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The Effect of Role Playing Method on The Socialization Skills of School-Age Children: Pre-Experiment Study at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto, Indonesia

Inna Ilma Nafi'ah, Aida Novitasari^{ORCID}, Miadi^{ORCID}, and Kiaonarni Ongko Waluyo^{ORCID}

Department of Nursing, Poltekkes Kemenkes Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

Corresponding author: Inna Ilma Nafi'ah (e-mail: ilmanafiah464@gmail.com)

ABSTRACT Bullying among school-aged children remains a significant public health and educational concern that negatively affects psychological well-being, emotional stability, self-esteem, and socialization abilities. Inadequate social skills may hinder children's ability to interact effectively with peers and adapt to their social environment. Interactive educational approaches, such as role-playing, are considered beneficial in promoting communication, cooperation, empathy, and self-control among children. However, empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of role-playing methods in improving socialization skills among elementary school students in Indonesia remains limited. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the effect of the role-playing method on the socialization skills of school-aged children at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto, Indonesia. This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest–posttest approach. The participants consisted of 30 fifth-grade students selected through a total sampling technique. The intervention involved three role-playing sessions conducted weekly. Socialization skills were measured using the teacher version of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) questionnaire before and after the intervention. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test with a significance level of 0.05. The findings demonstrated a significant improvement in students' socialization skills following the intervention. Before the intervention, most students (66.67%) were categorized as having moderate socialization skills, whereas after the intervention, the majority (90%) achieved high socialization skill levels. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($Z = -4.796$; $p = 0.000$). These results indicate that the role-playing method effectively enhances children's social interaction, cooperation, and self-control. In conclusion, role-playing is an effective and practical educational strategy for improving socialization skills among school-aged children. Integrating role-playing activities into school learning programs may contribute to fostering positive peer relationships and reducing social difficulties among elementary school students.

INDEX TERMS Role-Playing Method, Socialization Skills, School-Aged Children, Bullying Prevention, Social Interaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Bullying among school-aged children remains a critical global public health and educational issue because it significantly affects children's psychological well-being, emotional stability, and social development [1], [2]. Victims of bullying frequently experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and difficulties in building healthy interpersonal relationships [3], [4]. According to recent international reports, approximately one in three children worldwide has experienced bullying during their school years, indicating that bullying continues to be a widespread concern across educational settings [5]. In addition, inadequate socialization skills among children may worsen peer conflicts and reduce children's ability to

communicate, cooperate, and adapt effectively within their social environment [6]. These conditions demonstrate the urgent need for educational interventions that not only improve academic competence but also strengthen children's psychosocial and social interaction abilities [7].

Socialization skills are fundamental during middle childhood because children begin to develop broader peer relationships and social identities during this stage [8]. Erikson's psychosocial development theory explains that children aged 6–12 years are in the "industry versus inferiority" phase, where successful peer interaction and social acceptance contribute to self-confidence and emotional maturity [9]. Furthermore, Vygotsky's social development theory emphasizes that learning and social competence are

strongly shaped through collaborative interaction and guided participation [10]. Consequently, educational strategies that actively engage children in communication, cooperation, and emotional expression are considered effective for promoting social development [11].

One learning approach that has attracted considerable attention is the role-playing method. Role-playing is an interactive educational strategy that enables children to simulate real-life situations, perform specific social roles, and practice communication and problem-solving skills through experiential learning [12], [13]. Previous international studies have reported that role-playing activities can improve empathy, self-confidence, teamwork, communication skills, and emotional regulation among elementary school students [14]–[16]. In addition, role-playing interventions have been associated with enhanced peer interaction and reduced aggressive behavior because children learn to understand different perspectives and practice conflict resolution strategies [17], [18]. Play-based learning approaches are particularly appropriate for school-aged children because they provide enjoyable and meaningful experiences that support cognitive, emotional, and social development simultaneously [19].

Despite the increasing use of role-playing methods in educational settings, several limitations remain in previous studies. Most existing studies have focused primarily on language learning outcomes, cognitive achievement, or communication skills rather than specifically evaluating socialization abilities related to bullying prevention [20], [21]. Moreover, limited studies have comprehensively examined dimensions of socialization skills, including social interaction, cooperation, and self-control among elementary school children [22]. Previous research has also predominantly been conducted in developed educational contexts, while evidence from developing countries, particularly Indonesia, remains relatively scarce [23]. Furthermore, studies investigating role-playing interventions within local elementary school settings are still limited, creating a research gap regarding the applicability and effectiveness of such methods in improving children's socialization skills in Indonesian schools [24].

