

# Improving Prosocial Behavior Through Project-Based Learning Activities In Children Aged 5-6 Years

Alfina Hermawati<sup>1</sup> ✉, Apri Kurniasih<sup>2</sup>, Retno Risti Darmawanti<sup>3</sup>  
Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Darussalam, Lampung, Indonesia<sup>(1)</sup>  
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✉ Corresponding author:  
[alfinahermawati22@gmail.com]

## Abstract

Prosocial behavior plays a crucial role in early childhood social-emotional development, as it forms the foundation for children's ability to interact, cooperate, and demonstrate empathy in social contexts. This study aims to improve the prosocial behavior of children aged 5–6 years through the implementation of project-based learning at PAUD Budi Luhur II. The research employed a classroom action research design conducted in two cycles, involving 15 children as participants, with data collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed using descriptive qualitative and quantitative techniques by comparing prosocial behavior achievement across cycles. The findings indicate a significant improvement in children's prosocial behavior, particularly in cooperation, sharing, and helping behaviors, with 80% of children reaching the very well-developed category. These results imply that project-based learning is an effective pedagogical approach for fostering prosocial behavior in early childhood education.

**Keywords:** *Prosocial Behavior, Project Based Learning, Early Childhood*

## Article Info

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Early childhood is a child who is in the age range of 0-6 years, is a group of children who are in the process of development and growth that is unique in nature in Indonesia, the definition of early childhood is aimed at children aged 0-6 years as in the Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System in Article 1 paragraph 14 which states that Early Childhood Education is education intended for children from birth to 6 years of age. While Early Childhood according to NAEYC (National Association for The Education of Young Children), is a child aged between 0-8 years.(Pebriana, 2017)

Early Childhood Education is a pre-school education intended for Early Childhood as initial provisions before continuing to a higher level of education. In Early Childhood Education, children's basic abilities are honed so that they grow and develop optimally.(Hidayat & Nurlatifah, 2023) The National Education System Law states that Early Childhood Education (PAUD) is a development effort aimed at children from birth to the age of six years which is carried out through the provision of educational stimulation to assist physical and spiritual growth and development so that children are ready to enter further education (Law Number 20 of 2003, Chapter I, Article 1, paragraph

14)(Efektivitas Permainan Galah Terhadap Perilaku Prosocial Anak Usia et al., 2023).(Sulaeman et al., 2022)

The goal of Early Childhood Education is to create high-quality children, namely those who grow and develop according to their level of development, have character, a sense of responsibility, discipline, and can solve problems by thinking ahead. (Angelia et al., 2022) Early Childhood Education must be guided by standards stated as the Child Development Achievement Level Standards (STPPA) which contain the scope of aspects of child development consisting of religious and moral values, physical motor aspects, cognitive development, language, social emotional and artistic aspects. (Aini et al., 2023) One aspect of development that must be achieved in PAUD is the social emotional aspect that needs to be stimulated early on. According to Nugraha and Rachmawaty, a child must be able to process and control emotions and recognize their social behavior that has an impact on children to respond well to every emotional and social condition in front of them.

Formation of commendable behavior or what is known as prosocial behavior. According to Urlock (1978) prosocial behavior in children appears since children aged 2-6 years, children learn to do social relationships and socialize with people outside the home environment and peers. Prosocial behavior patterns in early childhood include: Cooperation, caring, empathy, friendly attitudes, selfless attitudes and attachment behavior. (attala, 2023) In prosocial behavior requires several abilities, namely building communication, developing social interaction and cooperation. While the aspect of social development is very important because it concerns the achievement of maturity of children's social interaction relationships. The aspect of social development is influenced by the process of treatment or guidance from the environment, parents, or norms that apply in society.(Mahatmaharti & Dinarti, 2023)

Prosocial behavior in early childhood is directed towards good social development, such as cooperation, helping each other, sharing, sympathy, empathy, and needing each other. (Jannah, 2022) Prosocial behavior is very important for early childhood to create a harmonious, safe, comfortable and conducive environment as expected. Another benefit is that it can minimize negative incidents such as bullying or actions that can harm others. The benefits of prosocial behavior are so great that Allah SWT rewards His servants who behave prosocially. Prosocial behavior is very important for early childhood to create a harmonious, safe, comfortable and conducive environment as expected. Another benefit is that it can minimize negative incidents such as bullying or actions that can harm others. The benefits of prosocial behavior are so great that Allah SWT rewards His servants who behave prosocially.(Iskandar, 2024) the most appropriate way to develop prosocial behavior is to give children the opportunity to play with their friends.

