

The Role of Teachers in Developing Social Skills of Early Childhood Students at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa Merangkak, Embung Kandong Village, Academic Year 2024/2025

Suhaini¹; Marniati²

^{1,2} STIT Palapa Nusantara Lombok NTB, Indonesia

Email: suhainipgra1@gmail.com¹; marniatistit@gmail.com²

ABSTRAK

This study aims to analyze the roles and strategies of teachers in developing the social skills of early childhood learners at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa, as well as to identify supporting factors and challenges faced during the learning process. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results reveal that the teacher's role in developing children's social skills falls into the "very good" category, with an observation score achievement of 81.25%. The teacher's role includes lesson planning, implementing interactive activities, providing direct guidance, modeling social behavior, and reinforcing positive social attitudes. The strategies applied consist of learning through play, role-playing, habituation of social values, group work, and structured observation of children's social behavior. Supporting factors for success include teachers' strong understanding, parental involvement, and the support of school leadership. The main challenges encountered involve limited play facilities, the absence of formal training, and the diversity of children's individual characters. This research highlights the importance of collaboration among teachers, parents, and school stakeholders in promoting the social development of early childhood learners through contextual and enjoyable learning strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (PAUD) serves as a formative stage that shapes the foundational aspects of children's development, including cognitive, emotional, and particularly social competencies. Social skills constitute a crucial domain that enables children to communicate effectively, cooperate with peers, resolve conflicts, and develop empathy. Hurlock (1998) asserts that early childhood is the stage in which children learn to differentiate right from wrong, express concern for others, and build essential interpersonal abilities. These competencies do not emerge automatically; instead, they require structured support and facilitation. In this regard, teachers play an indispensable role as facilitators and mediators in children's social interactions. Ariyanto et al. (2023) highlight that teachers' pedagogical methods significantly influence the formation of young children's social behaviors. At PAUD Shihabul Musthofa, teachers are positioned as central agents in establishing supportive, interactive, and socially enriching learning environments.

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Corresponding Author

Marniati

*Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah
Palapa Nusantara Jln Palapa No.
01 Selebung Keruak, Lombok
Timur, NTB, Indonesia*

Despite the importance of social development, many children still encounter challenges such as difficulty interacting with peers, reluctance to share, and limited empathy. These issues often stem from a lack of exposure to meaningful social experiences, insufficient parental involvement, or limited teacher understanding of appropriate pedagogical approaches. Such conditions underscore the urgency of examining how teachers facilitate social development, particularly in the context of PAUD Shihabul Musthofa—an educational institution that serves a diverse population of young learners in Embung Kandong Village. Understanding teacher roles in this setting is critical for identifying effective practices and addressing existing gaps in early social education.

A substantial body of research provides evidence on effective strategies to support social development in early childhood. Yudiastuti (2015) found that role-playing activities enhanced children's cooperation, emotional expression, and rule comprehension. Likewise, Huda and Iman (2018) reported that although creative educational play media have significant potential to improve social interaction, their implementation at PAUD Permata Bangsa remained suboptimal due to limited professional staffing and inadequate facilities. Machmud (2018) further emphasized that parenting styles—whether authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive—play a major role in shaping children's social abilities. These findings collectively reinforce the notion that children's social skills are influenced by both home and school environments.

Early childhood is widely regarded as a “golden age,” wherein rapid development occurs across physical, cognitive, moral, emotional, and social domains (Pujianti et al., 2024; Ummah et al., 2016; Asmawati, 2017; Nurvitasari, 2016). Environmental factors such as nutrition, family support, and parental involvement further shape children's growth trajectories (Hulu, 2016). Within this developmental window, teachers and parents serve as dual role models who contribute to shaping children's character and social behavior (Anugrahwati & Marmawi, 2013; Noor et al., 2024). Teachers, in particular, provide guidance and structure that help children navigate common social challenges such as selfishness, emotional outbursts, or difficulties collaborating (Wahyuni & Nuraini, 2019). Their professional roles extend beyond instruction to include planning, facilitating, directing, and evaluating learning experiences (Nurhamidah et al., 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, social skills encompass a set of socially acceptable behaviors that enable children to engage constructively with others (Isnaini, 2019). These skills include cooperation, communication, empathy, responsibility, and respect for social norms. Santrock (as cited in Machmud, 2013) emphasizes that social competence not only influences peer relationships but also facilitates growth in cognitive and emotional domains. Children who possess strong social skills tend to perform better academically, display fewer behavioral problems, and exhibit higher emotional resilience.

