
THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVE PLAY IN DEVELOPING INTERPERSONAL ACTIVITY AMONG PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract:	Keywords
Cooperative play plays a crucial role in the social and psychological development of preschool children. Through collaborative activities, children learn to communicate, cooperate, share responsibilities, and develop empathy toward others. This study examines the impact of cooperative play on the development of interpersonal activity among preschool children. The research involved observational analysis and statistical evaluation of children's participation in cooperative games in preschool educational institutions. The results demonstrate that structured cooperative play significantly improves communication skills, teamwork, and emotional interaction among children. The findings emphasize the importance of play-based pedagogical strategies in early childhood education.	Cooperative play, preschool children, interpersonal activity, early childhood education, social development, teamwork, communication skills, child psychology, social competence, play-based learning

Introduction

Early childhood is one of the most significant periods in human development, during which fundamental social, emotional, and cognitive abilities are formed. Preschool age represents a particularly important stage because children begin to interact more actively with their peers and participate in social activities outside the family environment. One of the most effective methods for promoting social interaction among preschool children is cooperative play.

Play is considered the leading activity in preschool childhood. Through play, children explore the world, develop imagination, and learn social rules. Cooperative play, in particular, provides opportunities for children to engage with others, share responsibilities, and achieve common goals. Unlike individual play, cooperative play requires children to communicate, negotiate, and collaborate with peers.

Researchers in developmental psychology emphasize that cooperative play contributes significantly to the formation of interpersonal activity. Interpersonal activity refers to the ability to establish communication, cooperate with others, and respond appropriately to social situations. In preschool children, these abilities develop gradually through interaction with peers and adults.

According to the sociocultural theory of development, children learn social behaviors through interaction with others. Vygotsky argued that social interaction plays a central role in cognitive development. Cooperative activities allow children to learn from each other, exchange ideas, and develop problem-solving skills.

In preschool educational institutions, cooperative play is widely used as a pedagogical strategy to promote social development. Teachers organize group games, role-playing activities, and collaborative tasks that encourage children to work together. These activities help children develop communication skills, empathy, and teamwork.

Cooperative play also contributes to emotional development. When children engage in group activities, they learn to recognize and respond to the emotions of others. They develop empathy and learn how to manage conflicts that may arise during interaction.

Despite the importance of cooperative play in early childhood education, not all children actively participate in group activities. Some children may demonstrate shyness or limited social interaction. Therefore, it is important to examine how cooperative play influences the development of interpersonal activity among preschool children.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of cooperative play in developing interpersonal activity in preschool children. The research aims to identify the impact of group play activities on children's communication skills, cooperation, and emotional interaction.

Methods

This research employed a mixed research design combining observation and statistical analysis. The study was conducted in several preschool educational institutions to examine children's behavior during cooperative play activities.

Participants

The study involved **110 preschool children aged 5–6 years** from three preschool educational institutions. The participants included both boys and girls representing diverse social and family backgrounds.

Additionally, **10 preschool teachers** participated in the study by providing professional observations of children's social interaction.

Research Instruments

Several research methods were used to collect data.

Observation Method

Researchers conducted direct observation during cooperative play sessions. The observation focused on the following indicators:

- communication with peers
- participation in group activities
- cooperation during play
- emotional interaction with peers

Observations were conducted during both structured and free play activities.

Behavioral Assessment

Children's interpersonal activity was evaluated using a behavioral assessment scale consisting of three levels:

- High level of interpersonal activity
- Medium level of interpersonal activity
- Low level of interpersonal activity

Teacher Questionnaire

Teachers completed questionnaires evaluating children's participation in cooperative games and their ability to interact with peers.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Percentages were calculated to determine the distribution of interpersonal activity levels among children.

Results

The results of the study demonstrate that cooperative play significantly contributes to the development of interpersonal activity among preschool children. Observations revealed that children who frequently participated in group games demonstrated higher levels of communication and cooperation.

Table 1 Influence of Cooperative Play on Interpersonal Activity

Behavioral Indicators	High Level (%)	Medium Level (%)	Low Level (%)
Participation in group play	48	37	15
Communication during play	45	39	16
Cooperation with peers	43	41	16
Emotional interaction	40	44	16

The results show that nearly half of the children demonstrated a high level of participation in cooperative play activities. These children actively communicated with peers, shared roles during games, and demonstrated collaborative problem-solving skills.

Communication during play also showed high levels of development. Many children were able to express ideas, negotiate roles, and respond to the suggestions of their peers.

Cooperation with peers was another important indicator. Children who participated in cooperative games were more likely to help others, share toys, and follow group rules.

Emotional interaction also improved during cooperative play. Children demonstrated empathy and emotional responsiveness when interacting with peers.

Teachers reported that cooperative play activities improved children's confidence in communication and encouraged shy children to participate more actively in social interaction.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm the significant role of cooperative play in the development of interpersonal activity among preschool children. Cooperative play creates opportunities for children to interact with peers and develop essential social skills.

One of the main advantages of cooperative play is that it promotes communication among children. During group games, children must exchange ideas, negotiate roles, and coordinate their actions with others. These interactions help children develop verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

Another important benefit of cooperative play is the development of teamwork. Children learn to work together toward a common goal and understand the importance of collaboration. They learn to respect the opinions of others and share responsibilities.

Cooperative play also contributes to emotional development. Through interaction with peers, children learn to recognize and respond to emotions such as happiness, frustration, and disappointment. These experiences help children develop empathy and emotional regulation.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research in early childhood education. Many researchers have emphasized that play-based learning is one of the most effective methods for promoting social development in preschool children.

Educational psychologists argue that cooperative play supports the development of social competence, which includes communication, empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution skills.

Teachers play an essential role in facilitating cooperative play activities. By organizing structured group games and providing guidance during interaction, teachers help children develop positive social behaviors.

However, the study also identified certain challenges. Some children showed reluctance to participate in group activities. These children required additional encouragement and support from teachers.

Creating inclusive play environments and providing opportunities for all children to participate in cooperative activities can help overcome these challenges.

Conclusion

Cooperative play is a powerful pedagogical tool for developing interpersonal activity among preschool children. Through group play activities, children learn communication skills, teamwork, and emotional interaction.

The results of this study demonstrate that children who frequently participate in cooperative games show higher levels of interpersonal activity. These children are more confident in communication and more willing to collaborate with peers.

Preschool educators should incorporate cooperative play activities into daily learning routines. Structured group games, role-playing activities, and collaborative tasks can significantly enhance children's social competence.

Parents should also encourage cooperative play at home by providing opportunities for children to interact with siblings and peers.

Future research may explore additional aspects of cooperative play, including cultural influences and the role of digital technologies in early childhood social development.

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