

## Improving the social emotional abilities of special needs children through block play

Ajat<sup>1</sup>, Dina Fajriah<sup>2</sup>, Rita Amaliani<sup>3</sup>, Eti Gustini<sup>4</sup>, Salmiani<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Early Childhood Education Magister Program, Pancasakti University,  
West Java, Indonesia

[ajat@panca-sakti.ac.id](mailto:ajat@panca-sakti.ac.id), [dinafajriah107@gmail.com](mailto:dinafajriah107@gmail.com), [ritaamaliani610@gmail.com](mailto:ritaamaliani610@gmail.com)

[agnaagni20@gmail.com](mailto:agnaagni20@gmail.com), [tknagansalmiani@gmail.com](mailto:tknagansalmiani@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

*The ability of young children to interact with others, control their own emotions, and recognize and react to the feelings of others are all considered social-emotional abilities in early life. Special needs children do not have the opportunity to play with appropriate play materials. Consequently, children with special needs frequently must fully explore their social-emotional development. Since play is a crucial component of children's growth and development, it is anticipated that using block play methods will enhance students' social-emotional skills and prevent boredom in the classroom. Children's social-emotional abilities, like focus and concentration, self-assurance, and cooperation, can be improved through block games. This study aims to describe how learning through block media is implemented, how difficulties arise, and how learning through block media is implemented to enhance children's social-emotional capacities. The classroom action research design was applied in this study. Data was gathered at Islamic Kindergarten A'amillah through interviews, paperwork, and filed notes from five kids. The study's findings indicate that one of the best approaches for enhancing the knowledge and abilities of kids with special needs is through the block technique; the usage of blocks supports the proper development of children's social-emotional skills.*

**Keywords:** Special needs, Block play, Social emotional

### Abstrak

Keterampilan sosial emosional pada anak usia dini adalah keterampilan dan perkembangan anak dalam berinteraksi dengan orang lain, mengelola emosinya sendiri, serta memahami dan menanggapi emosi orang lain. Anak berkebutuhan khusus tidak memiliki kesempatan untuk bermain menggunakan media bermain yang tepat, sehingga perkembangan kemampuan sosial-emosional anak berkebutuhan khusus seringkali belum



sepenuhnya dieksplorasi. Penerapan metode bermain balok diharapkan dapat meningkatkan kemampuan sosial-emosional anak, sehingga proses belajar mengajar dapat berjalan dengan baik dan lancar, serta anak tidak mengalami kebosanan karena bermain merupakan bagian yang sangat penting dari tumbuh kembang anak. Melalui permainan balok dapat meningkatkan keterampilan social emosional anak seperti konsentrasi dan fokus, kepercayaan diri, dan meningkatkan keterampilan kerja sama. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk meningkatkan kemampuan sosial emosional anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskripsi kualitatif. Pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara, dokumentasi, dan catatan arsip dari lima anak di TKIT A'amillah. Hasil penelitian menemukan bahwa dengan menggunakan metode balok sebagai salah satu cara efektif untuk meningkatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan anak berkebutuhan khusus. Penggunaan balok mendukung perkembangan sosial emosional anak secara optimal.

**Kata Kunci:** anak kebutuhan khusus, media balok, sosial emosional

## **INTRODUCTION**

Children's behavior in adjusting to the norms of society or their surroundings is a critical component of their social development. Social development refers to the process by which young children engage with their classmates, adults, and the broader community to effectively conform to the societal norms and expectations set by the nation and the government (Mayar, 2013). The child still needs to comprehend that the environment distinctly perceives him. The child is currently engaged in self-reliant behavior without any external motivations (Nurmalitasari, 2015). Young children still need to be capable of effectively interacting with others. The child exhibits self-centered behavior.

The social and emotional development of children with special needs diverges from that of typically developing children. Children with exceptional needs have a notable distinction in their emotional regulation compared to typical children, which sets them apart. The disparity in regulating these emotions arises from their distinct perception of him compared to the other children. Children with special needs often struggle to regulate their feelings due to a combination of attention-seeking behavior and a lack of self-acceptance (Shafira et al., 2022). Children with special needs often face unique social and emotional challenges impacting their development and well-being. These challenges may include difficulties forming and maintaining peer relationships, experiencing higher levels of social isolation, and struggling with self-esteem. Social skills deficits are common, making navigating social interactions and understanding social cues harder for these children. Emotional regulation can

also be a significant challenge, as many children with special needs may experience heightened anxiety, frustration, or depression due to their difficulties in communication or sensory processing. Providing support through inclusive education, social skills training, and emotional regulation strategies can be crucial in helping these children thrive. Moreover, fostering an empathetic and supportive environment at school and home is essential for their social and emotional growth (Bauminger, N., & Kasari, 2000; Guralnick, 2010).