Based on observations conducted at PAUD Budi Luhur II, Braja Luhur Village, Braja Selehah District, East Lampung Regency, it was found that the social skills of children aged 5-6 years had not developed optimally. This condition was reflected in several behaviors, including 5 out of 15 children who were reluctant to share toys, 6 children who showed limited ability to cooperate, 5 children who frequently violated classroom rules, and 3 children who tended to avoid interaction with peers. These findings are consistent with previous studies which report that early childhood social skills often remain underdeveloped when learning activities are dominated by teacher-centered approaches and lack meaningful social interaction (Jannah, 2022; Mahatmaharti & Dinarti, 2023). Other studies also indicate that limited opportunities for collaborative play and group-based learning can hinder the development of prosocial behaviors such as cooperation, empathy, and responsibility (Fitriani et al., 2023; Islamiyah et al., 2024). Furthermore, research by Husnah et al. (2023) emphasizes that social skills deficits in early childhood are closely related to the absence of structured activities that encourage peer interaction and shared problem-solving. Therefore, in response to these challenges, an appropriate learning model is required to facilitate the development of children's social skills, one of which is the implementation of a project-based learning model that emphasizes collaboration, interaction, and active participation.

Project-based learning model is one of the learning models where teachers provide opportunities for children to be actively involved in solving problems encountered in everyday life which are carried out in groups. Project-based learning places students as active learning subjects,

encourages the emergence of initiative and exploration processes, provides opportunities to apply what is learned. Opportunities to present or communicate and evaluate student performance. With this learning model, activities given in groups will create a process of interaction, socialization, and cooperation between children to solve the problems faced. (Al Wafa & Majid, 2024) Learning experiences can encourage children to solve problems in daily activities independently. This activity equips children with creativity, expands children's interests and combines other children's work activities in achieving group goals.

The advantage of project learning is that there is two-way communication between students and teachers, and students are even trained to communicate with each other. This makes the learning atmosphere more enjoyable and interesting. Project-based learning can also improve students' problem-solving skills, increase student togetherness, and increase learning motivation. (Fitrianingtyas et al., 2023) The project method is important to be applied to early childhood because it is related to real daily life so that children learn from their own experiences. This is proven to be more meaningful than ordinary methods. In addition, children can learn to manage themselves to work together with friends in solving problems.

It can be concluded that the project-based learning model is one of the learning models where teachers provide opportunities for children to be actively involved in solving problems encountered in everyday life which are carried out in groups. Project-based learning places students as active learning subjects, encourages the emergence of initiatives and exploration processes, provides opportunities to apply what is learned. Opportunities to present or communicate and evaluate student performance.

Previous studies have widely examined the effectiveness of project-based learning in early childhood education, particularly in enhancing social skills and general character development. Research by Fitrianingtyas et al. (2023) and Islamiyah et al. (2024) demonstrated that project-based learning positively influences children's social interaction and cooperation; however, these studies mainly focused on general social skills without systematically measuring specific indicators of prosocial behavior. Other studies, such as those conducted by Husnah et al. (2023) and Jannah (2022), emphasized the role of storytelling and play-based activities in fostering prosocial behavior, yet they did not integrate structured project routines that actively involve children in collaborative problem-solving processes. In addition, Mahatmaharti and Dinarti (2023) highlighted the influence of parenting and environmental factors on socio-emotional development, but the instructional model used in classroom settings was not examined in depth.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the systematic implementation of project-based learning as a routine classroom strategy to specifically enhance prosocial behavior indicators namely sharing, cooperation, helping, and peer interaction among children aged 5–6 years. Unlike previous studies, this research employs classroom action research to observe progressive behavioral changes across learning cycles, emphasizing direct involvement, habituation, and reflective group activities within project-based learning contexts. Based on this novelty, the objective of this study is to improve the prosocial behavior of children aged 5–6 years through the implementation of project-based learning activities at PAUD Budi Luhur II.

## 2. METHODS

You consists of four stages, namely: (1) planning, (2) implementation of action, (3) observation, and (4) reflection. This study was conducted in two cycles, each cycle consisting of several meetings. This classroom action research was conducted by involving collaboration between teachers and researchers to overcome problems and improve the quality of learning in the classroom.