Conversely, children with poor social skills may experience social isolation, low self-confidence, difficulty adapting to group activities, and higher risks of behavioral issues or delinquency (Wariani et al., 2017). Such difficulties often hinder children from participating meaningfully in classroom learning, leading to long-term developmental implications. Therefore, strengthening social skills in early childhood is essential not only for immediate social functioning but also for lifelong personal and academic success.

In early childhood education, teachers assume multifaceted roles in enhancing social competence. As observers, they identify children's social strengths and challenges; as facilitators, they design play-based activities that encourage interaction; as mediators, they guide children in resolving conflicts; and as role models, they demonstrate positive social behaviors. Siswanto et al. (2019) argue that experiential and play-based learning methods—particularly those involving group

play, outdoor activities, and problem-solving tasks—can significantly enhance children’s independence, responsibility, and discipline.

Preliminary observations and contextual analysis suggest several challenges that may affect social skill development at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa, including varying levels of teacher pedagogical competence, limited availability of learning media, and diverse backgrounds of students’ families. These conditions necessitate a deeper understanding of how teachers adapt their strategies to accommodate these challenges. Such insights are vital for improving teacher capacity, optimizing learning resources, and ensuring equitable social development opportunities for all children.

While previous studies have explored parenting styles, role-play, and media-based interventions, there remains a noticeable gap concerning how teachers specifically enact their professional roles in fostering social skills within the unique context of PAUD Shihabul Musthofa. Existing literature has not thoroughly examined the day-to-day classroom interactions, teacher decision-making processes, or localized strategies used to support children’s social development. This study seeks to fill that gap through an in-depth qualitative exploration.

The novelty of this research lies in its context-specific analysis of teacher roles in early childhood social skill development. Rather than merely exploring learning methods or media interventions, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the real practices, challenges, and pedagogical considerations experienced by teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa. By integrating theories of child development with contextualized field findings, this research contributes a unique perspective to both academic literature and practical early childhood education frameworks.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What roles do teachers play in developing the social skills of early childhood students at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa?; (2) What learning strategies do teachers implement to enhance children’s social skills?; and (3) What supporting and inhibiting factors influence teachers’ efforts to foster social skill development?

The objectives of this study are to analyze teachers’ roles, identify pedagogical strategies used in social development, and explore the factors that support or hinder this process. The significance of this research is manifold: theoretically, it enriches the discourse on early childhood social development and teacher roles; practically, it offers actionable recommendations for teachers and institutions; and at the policy level, it informs the design of early childhood programs that prioritize social competence as a core developmental goal.

METHOD

1. Research Design and Approach

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research method. The researcher sought to understand and describe the role of teachers in developing early childhood social skills at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed for an in-depth exploration of social phenomena through direct interaction with participants. As noted by Moleong (2017:6), qualitative research generated descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and observable behavior.

2. Research Setting

The study was conducted from April 20 to June 25, 2025, at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa NW Merangkak, located in Embung Kandong Village, Terara, East Lombok, NTB. The institution had 18 students in Class A and 17 students in Class B. The site was selected based on its relevance to

early childhood education and the accessibility that allowed the researcher to conduct data collection efficiently.

3. Research Informants

The informants consisted of teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa who were directly involved in facilitating the development of children's social skills. Additional informants—namely the school principal and parents—were included to provide broader and more comprehensive insights. Sugiyono (2016:133) states that qualitative research informants are selected based on their involvement in the issues being studied.

4. Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select the informants. This technique was chosen because the researcher required participants with sufficient knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in developing early childhood social skills at the institution. According to Sugiyono (2016:133), purposive sampling is a technique in which data sources are selected based on specific considerations.

5. Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using several techniques:

a. In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers to obtain information about the strategies they used to develop children's social skills. Moleong (2017:186) describes in-depth interviews as purposeful conversations designed to gather detailed information.

b. Observation

Direct classroom observations were carried out to examine teacher–student interactions and learning activities. Bogdan and Biklen (1982:27) define observation as a data collection method in which the researcher is physically present to observe the phenomenon being studied.

c. Documentation

Documentation techniques were used to collect learning records, institutional documents, and reports that supported the analysis of social skill development activities.

6. Data Trustworthiness

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information from teachers, the principal, and parents, while technique triangulation involved comparing interview results, observation notes, and documentation. According to Moleong (2017:330), triangulation is a method of verifying data by using additional sources or techniques as points of comparison.

7. Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the interactive model, which consisted of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, the researcher selected and organized data relevant to the research focus. Data were presented narratively, in tables, or in visual form. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the presented data. Miles and Huberman (1994:10–11) emphasize that qualitative data analysis is conducted continuously until data saturation is reached.

RESULTS

1. The Role of Teachers in Developing Early Childhood Social Skills

In developing social skills among early childhood learners, teachers play a crucial role that includes lesson planning, implementing interactive activities, providing direct guidance, modeling positive social behavior, and giving reinforcement to support children's social attitudes. Based on

observations and instrument analysis, the role of teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa was categorized as *very good*, with an overall observation score of **81.25%**.

a. Lesson Planning by Teachers

Teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa prepared Daily Learning Implementation Plans (RPPH) that explicitly included group learning and role-play activities as strategies to enhance children's social skills. The planning was highly structured and contextual, effectively supporting early childhood social learning goals. The observation score for this aspect was **4**, indicating that planning was conducted very well and consistently. *(Researcher's direct observation of RPPH preparation for Class B, June 3, 2025)*

b. Implementation of Interactive Activities

In practice, teachers actively implemented interactive learning activities that encouraged children to collaborate, engage in dialogue, and solve problems together. For example, role-play and group work activities were routinely carried out. Observation results showed a score of **3**, indicating that such activities were conducted fairly frequently as part of the social learning method. *(Observation of role-play activity in Class B, June 5, 2025.)*

c. Guidance and Facilitation of Children's Social Interaction

Teachers not only planned and conducted activities but also directly accompanied children during social interactions. They guided children during play, helped them resolve minor conflicts, and modeled appropriate communication. The observation score for this aspect was **4**, indicating that teachers consistently fulfilled this role and served as key facilitators in children's social interactions. *(Observation of teacher facilitation during group activities outside the classroom, June 10, 2025.)*

d. Teachers as Social Role Models

Modeling positive behavior served as an effective implicit teaching method. Teachers demonstrated politeness, empathy, and cooperation through both verbal communication and daily actions. With an observation score of **4**, it can be concluded that teachers performed this role optimally. *(Observation of teacher-student interactions during the morning exercise session, June 12, 2025.)*

e. Reinforcement and Appreciation of Children's Social Behaviors

In addition to modeling behavior, teachers provided verbal and nonverbal appreciation for children's positive social behaviors, such as sharing and helping peers. Such praise helped build children's confidence and strengthened consistent social behavior. The observation score for this component was **3**, indicating that reinforcement was given fairly frequently during learning activities. *(Observation of teacher praise during a drawing-tool sharing activity, June 14, 2025.)*

Below is the table and graph illustrating the Role of Teachers in Developing Early Childhood Social Skills at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa.



Figure 1. Bar Chart of Teachers' Roles in Developing Early Childhood Social Skills

In the horizontal bar chart above, it is shown that the highest score (4) was achieved in three aspects: Planning, Guidance, and Modeling. Meanwhile, the aspects of Implementation and Reinforcement received a score of 3, indicating that these activities were performed fairly frequently but still have room for further improvement.