Early childhood development requires optimal emotional and social abilities for typical or exceptional children. Developing optimal social-emotional skills will significantly increase a child's self-assurance, improve their capacity to collaborate by teaching them how to effectively work with their peers, and equip them to engage in society fully. The bar media is a learning tool that can improve the emotional and social skills of children with special needs. Bars are versatile objects that can be molded into different shapes, making them suitable for various sports and activities.

There are several ways in which block play activities might support the emotional and social skill development of children with special needs. (1) Interpersonal skills: engaging in block playing can facilitate the development of social skills in children with unique needs. Children can acquire skills in sharing, collaborating, and peacefully resolving disagreements. (2) Emotional intelligence: Playing blocks might assist individuals with specific requirements in developing their emotional intelligence and enhancing their ability to comprehend their own feelings and those of others. Children can acquire the skills to recognize emotions, constructively articulate feelings, and proficiently regulate their emotions. (3) Cognitive skills for making decisions. Block play facilitates the acquisition of healthy decision-making skills for children with exceptional needs. Children can develop the ability to take multiple things into account when making judgments and learn to take responsibility for the outcomes of their choices.

An educational game designed to enhance children's emotional and social skills, including those with special needs. Playing this game might improve the focus and concentration of a child with special needs. Engaging in block play can also enhance self-assurance. A child with a particular need who successfully does a block task will experience a sense of pride and increased confidence. This will significantly improve his emotional growth. Block games can be played either solo or in groups. Children with disabilities who engage in group play will develop the ability to cooperate with their peers.

To enhance a child's development and learning during play, it is essential to organize the activity of playing bands in a manner that considers the child's safety, comfort, needs, conditions, and interests. Playing block can be an enjoyable and instructive pastime for the children when adequately supervised (Faeruz et al., 2022). The study by Zamiah and Nurhenti (2013) revealed that implementing the media game enhanced children's social-emotional skills. The survey conducted by Sukei, Tauchidiyah, and Timur (2022) suggests that the game of beams can enhance the emotional intelligence of youngsters. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Yuningsih, Daulay, and Nurmalina (2023) which indicates that playing with beads enhances social emotions. Through engaging in block games during each gathering, the youngster cultivates skills in collaboration, sharing, and assisting others. Playing blockd is an educational game tool that effectively enhances a child's social-emotional development. While playing musical instruments has the potential to improve the emotional and social skills of children with special needs, several factors still require further study. These include the specific characteristics of children with special needs, any medical conditions or developmental disorders they may have, and their life experiences, all of which can impact their ability to play musical instruments. The presence of sufficient beam media can enhance the ability of children with special needs to engage in beam play with greater creativity and inventiveness. Restrictions on electronic media exposure may limit the opportunities available to special needs children to develop their social and emotional skills. Children with special needs can enhance their emotional and social skills by engaging in group activities such as performing in bands. Teachers who offer suitable instruction can assist children with unique requirements in comprehending the regulations of the activity, engaging with their peers, and peacefully resolving disputes.

Preliminary observations show that there are five children with special needs living with families who are both busy working. The condition causes the children to be more at home and less sociable with their peers in the home neighborhood. Children are hard to adapt and tend to be indifferent to the others around them. It causes children with special needs to have barriers to social interaction, to manage emotions, and to adapt to their surroundings. Children with special needs have difficulties in social communication, such as speaking, difficulty expressing emotions in ways that are understood by others, and problems in participating in play activities that involve social interaction with peers; some children have difficulty managing emotions, such as anger and often temptation so affecting their social interactions, such

children also have trouble in social relationships. It seems that the social skills of children with special needs need to be developed or enhanced. The purpose of this study is to describe the method of development of social-emotional abilities of children with special needs through the use of the media of the balllocks in TKIT A'amillah.