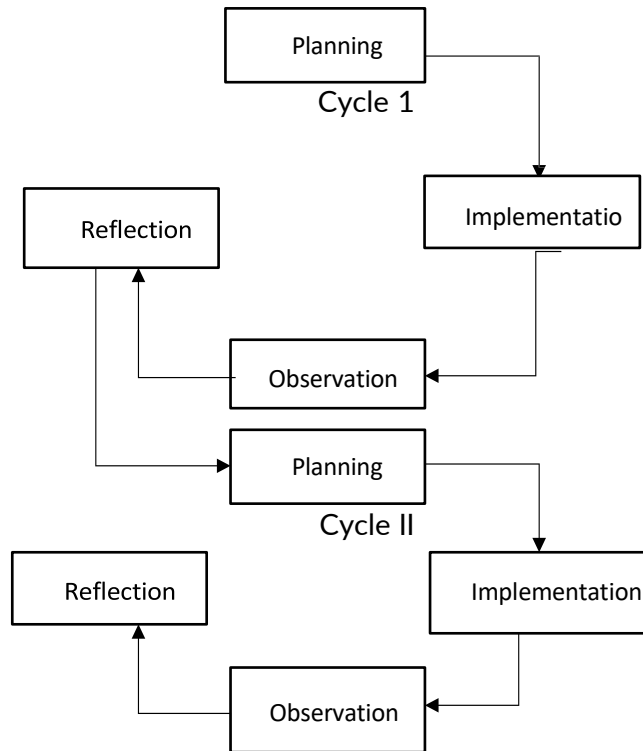


Figure 1. Classroom Action Research Flow Model Kemmis M C Taggart

The subjects of this study were 15 children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Budi Luhur II. The study was conducted at the PAUD institution for 4 days, in 2025. The types of data collected are qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data are obtained from the results of observations of children's prosocial behavior during project-based learning activities. Quantitative data are in the form of scores or percentages of achievement of prosocial behavior indicators collected from observation sheets. Data sources include, Students, classroom teachers, documentation of learning activities, Data Collection Techniques.

Data collection techniques used in this study include, Observation, to observe children's prosocial behavior during the learning process. Interviews, conducted informally with teachers to obtain additional information. Documentation, in the form of photos of activities, teacher diaries, and children's project results. The research instruments used are, Prosocial behavior observation sheets, which include indicators such as: sharing, helping friends, working together, and respecting others. Field notes to record important events during the implementation of the action. Interview guides to dig up information from teachers. Data analysis was conducted descriptively qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data were analyzed by reducing data, presenting data, and drawing conclusions. Quantitative data were analyzed by calculating the percentage increase in prosocial behavior from cycle to cycle using the formula:

$$P = \frac{N}{A} \times 100\%$$

- P = Expected percentage
- F = What students achieve
- N = Number of students

**Table 1. Level of Completion of Children's Fine Motor Skills**

No	Level of Completion	Mark	Research Criteria
1	80%-100%	BSB	Developing Very Well
2	51%-79%	BSH	Developing According to Expectations
3	0%- 50%	MB	Starting to Develop

Progress between cycles is compared to see the effectiveness of project-based learning in improving children's prosocial behavior. The study is considered successful if there is a significant increase in prosocial behavior indicators of at least 80% of children showing development as expected, and there is a positive response from teachers and children to project-based learning activities.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Pre-Action Results

Before entering cycle I, the researcher found out the existing problems by conducting initial observation. From the observation results, it can be seen that the children's prosocial behavior ability is low. They do not yet have a sense of cooperation, concern, empathy, friendly attitude, selflessness and attachment behavior. Children are also not yet accustomed to this project method and are not yet accustomed to doing their assignments in groups.

**Table 2. Score in Pre-Action**

No	Information	Precycle	
		Amount	%
1	Developing very well (BSB)	3	20
2	Developing according to expectations (BSH)	5	33,33
3	Started to develop (MB)	7	46,67

Observations at PAUD Budi Luhur II Braja Luhur, showed that the development of children's prosocial behavior still varied, with 7 (46.67%) children in the category of "Starting to Develop" (MB), 5 (33.33%) "Developing According to Expectations" (BSH), and 3 (20%) "Developing Very Well" (BSB). This classroom action research was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of three meetings. The focus of the action was the implementation of project-based learning activities to improve the prosocial behavior of children aged 5-6 years.

#### Cycle 1

Before starting the cycle I action, the researcher first made a RPPH (Daily Learning Implementation Plan) and the guardian discussed it with the class teacher. During the activity, the researcher had prepared the tools and materials in advance, such as cardboard, food coloring, natural materials, Lego, and small spoons, etc. The researcher also prepared an observation sheet and a rubric for assessing children's prosocial behavior abilities and divided the groups during the activity. In the early stages (cycle I), children began to be introduced to project-based activities through simple projects such as making simple words using plastic spoons in groups, making various shapes from lego in groups. Based on the results of observations, the level of achievement of children's prosocial behavior is still relatively low.