Table 1. Observation Scores of Teacher Roles

No.	Observed Aspect	Score (1–4)
1	Teacher Planning	4
2	Teacher Implementation	3
3	Child Guidance	4
4	Teacher Modeling	4
5	Reinforcement of Children's Social Skills	3

In the horizontal bar chart above, the highest score (4) was obtained in three aspects: Planning, Guidance, and Modeling. Conversely, Implementation and Reinforcement received a score of 3, signifying that these activities were adequately carried out but can continue to be strengthened.

2. Learning Strategies Implemented by Teachers to Enhance Children's Social Skills

a. Learning Through Play Strategy

Teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa applied a learning-through-play strategy as the primary approach to developing early childhood social skills. Based on interview results, this method was considered the most effective because children could naturally express themselves and interact through activities such as pretend shops, house play, and professional role-play scenarios (doctor, teacher, merchant). Teachers believed that in a playful context, children more easily understood concepts of sharing, taking turns, and cooperating. (*Observation of role-play activities in Class B, June 5, 2025.*)

b. Role-Play and Social Simulation Activities

Role-play activities were conducted regularly in the classroom to foster empathy, communication skills, and cooperation. Observations showed that teachers frequently encouraged children to act out particular characters within specific social situations. These activities promoted peer interaction, allowing children to practice social skills directly in an enjoyable and educational setting. (*Interview with Hormaniatul Aini, Class A Teacher, June 4, 2025.*)

c. Daily Reinforcement of Social Values

Teachers also instilled positive habits by reinforcing daily social values, such as greeting peers and teachers, saying thank you, apologizing, and waiting for their turn. Based on interviews, these activities were consistently integrated into children's daily routines, both inside and outside the classroom. Such habituation was considered effective in concretely embedding moral and social values. (*Interview with Hormaniatul Aini, June 13, 2025.*)

d. Varied Group and Collaborative Activities

Another strategy used was integrating collaborative activities into learning, such as building block structures together, coloring large posters in groups, and participating in simple competitions. These activities provided opportunities for children to practice turn-taking, role-sharing, and appreciating group members. (*Interview with Hormaniatul Aini, June 13, 2025.*)

e. Structured Observation of Children's Social Behavior

Teachers conducted daily structured observations of children's social behavior, which were documented in individual development journals. These evaluations were discussed during weekly teacher meetings and served as a basis for determining appropriate approaches for each child. The

information was also shared with parents as part of collaborative efforts to support children’s social development. (*Interview with the Principal, Salmini, S.Pd., June 17, 2025.*)

Below is a bar chart illustrating the five learning strategies implemented by PAUD Shihabul Musthofa teachers to enhance early childhood social skills, with frequency values based on interview and observation data.

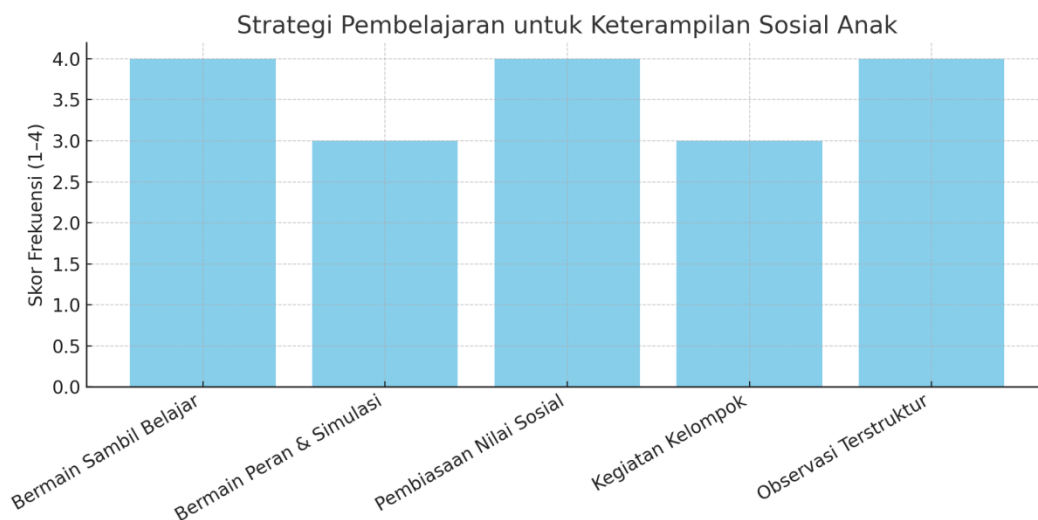


Figure 2: Bar Chart of Learning Strategies to Enhance Early Childhood Social Skills