## **METHOD**

This study employs the class action research method (CAR) with a collaborative action research design. Arikunto (2011) outlined several stages of research, beginning with the planning stage. During this stage, the researcher devises a plan of action to be implemented. The intended strategy is to utilize the media to improve children's emotional and social capacities with exceptional needs. Second step, the actions being implemented are as follows: Teachers set up bar media that meets the needs of the students; they demonstrate block games that can help kids develop their social and emotional skills; and they provide the kids the chance to play block alone or with friends. During the observation phase, the third step is for researchers to collect data on the child's social-emotional capacities by closely observing their development. (4) the last step, the Reflective phase, is when the researcher analyses the observed observations to identify the subsequent course of action.

The data gathered in this study comprise both qualitative and quantitative information. Qualitative data is collected through observations, and quantitative data is gathered by evaluating the child's social and emotional capacities. The selection of the CAR technique is based on the fact that it is a study approach carried out by educators or researchers within their classrooms. It enhances the applicability of research to actual classroom situations. Its objective is to enhance the quality of education inside the classroom setting. It enhances the benefits of research for both teachers and students.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

The research findings reported in this part are devoid of contamination or impurities. There is no requirement to present data analysis techniques, such as statistical calculations and hypothesis testing processes. Only the outcomes of analysis and speculative experimentation should be considered. Tables and graphs can enhance the clarity of verbally presenting study findings. In qualitative research, the output section has comprehensive subsections in sub-themes and sub-topics that are directly linked to the research focus and

categories. The article's discussion aims to address the formulation of problems and research questions, present the methodology used to obtain the findings, interpret and analyze the findings, connect the research findings with established knowledge structures, and propose new theories or modifications to existing theories. When solving formula issues and research questions, it is necessary to state the conclusions drawn from the study results clearly. The data are interpreted using existing reasoning and theories.

The findings in the field are synthesized with earlier research results or with existing hypotheses. To accomplish this goal, a point of reference is required. When new theories arise, they can either support or reject old theories and in some cases, it may be necessary to change the original theory. When writing an article, categorizing research findings using "subheadings" is often necessary. Here is a guide on creating the organizing format, which demonstrates the inclusion of specific details that are integral to an article and cannot be omitted.

## Cycle I

### Planning and Action in Cycle I

The planning of this research activity involves a discussion between the school principal and the class teacher, which centers on the specific topics that will be addressed during the study of class action in cycle I. The discussion includes several topics; they are: (1) Reconciling the head and teacher's understanding of the research plan, (2) Formulating the concept of using bands to enhance the child's emotional intelligence, (3) Creating a plan for implementing daily activities, (4) Developing an observation instrument, (5) Establishing a timetable for conducting class action research. The investigation was conducted at the center of the balcony on Thursday during the main activity, which takes place from 10.00-11.00 a.m. Before beginning the block activity, the teacher provided preliminary instructions to the children by explaining the sequential steps involved in the game. The teacher also agreed with the children that they would collaborate in constructing a building as a group. The children were then divided into five groups, each comprising four children, including one child with special needs.

According to the findings from the first cycle, media use can enhance the social and emotional skills of children with special needs. After utilizing the block media, the child's emotional and social abilities improved from 60% to 70.50% during the initial presentation cycle. The communication proficiency rose from 50% to 70%. The effectiveness of conflict resolution increased by 50% to 60%, while the capacity to regulate emotions improved by approximately

25% to 40%. The emotional social skills do not meet the required criterion, which is a minimum of  $\geq 80\%$  for the degree of emotional development attainment. The reason for this is the teacher's insufficient provision of stimulation and guidance during the child's play on the beam. Children with special needs find the offered beams less appealing due to their exclusive usage of natural materials. The child remains unenthusiastic, disinterested, and unfamiliar with playing in ensembles at the block.

## Cycle II

### Planning and Action in Cycle II

Developing a child's emotional intelligence using balloons in cycle I has been largely successful, but it has yet to attain the required contentment. Some children with specific disabilities may have lower levels of attentiveness, which might hinder the development of their emotional intelligence. In order to address this issue, researchers, school administrators, and classroom teachers have devised a plan of action for cycle II. The second cycle is planned to take place over two sessions, the initial one on Monday and the subsequent one on Thursday. Following conversations, researchers, school administrators, and class teachers reached a consensus on a set of measures that should be implemented to enhance a child's emotional intelligence using beam games. The measures include the following: (1) enhancing engagement with children, offering guidance, and providing positive reinforcements, (2) augmenting the amount of time allocated for children to engage in exploration, (3) supplying accessories in the form of colourful beams to captivate children's attention, (4) diversifying activities by inviting children to play with beams outside of the classroom.