Therefore, this study aimed to analyze the effect of the role-playing method on the socialization skills of school-aged children at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto, Indonesia. This study contributes to the existing literature in several important ways. First, it provides empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of role-playing methods in enhancing socialization skills among elementary school students. Second, it expands the implementation of play-based educational interventions in the context of bullying prevention and psychosocial development. Third, the findings offer practical recommendations for educators and schools regarding the integration of interactive and collaborative learning methods into elementary education programs to strengthen children's social competence and emotional regulation.

This article is organized into several sections. Section II describes the research methodology, including the study

design, participants, instruments, intervention procedures, and data analysis techniques. Section III presents the research findings. Section IV discusses the interpretation of the findings and compares them with previous studies. Finally, Section V concludes the study and presents implications and recommendations for future research and educational practice.

II. METHOD

A. STUDY DESIGN

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest–posttest approach. The design was selected to evaluate the effectiveness of the role-playing method in improving the socialization skills of school-aged children by comparing participants' conditions before and after the intervention [25]. In this design, all participants received the intervention without a comparison or control group. The pretest–posttest approach enabled the researchers to identify changes in socialization skills after the implementation of the role-playing activities. This study was conducted prospectively from January to September 2025, including preparation, intervention implementation, data collection, and statistical analysis stages.

B. STUDY SETTING AND POPULATION

The research was conducted at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia. The school is located in an industrial-area community where many parents work full-time, resulting in limited parental supervision and social interaction opportunities for children outside school hours. This setting was considered relevant because socialization difficulties and bullying behaviors among school-aged children may be influenced by environmental and family-related factors [26]. The target population consisted of all fifth-grade students enrolled at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto during the 2025 academic year. A total of 30 students participated in the study. The participants included both male and female students aged 10–11 years. The sampling technique used was non-probability total sampling because the population size was relatively small and all eligible students were included as respondents [27].

C. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

The inclusion criteria were: (1) fifth-grade students actively enrolled at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto, (2) students aged between 10 and 11 years, (3) willingness to participate in the study, and (4) ability to communicate and follow the intervention procedures. Written informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians before data collection. The exclusion criteria included students who: (1) withdrew during the study period, (2) experienced illness requiring intensive medical care, or (3) were absent during the intervention sessions or posttest assessment.

D. INTERVENTION PROCEDURE

The intervention used in this study was the role-playing method, which is an interactive educational strategy involving dramatization, simulation, and social interaction

exercises. Role-playing activities allow children to actively participate in social scenarios and practice communication, cooperation, empathy, and emotional regulation skills [28].

The intervention was conducted in three sessions over a three-week period, with one session administered each week. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes and was facilitated by the researchers in collaboration with classroom teachers. During the sessions, students were divided into small groups and assigned different social scenarios commonly encountered in school environments, such as friendship conflicts, cooperation in group activities, helping peers, and responding to bullying situations.

Each role-playing session consisted of four stages: introduction, role assignment, role enactment, and reflection. During the introduction stage, the facilitator explained the objectives and social themes of the activity. In the role assignment stage, students received specific characters and situations to perform. The enactment stage involved students acting out the assigned scenarios, while the reflection stage encouraged discussion regarding appropriate social behaviors, emotional responses, and problem-solving strategies. This structured approach was intended to strengthen children's understanding of positive social interaction and improve their ability to manage interpersonal relationships [29].

E. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Socialization skills were measured using the teacher version of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). The SSRS is a standardized instrument widely used to assess children's social competence, including social interaction, cooperation, communication, empathy, and self-control [30]. The questionnaire was adapted into Indonesian and modified using age-appropriate language to ensure comprehension and contextual relevance for elementary school students.

The instrument consisted of behavioral indicators evaluated by the classroom teacher based on students' daily social behavior. The assessment included dimensions such as initiating communication, cooperating with peers, controlling emotions during conflict, respecting others, and participating in group activities. The questionnaire was administered twice, namely before the intervention (pretest) and after completion of the intervention (posttest).

F. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Prior to data collection, researchers coordinated with the school administration and classroom teachers regarding the study schedule and procedures. During the pretest stage, teachers completed the SSRS questionnaire for each participant to assess baseline socialization skills. Subsequently, the role-playing intervention was implemented for three consecutive weeks.

