the subject was carried out using the purposive sampling technique, which is based on the subject's direct involvement in the snake and ladder game activity so that it is relevant to the focus of the research (Nadirah et al., 2022).

Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Observation is used to directly observe the child's social-emotional behavior during play, such as the ability to work together, manage emotions, and interact with peers. Interviews were conducted with teachers to obtain information related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning using snake and ladder games, while documentation was used as supporting data for activities, children's development records, and learning tools. The combination of these three techniques is used to obtain comprehensive and complementary data (Ulfatin, 2022).

The data analysis in this study uses an interactive analysis model which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing which are carried out continuously until data saturation is achieved. Data reduction is carried out by sorting out information relevant to the focus of the research, then presented in the form of a descriptive narrative, and ending with the drawing of interpretive conclusions. To ensure the validity of the data, source triangulation techniques and techniques are used, namely by comparing observation, interview, and documentation data and confirming the data to informants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

This research was carried out at Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 2 Muncar Kindergarten by involving 13 children aged 4-5 years old as research subjects. Data were obtained through participatory observation during three snake and ladder game sessions, interviews with classroom teachers, and documentation of child development. The results of the study focused on five aspects of social-emotional development, namely empathy, emotional control, cooperation, communication, and self-confidence.

**Table 1**. Children's Social-Emotional Development Before and After After the Implementation of the Snake and Ladder Game

| Aspects | Before (BB/MB/BSH/BSB) | After (BB/MB/BSH/BSB) | Changes | Observation Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Empathy | BB | MB | Fixed | Begin to be able to show empathy when a friend loses |
| Emotion Control | MB | BSH | Increase | Starting to be able to accept defeat |
| Cooperation | MB | BSH | Increase | Children are able to wait patiently for their turn |
| Empathy | MB | BSH | Increase | Haven't shown concern for your friend's feelings |
| Emotion Control | BB | BSH | Increase | Starting to be able to endure disappointment |
| Cooperation & Communication | BSH | BSB | Fixed | Actively communicating, leading the game, cooperative |
| Confidence | BSH | BSB | Increase | Dare to think and make decisions in the game |

**Description:**
BB = Not yet developed;
MB = Start Growing
BSH = Grow Up To Expectations
BSB = Very Well Developed.

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that there is a variation in the social-emotional aspects of children after the application of the snake and ladder game. Some aspects show improvement, especially in emotional control and cooperation, while the empathy aspect shows slower progression. In general, children begin to show the ability to accept defeat, wait for their turn, and interact more actively during the game.

Based on the results of observations, it shows that not all children experience significant improvements. Some children still show negative emotional responses such as being excessively disappointed when losing, and not being able to fully understand their friends' feelings. In addition, the dynamics of the game also show the emergence of small conflicts such as fighting for turns and differences in understanding the rules of the game.

The results of interviews with teachers revealed that the complexity factor of the game rules and the existence of an element of competition (win-lose) are one of the causes of limited development in several social-emotional aspects. The teacher also emphasized the importance of active mentoring during the game so that children can be directed in managing emotions and building positive social interactions.

**Discussion**

The findings of this study show that snake and ladder games have the potential to stimulate several aspects of children's social-emotional development, especially in the aspects of emotional control and cooperation, although the increase has not been evenly distributed in all aspects. These results are in line with the early childhood education paradigm that places play as the main medium of learning, where children learn through direct experience in social interaction (Widadiyah et al., 2024).

Improvements in aspects of emotional control, such as the ability to accept defeat and endure disappointment, suggest that snake and ladder games can be a means of emotional learning through real experience. This is in accordance with Fuadia's opinion (Fuadia, 2022) which states that the right stimulation during the Golden Age can help children develop the ability to regulate emotions gradually. However, the discovery of children who show negative emotional reactions indicates that the ability to regulate emotions at the age of 4-5 years is not fully mature, as emphasized by Daulay (2025).

In the aspect of cooperation and communication, the results of the study showed an increase in children's ability to wait for their turn and interact with peers. These findings support the results of Mustapa et al. (2025) and Pello & Zega (2024) which states that social interaction-based play can improve early childhood cooperation and communication skills. Nevertheless, the interactions that occur in snake and ladder games are also colored by minor conflicts, which suggests that competitive games have the potential to give rise to complex social dynamics.

Meanwhile, the development of empathy shows relatively slow results compared to other aspects. Although children begin to show basic empathy, such as responding to a losing friend, the ability to deeply understand other people's feelings has not been optimally developed. This shows that empathy requires more intensive and sustained stimulation, and it is not enough just through competitive play. These findings reinforce previous research that stated that cooperative play is

more effective at developing empathy than competitive play (Ujaini & Nawangsasi, 2025).

In addition, an important factor that affects the effectiveness of games is the role of teachers as facilitators. The results of the study show that active mentoring from teachers, such as providing direction and emotional support *(scaffolding),* It greatly affects children's ability to manage emotions and interact socially. This is in line with Wahyudi et al. (2024) which emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in early childhood education that focuses not only on activities, but also on the mentoring process. However, this study also found that the snake and ladder game in its original form has limitations, especially in terms of the complexity of the rules and the dominance of competition elements. This condition can hinder the optimization of children's social-emotional development, especially at the age of 4-5 years who are still in the early stages of development. Therefore, game modifications, such as simplifying rules or adding cooperative elements, are needed to better suit the child's developmental characteristics.

The limitations of this study lie in the limited number of subjects (13 children) and the relatively short duration of the study, so the results of the study cannot be generalized widely. In addition, the child's individual factors such as temperament and previous experiences are not analyzed in depth. Further research is recommended to use a broader design, involve a variety of games, and integrate a cooperative approach to obtain more optimal results.

Overall, this study confirms that snake and ladder games can be a medium of social-emotional stimulation for early childhood, but its effectiveness depends on the design of the game, the readiness of children's development, and the quality of mentoring from teachers.

## CONCLUSION

The application of the snake and ladder game at Kindergarten Aisyiyah Bustanul Athfal 2 Muncar showed an increase in several aspects of social-emotional development of children aged 4-5 years, especially in emotional control and cooperation, such as the ability to accept defeat and wait for turns. However, progress in the empathy aspect is still limited, while communication and self-confidence are relatively stable. The results of the study also show that the effectiveness of games is influenced by the complexity of the rules, the elements of competition, and the role of teacher mentoring. Thus, snake and ladder games can be used as a medium of social-emotional stimulation, but they need adjustment and mentoring to be more optimal.

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