According to the established plan, the researchers, the school principal, and the class instructors are implementing activities during cycle II. The task execution during the second phase commences Monday from 8:30 to 10:00 a.m., outside the classroom. Before commencing the block-playing activity, the teacher provides an initial hint to the child by explaining the steps involved in the game. The teacher also agrees with the child to construct a building in groups, maintaining the same group of children from the first cycle. Additionally, the teacher supplies colored block accessories to the child, which can be used to embellish their building. On Thursday, the teacher repeats this process, but this time at the center of the ball.

After implementing innovative activities in cycle II, the results of the second cycle study demonstrated enhanced development of children's emotional and social capacities following their use of multimedia media during

learning. The emotional abilities of children with exceptional difficulties show significant improvement after learning with the barrel medium, as seen by a 70.50% to 85% increase in their ability to cooperate. The communication proficiency increased from 70% to 95%. Effectively addressing and resolving conflicts improved from 60% to 80%. The teacher encourages the youngster to collaborate in constructing a massive building using the beam, rather than working alone. Teachers pose questions to encourage collaboration among youngsters, such as "Construct a dwelling for our dolls," "Create a metropolis complete with thoroughfares, bridges, and structures," and "Let us construct an amusement facility." Teachers can tailor the beam game to suit the specific requirements and traits of each child.

Additionally, they can offer a variety of vibrant beam accessories. Consequently, these beam games can enhance the child's social and emotional development. To support a struggling child, the teacher will offer focused and rigorous supervision and incentives to ensure they do not fall behind their peers. This is evident from the indication table provided below:

Indicators	Pre-learning	Post-learning	Improvement
Collaborative Ability	70.50%	85%	+14.50%
Communication Ability	70%	95%	+25%
Conflict Resolution Ability	60%	80%	+20%
Emotional control Ability	40%	80%	+40%

Table 1.

A study conducted in the Islamic Kindergarten of A'amillah showed that blocks may enhance children's collaboration and interaction skills and promote the development of dispute resolution and emotional management abilities. The researchers saw several positive developments, including the children collaborating with others to construct the beam structure and sharing a block with another kid. As researchers, we are pleased with these results as they facilitate collaborative problem-solving in constructing the structure. Therefore, children communicate with their friends to express their views or opinions while constructing a Bridge. Additionally, they acquire the ability to embrace the viewpoints or concepts of their peers when settling problems. During this phase, children exhibit emotional regulation, demonstrating resilience and reduced susceptibility to getting easily angered or upset when engaging in playful activities.

Block media plays a crucial role in fostering the emotional and social development of children with special needs while facilitating positive engagement within their social surroundings. The child's learning success in implementing the structure play to enhance social-emotional development is achieved through the iterative learning process in cycles I and II, resulting in improved learning outcomes and seamless progression in subsequent cycles. According to Dominick and Clarck (1996) in Hoorn et al. (1999) and Musfiroh (2005) direct experience through play allows youngsters to acquire concepts by classifying and categorizing them based on their activities. In line with Moeslichatoen (2004) practical and assignment activities are crucial educational phases as they allow teachers to assess the quality of children's learning results through feedback.

Block activities are a highly effective option for improving the emotional and social capacities of children with special needs (Suwandari & Mastiani, 2021; Usup et al., 2023). Children enhanced their ability to collaborate, interact, regulate emotions, and resolve conflicts. The teacher's technique and approach and the engaging media beam effectively increased the child's emotional and social capacities. Block games are recreational activities in bars that allow children to enhance their motor, cognitive, social, and emotional development (Purnomosari et al., 2022).

The findings of this study have significant ramifications for implementing inclusive education strategies. Integrating block media into a specialized curriculum for children with special needs can enhance the efficacy of instruction. This method can serve as a blueprint for educators and parents when constructing educational courses that prioritize enhancing children's socio-emotional development. These block games help children develop the fundamental skills to engage constructively with others in their social surroundings.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on research findings and discussions, block media can improve the emotional and social skills of kids with special needs. Block activities have provided a new avenue for enhancing the skills and capabilities of children with special needs. Block games not only provide an enjoyable educational setting but also have a significant influence on the socio-emotional development of youngsters. By engaging in ball activities, children develop the skills of cooperation and efficient communication. They engage in the collaborative construction of physical structures and develop strong social

bonds. Emotional and sociological abilities, such as empathy, responsibility, and self-confidence, are cultivated organically through this block game.

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