**Figure 1. Making Words From Plastic Spoons**



**Figure 2. Making Various Shapes From Lego**

Figure 1 shows that most children still do not have prosocial behavior such as cooperation, caring, empathy, friendly attitude, selflessness and attachment behavior. After implementing cycle I, the researcher found shortcomings in the research process. First, children are not used to working in groups. Second, there are still children who are more dominant and reluctant to share. Third, lack of joint reflection after the activity. Through the reflection above, the researcher planned a better learning to be implemented in cycle II. The researcher and teacher reflected on the need for strategy improvement, namely, Increasing guidance and modeling by teachers in each activity. Increasing group discussion time and joint evaluation activities. Providing direct positive reinforcement when children demonstrate prosocial behavior.

*Cycle II*

In cycle II, the projects given were more challenging and collaborative, such as children were given food coloring, cardboard, banana stems and other natural materials such as banana leaves, coffee leaves, cassava leaves, etc., to create creations according to children's creativity in groups. Children began to show improvements in cooperation, empathy, and social awareness. The results of observations showed that 12 out of 15 children (80%) had actively demonstrated prosocial behavior such as being able to complete tasks together. Wanting to help friends who had difficulties. Being able to share tools and roles voluntarily. Reflective activities carried out at the end of each session also helped children to recognize and understand their good actions.



**Figure 3. Creations From Natural Materials**



**Figure 4. Creations From Food Coloring**

In Figures 3 and 4 are a combination of meetings in cycle II. Improvement actions in cycle II proved effective. Children were not only actively involved in the project, but also showed an increase in the quality of social and emotional interactions.

**Table 2. Score in Cycle II**

No	Information	Cycle I		Cycle II	
		Amount	%	Amount	%
1	Developing very well (BSB)	5	33,33	12	80
2	Developing according to expectations (BSH)	7	46,67	3	20
3	Started to develop (MB)	3	20	-	-

The increase in prosocial behavior seen from cycle I to cycle II shows that project-based learning is able to create a rich social context to train empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect. This is in line with Thomas's opinion (2000), that project-based learning creates space for children to collaborate authentically and build social experiences (Sholeh, 2024). The results of this study are also supported by Vygotsky's theory of social development, which states that children's cognitive and social development occurs optimally through social interaction and group work. In project activities, children are trained to take an active role in solving problems together, which indirectly encourages the emergence of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior is one of several aspects of social emotional development that must be developed in children in Early Childhood Education Institutions. According to Eisimberg and Mussen prosocial behavior is a voluntary action intended

to help or benefit another person or group of people (Husnah et al., 2023)

Project-based learning provides opportunities for children to be actively involved in activities that require cooperation, empathy, and responsibility. Through projects, children learn to share tasks, help friends, and solve problems together. This is in line with findings in other studies that show that project-based learning methods can improve the social skills of early childhood (Islamiyah et al., 2024). In addition, this approach also allows children to develop communication and problem-solving skills, which are important aspects of prosocial behavior. Thus, project-based learning not only improves prosocial behavior but also supports the holistic development of children. The project method according to Moeslichatoen is one of the ways to provide learning experiences by confronting children with everyday problems that must be worked on in groups (Innayah, 2022)

In addition, project-based learning provides opportunities for children to learn from real experiences (experiential learning), which is very appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood development. Overall, the actions implemented have proven to be successful in increasing children's prosocial behavior, as indicated by the increasing percentage of achievement in cycle I, which increased from the pre-cycle, namely 5 children (33.33%) in the BSB category, 7 children (46.67%) in the BSH category, and 3 children (20%) in the MB category. After cycle II was carried out, there was a significant increase, namely, 12 children (80%) in the BSB category, 3 children (20%) in the BSH category, and 0 children in the MB category. This shows that the right approach and consistent guidance can help instill social values from an early age.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of classroom action research that has been carried out in two cycles, it can be concluded that project-based learning activities can effectively improve the prosocial behavior of children aged 5-6 years at PAUD Budi Luhur II. The increase can be seen from the increasing percentage of achievement in cycle I which has increased from the pre-cycle, namely 5 children (33.33%) in the BSB category, 7 children (46.67%) in the BSH category, and 3 children (20%) in the MB category. After cycle II was carried out, there was a significant increase, namely, 12 children (80%) in the BSB category, 3 children (20%) in the BSH category, and 0 children in the MB category. This shows that the right approach and consistent guidance can help instill social values from an early age.

The implementation of project-based learning provides space for children to interact actively with peers in a cooperative atmosphere, forming a sense of shared responsibility for group tasks, training empathy, helping each other, sharing, and appreciating differences. Project-based learning also facilitates contextual and enjoyable learning experiences for children, so that social values can be embedded naturally through meaningful activities. Thus, project-based learning can be used as an alternative learning method that is relevant, applicable, and effective in fostering prosocial behavior in early childhood

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