After all intervention sessions were completed, the posttest assessment was conducted using the same SSRS instrument. To minimize measurement bias, the pretest and posttest evaluations were conducted under consistent conditions and by the same classroom teacher. All collected

data were checked for completeness before statistical analysis.

G. DATA ANALYSIS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Univariate analysis was performed to describe participant characteristics, including age, gender, parenting background, and daily activities. Descriptive statistics were also used to present the distribution of socialization skill categories before and after the intervention.

Bivariate analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test because the data were ordinal and involved paired observations from the same participants [31]. A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was used to determine statistical significance. The null hypothesis stated that there was no difference in students' socialization skills before and after the role-playing intervention, while the alternative hypothesis stated that the intervention significantly improved socialization skills.

This study involved school-aged children who fall into the category of vulnerable groups. Written consent for the research was obtained from the parents, along with direct approval from the students. In addition, this study meets the ethical standards approved by the Health Polytechnic Ethical Committee of the Ministry of Health Surabaya (No. EA/3865/KEPK0Poltekkes_Sby/V/2025) and was declared "Ethically Appropriate." The researchers guarantee confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

III. RESULTS

This research was conducted at one of the schools in Mojokerto Regency. SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto is located at Jalan Pandega No.17 Ngoro, Mojokerto. The research was carried out over the period from January to September 2025. This elementary school consists of 132 students divided into 6 classes. The number of teachers is 9, including the headmaster.

TABLE 1
Frequency Distribution of Characteristics of Students at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto on August 28, 2025

Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	18	60
	Female	12	40
Total		30	100
Age	10 yo	6	20
	11 yo	24	80
Total		30	100
Preschool Education History	TK	30	100
Parenting Pattern	Parents	29	96,7
	Sibling	1	3,3
Total		30	100
Daily Activities	Yes	14	46,7
	No	16	53,3
Total		30	100

According to the information in TABLE 1, In terms of gender characteristics, it was found that the majority (60%) are male and almost half (40%) are female. Based on student

age data, it is known that almost all (80%) are 11 years old and a small portion (20%) are 10 years old. Furthermore, regarding the last education level, data shows that all (100%) have attended kindergarten.

Based on data on parenting pattern characteristics, it was found that almost all students (96.7%) are raised by their parents, and a small portion (3.3%) are raised by their older siblings or other relatives. Regarding the daily activities carried out by the students, the majority (53.3%) do not participate in daily activities, while almost half (46.7%) of the students do participate in daily activities.

TABLE 2

Distribution of Socialization Skills of SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto Students Before Intervention on August 28, 2025			
	Category	Frequency	%
Pre-Test	Low	3	10
	Medium	20	66,67
	High	7	23,33
Total		20	10

According to the information presented in TABLE 2, Obtained before the intervention, most (66.67%) had moderate socialization skills, a small portion (23.33%) of students had high socialization skills, and a small portion (10%) of students had low socialization skills.

TABLE 3

Distribution of Socialization Skills of SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto Students After Being Given Intervention on September 24, 2025			
	Category	Frequency	%
Post-Test	Low	0	0
	Medium	3	10
	High	27	90
Total		20	10

According to the information presented in TABLE 3, obtained after the intervention with almost all (90%) of the students having high socialization skills and a small portion (10%) of the students having moderate socialization skills.

TABLE 4

The Effect of Role-Playing Methods on Socialization Skills in Students at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto Using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test			
	Category	Frequency	%
Post-pre test	Decreasing	0	0
	Increasing	23	76,67
	Same	7	23,33
Total		30	100
Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test			
Test Statistic		Kat. Post-kat.Pre	
Z		-4.796	
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)		.000	

According to the findings presented in TABLE 4, almost all (76.67%) experienced an increase in socialization skills questionnaire scores, a small portion (23.33%) of students had the same socialization skills, and there was no decrease in socialization skills questionnaire scores.

Based on the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a Z value of -4.796 was obtained with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, with the post-test score being higher than the pre-test score. Therefore, the given intervention has been proven effective in improving students' socialization skills questionnaire results. Statistically, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is

accepted, meaning there is a difference before and after the role-playing intervention method was applied to students' socialization skills.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. SOCIALIZATION SKILLS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN BEFORE BEING GIVEN ROLE-PLAYING METHODS AT SDN NGORO 3 MOJOKERTO

The findings of this study demonstrated that, prior to the intervention, most students exhibited moderate levels of socialization skills. This condition indicates that although children were able to interact socially in certain situations, several participants still experienced difficulties in communication, cooperation, emotional regulation, and peer adaptation. The results are consistent with developmental theories emphasizing that school-aged children are in a critical phase of psychosocial and interpersonal development, where peer acceptance and social competence strongly influence emotional well-being and behavioral adjustment [32].