The observation scale used in this study ranges from 1 to 4, representing the frequency or consistency of an activity. A score of 4 indicates that the activity is carried out very frequently and with consistent structure in the learning process. A score of 3 signifies that the activity occurs regularly, although not yet fully consistent. A score of 2 reflects that the activity is performed occasionally or intermittently. Meanwhile, a score of 1 indicates that the activity is rarely carried out or receives limited attention during classroom activities.

3. Factors Influencing Teachers’ Success and Challenges Encountered

a. Supporting Factors for Teacher Success

1) Teachers’ Understanding and Competence

Teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa possess a strong understanding of early childhood social skills. They recognize that social skills include the ability to share, cooperate, take turns, and express emotions appropriately and politely. This understanding forms an essential foundation for determining suitable instructional strategies to promote children’s social development. (*Interview with Baiq Nurhayani, Early Childhood Teacher, June 5, 2025.*)

2) Parental Support

Active parental involvement also contributes significantly to teachers’ success. Based on interview findings, parents accompany their children at home, help develop social interactions within the family and neighborhood environment, and maintain regular communication with teachers through WhatsApp messages. In addition, parents participate in various school activities such as family competitions and religious events, which strengthen a positive social environment for the children. (*Interviews with parents of students—Daffa Ibnu Hafiz and Tiara Azzahra, June 21 and 25, 2025.*)

3) Support from the School Principal

The principal of PAUD Shihabul Musthofa provides moral support and policy reinforcement for teachers in developing children’s social skills. The principal encourages teachers to integrate social values into daily activities and facilitates collaboration with parents through joint programs and periodic evaluations of children’s development. (*Interview with the Principal, Salmini, S.Pd., June 14, 2025.*)

b. Challenges Faced by Teachers

1) **Limited Play Facilities**

One of the major challenges faced by teachers is the limited availability of play facilities to support children’s learning activities. Educational play equipment remains minimal, and there is no adequate outdoor play area. These limitations restrict children’s opportunities to engage in broader and more natural social interactions. (Interview with the Principal, Salmini, S.Pd., June 14, 2025.)

2) **Lack of Formal Training**

Interview results also indicate that none of the teachers have attended formal training specifically related to developing social skills in early childhood. Consequently, teachers rely on personal experience and contextual approaches in carrying out their teaching roles. This lack of training becomes an obstacle in enriching the strategies and methods that could be implemented. (Interview with Salmini, June 17, 2025.)

3) **Individual Differences in Children’s Characteristics**

Teachers encounter challenges associated with children’s diverse personalities. Some children tend to be shy and struggle to initiate interactions, while others are more dominant and reluctant to cooperate. These differences require teachers to be patient, flexible, and able to apply differentiated approaches based on each child’s needs. (Interview with Zulmini, Classroom Teacher, June 10, 2025.)

To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the process of developing early childhood social skills at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa, the researcher identified the factors supporting teachers’ success as well as the challenges they face. These findings are systematically presented in the following tables.

Table 2. Supporting Factors Contributing to Teacher Success

No.	Supporting Factors	Description
1	Teachers’ Understanding and Competence	Teachers understand concepts of social skills such as sharing, cooperation, and expressing emotions appropriately.
2	Parental Support	Parents maintain active communication with teachers, accompany children at home, and participate in school activities.
3	Support from the Principal	The school principal supports social learning activities and continuous teacher–parent collaboration.

This table highlights three primary factors that contribute to teachers’ success in guiding children’s social skill development. These include adequate teacher competence, active parental involvement, and supportive leadership from the principal.