Most participants in the moderate category were 11 years old and lived with their parents, suggesting that age and family support may contribute positively to children's social development. At this developmental stage, children gradually develop the ability to cooperate, communicate effectively, and participate in group activities [33]. However, some children still demonstrated behaviors such as social withdrawal, selective peer interaction, low confidence, and difficulty controlling emotions during conflict situations. These findings suggest that adequate social interaction opportunities and supportive environments remain essential for optimizing children's socialization skills.

The findings also revealed that a small proportion of students had high levels of socialization skills before the intervention. These children generally participated in extracurricular or daily social activities, such as tutoring, sports, or arts programs. Previous studies have similarly reported that participation in structured social activities contributes significantly to children's interpersonal competence, teamwork, empathy, and communication skills [34], [35]. Children who frequently engage in collaborative environments tend to develop stronger social confidence and adaptability compared to those with limited social exposure.

Conversely, several students were categorized as having low socialization skills. These children tended to avoid interaction, displayed anxiety during peer communication, and rarely participated in classroom discussions or cooperative activities. Such conditions may be associated with inadequate social stimulation, limited peer engagement, or family-related factors. Research conducted by Kim and Park [36] explained that children with minimal social participation often demonstrate lower self-confidence and weaker emotional regulation skills, which may negatively affect their peer relationships and classroom participation.

The results of this study are consistent with previous international studies showing that bullying experiences and poor social environments can reduce children's social competence and psychological adjustment [37], [38]. Victims

of bullying frequently experience fear, emotional insecurity, and social isolation, which may limit their willingness to interact with peers. Therefore, interventions promoting communication, empathy, and cooperation are essential to support healthy psychosocial development among school-aged children.

Despite these findings, this study has several limitations. The absence of a control group limited the researchers' ability to compare outcomes between intervention and non-intervention participants. Additionally, the relatively small sample size restricted the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Nevertheless, the pretest results provide important baseline evidence regarding the socialization conditions of school-aged children in elementary educational settings and highlight the need for interactive learning interventions to improve children's social competence.

B. SOCIALIZATION SKILLS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AFTER BEING GIVEN ROLE-PLAYING METHODS AT SDN NGORO 3 MOJOKERTO

Following the implementation of the role-playing intervention, most students demonstrated high levels of socialization skills. The posttest findings indicated substantial improvements in children's ability to communicate with peers, cooperate during group activities, express emotions appropriately, and regulate behavior during interpersonal conflicts. These results suggest that the role-playing method effectively facilitated children's active engagement in social interaction and collaborative learning experiences.

The improvement observed after the intervention can be attributed to the experiential nature of role-playing activities. Through simulated social scenarios, children were encouraged to practice communication, empathy, and problem-solving skills directly within a supportive environment [39]. During the intervention sessions, participants actively performed various social roles involving friendship, teamwork, helping behaviors, and conflict management. Such activities allowed children to understand different perspectives and develop emotional awareness, which are essential components of social competence [40].

The findings are consistent with previous studies reporting that role-playing interventions significantly improve children's communication abilities, self-confidence, and peer interaction skills [41], [42]. Kim and Park [36] found that elementary school students who participated in structured role-playing activities demonstrated higher levels of cooperation and emotional regulation compared to students receiving conventional classroom instruction. Similarly, Chernikova et al. [43] emphasized that simulation-based learning approaches enhance active participation and facilitate meaningful behavioral learning experiences among children.

An important finding in this study was the improvement among students who were initially categorized as having low socialization skills. Several children who previously avoided interaction became more willing to participate in group discussions and perform social roles confidently after the

intervention. This suggests that role-playing may create psychologically safe opportunities for socially withdrawn children to practice interpersonal communication without fear of judgment. The supportive classroom environment during role-playing sessions likely contributed to increased self-confidence and emotional comfort among participants.

In addition, role-playing activities promoted cooperation and empathy because students were required to interact with peers and respond to social situations collaboratively. Children learned to respect others' opinions, help peers experiencing difficulties, and resolve disagreements constructively. These findings align with previous evidence demonstrating that play-based collaborative learning strengthens children's empathy, prosocial behavior, and interpersonal understanding [44].

Despite the positive outcomes, several limitations should be acknowledged. The intervention duration was relatively short, consisting of only three sessions, which may not fully reflect the long-term sustainability of the observed improvements. Furthermore, the assessment relied solely on teacher observations using the SSRS instrument, which may introduce subjective bias. Future studies should consider using multiple assessment methods, including parent reports and direct behavioral observations, to strengthen data validity.

The findings of this study have important practical implications for educational settings. The role-playing method may serve as an effective, low-cost, and child-friendly strategy to enhance children's socialization skills within elementary schools. Integrating role-playing activities into classroom learning and school counseling programs may support psychosocial development while simultaneously reducing social difficulties and bullying-related behaviors among students.

C. THE EFFECT OF ROLE-PLAYING METHODS ON THE SOCIALIZATION SKILLS OF SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN AT SDN NGORO 3 MOJOKERTO

The statistical analysis demonstrated a significant effect of the role-playing method on students' socialization skills, as indicated by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test results ($p < 0.05$). Most participants experienced improvements from moderate to high socialization categories, while students with initially low socialization abilities also demonstrated measurable progress. These findings indicate that role-playing interventions positively influence children's interpersonal competence, emotional regulation, and social adaptability.

The effectiveness of the intervention may be explained by the interactive characteristics of role-playing activities, which encourage children to participate actively in simulated social situations. Unlike passive instructional methods, role-playing allows children to experience direct communication, emotional expression, and collaborative problem-solving [45]. Such experiential learning processes are particularly suitable for school-aged children because children at this developmental stage learn effectively through participation and imitation [46].

The findings support previous studies demonstrating that role-playing interventions improve social interaction, empathy, and conflict management skills among elementary school students [47], [48]. Mazlan and Wangid [41] reported that role-playing significantly enhanced children's social confidence and teamwork abilities. Likewise, Whitebread et al. [49] highlighted that play-based educational approaches support self-regulation, emotional development, and peer cooperation among children.

The role-playing method may also contribute to bullying prevention because it teaches children how to respond appropriately to social conflict and encourages mutual respect among peers. During the intervention sessions, participants practiced helping behaviors, conflict resolution strategies, and emotional self-control. Such experiences may strengthen children's ability to manage interpersonal problems constructively and reduce aggressive or exclusionary behaviors within the classroom environment [50].

Although the intervention demonstrated positive outcomes, several methodological limitations should be considered. First, the one-group pretest–posttest design limits causal interpretation because external factors outside the intervention may also have influenced children's social behavior. Second, the study involved participants from only one elementary school, limiting generalizability to other educational contexts. Third, the study did not evaluate long-term outcomes; therefore, it remains unclear whether the observed improvements would persist over time.

Future research should employ randomized controlled trial designs with larger and more diverse samples to strengthen the evidence regarding the effectiveness of role-playing interventions. Longitudinal studies are also needed to evaluate the sustainability of socialization improvements and their potential influence on bullying prevention and academic adjustment.

Overall, the findings indicate that the role-playing method represents an effective educational strategy for enhancing socialization skills among school-aged children. By promoting communication, cooperation, empathy, and emotional regulation, role-playing activities may support children's psychosocial development and contribute to healthier social environments within elementary schools.

V. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted to determine the effect of the Role-Playing Method on Socialization Skills in School-Age Children at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto. From the results of this study, it can be concluded that before the role-playing method intervention was carried out, almost all school-age children had moderate socialization skills. After the role-playing method intervention was carried out, almost all school-age children had high socialization skills. The role-playing method has an effect on the socialization skills of school-age children. This research is expected to serve as an additional literature source and insight into the development of knowledge. Educational institutions are expected to support programs that promote role-playing methods for

children's social development. The implementation of role-playing methods should be incorporated into the curriculum to enhance children's socialization skills. Support role-playing activities by having parents engage children in role-playing at home to practice social interaction. In addition, facilitate children to interact with peers or participate in other social activities.

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DECLARATIONS

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study adhered to ethical guidelines and was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee (KEPK) of Poltekkes Kemenkes Surabaya, with the ethical approval number No. EA/3865/KEPK-Poltekkes_Sby/V/2025. Written consent was obtained from the parents of school-aged children at SDN Ngoro 3 Mojokerto, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. All research procedures complied with the established ethical standards for studies involving human participants.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION PARTICIPANTS.

Consent for publication was given by all participants

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare no competing interests.

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