Table 3. Challenges Faced by Teachers

No.	Challenges	Description
1	Limited Play Facilities	Educational play tools are limited and there is no adequate outdoor play area.
2	Lack of Formal Training	Teachers have not received specific training related to developing early childhood social skills.
3	Differences in Children’s Characteristics	Teachers face challenges with varied child personalities (shy, dominant, or lacking cooperation).

The table illustrates three major challenges frequently encountered by teachers in implementing social learning activities, namely limited facilities, the absence of formal training, and variations in children’s characteristics. These factors present obstacles that require targeted strategies and special attention to ensure they do not impede the achievement of social learning objectives.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the role of teachers in developing early childhood social skills at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa falls into the very good category, with an observation score achievement of 81.25%. This score reflects the teachers' ability to design learning activities that are responsive to children's social needs. Teachers play an active role through activity planning, the implementation of interactive methods, guidance, social modeling, and reinforcement of positive attitudes. This finding aligns with Rusman (2021), who asserts that success in early childhood learning is not solely determined by the learning content but also by how teachers create meaningful social experiences for children.

In terms of instructional strategies, teachers employ learning-through-play approaches, role-playing activities, habituation of social values, and collaborative tasks as the primary methods for fostering children's social skills. Such strategies are highly consistent with the principles of experiential learning, which are believed to simultaneously enhance children's social, emotional, and cognitive competencies. A study by Andriani, Fatimah, and Suryani (2020) concluded that role-playing methods consistently improve empathy, communication skills, and conflict-resolution abilities among children aged 4–6 years.

The findings also show that external support—particularly parental involvement and principal leadership—substantially contributes to the effectiveness of teachers' roles. Parents who actively communicate with teachers and engage with their children help create continuity between home and school learning environments. This is consistent with the findings of Sari and Fitriani (2019), who argue that strong collaboration between teachers and parents reinforces the internalization of children's social values. The school principal also plays a crucial role by providing policy direction and motivation to integrate social values into daily classroom activities.

However, several challenges persist, including limited play facilities, the absence of formal training on social skill development, and significant variations in children's individual characteristics. Teachers reported limited access to educational play materials and insufficient outdoor play areas to support natural and extensive social interactions. The lack of formal training further restricts teachers' ability to develop innovative and contextually relevant instructional strategies. This challenge is supported by recent findings from Lestari and Sulaiman (2022), who found that early childhood teacher training has a significant impact on improving teachers' ability to facilitate children's social interaction skills.

In addition, differences in children's characteristics—such as shyness, dominance, and difficulty cooperating—require individualized approaches that are not always easy to implement in classroom settings. Teachers are expected to demonstrate sensitivity and creativity in addressing these diverse needs. Therefore, it is essential for early childhood institutions to strengthen teacher capacity through regular training, the provision of adequate facilities, and the creation of learning environments that are adaptive to children's individual needs. In the long term, synergy among teachers, schools, and parents becomes the key to ensuring success and sustainability in children's social development (Wulandari, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the teachers at PAUD Shihabul Musthofa have demonstrated a highly significant role in developing the social skills of early childhood learners. This is reflected in the observation score of **81.25%**, indicating that teachers have fulfilled their responsibilities exceptionally well, particularly in lesson planning, the

implementation of interactive activities, direct guidance, social modeling, and the provision of reinforcement for children's social behaviors. The instructional strategies applied—such as learning through play, role-playing, social habituation, and structured observation—have also proven effective, as they promote active and contextual learning. Several supporting factors, including teacher competence, parental involvement, and school leadership policies, further contribute to the successful implementation of these strategies. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited play facilities, the absence of formal training, and the diversity of children's characteristics remain issues that require prompt attention.

The implications of this study highlight the importance of providing formal training and adequate play facilities as key forms of institutional support. This research also offers practical contributions to the development of social learning policies in early childhood institutions and may serve as a reference for educators in designing learning activities that optimally support children's social development. For future research, it is recommended that attention be directed toward developing socially oriented learning models based on local environmental and cultural contexts, as well as ensuring more systematic parental involvement. This study reaffirms that the social skills of young children can be enhanced through enjoyable, structured, and collaborative approaches involving both teachers and the surrounding environment.

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