



Fostering Prosocial Behavior Habits in Early Childhood through Make A Match Learning

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Received: 8 April 2026; Revised: 1 Juni 2026; Accepted: 29 Juni 2026

Abstract

Prosocial behavior is one of the essential aspects of early childhood development, as it helps children build positive interactions with their surrounding environment. This study aimed to describe the findings regarding the habituation of prosocial behavior through the *Make a Match* learning model among early childhood students at Pertiwi 1 Kindergarten. This research employed a qualitative approach using a case study strategy. The participants were Group B1 children aged 5-6 years. Data were collected through observations, interviews, and documentation involving the principal, teachers, and students as the research informants. The findings revealed that the *Make a Match* learning model effectively fostered children's prosocial behavior through interactive and collaborative card-matching activities. The habituation of prosocial behavior was reflected in several indicators, including discipline in following the rules of the game, helping peers who encountered difficulties, caring for the environment by tidying up learning materials after use, and demonstrating care and respect toward classmates throughout the learning process. The teacher's role as a facilitator, role model, and provider of positive reinforcement was a crucial factor in the successful habituation of these behaviors. Therefore, the *Make a Match* learning model can serve as an effective instructional strategy for fostering and habituating prosocial behavior in early childhood education.

[Perilaku prososial merupakan salah satu aspek perkembangan penting bagi anak usia dini untuk membangun interaksi yang positif bagi lingkungan sekitarnya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi temuan mengenai pembiasaan perilaku prososial melalui pembelajaran make a match pada anak usia dini di TK Pertiwi I Kandungan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan strategi studi kasus. Subjek penelitian adalah anak Kelompok B1 yang berusia 5-6 tahun. Data diperoleh melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi dengan informan yang terdiri atas kepala sekolah, guru, dan peserta didik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran Make a Match mampu membiasakan perilaku prososial anak melalui kegiatan mencari pasangan kartu yang dilakukan secara berkelompok dan interaktif. Pembiasaan perilaku prososial tampak pada indikator disiplin dalam mengikuti aturan permainan, saling membantu teman yang mengalami kesulitan, peduli terhadap lingkungan dengan merapikan alat permainan setelah digunakan, serta menunjukkan sikap peduli dan menghargai teman selama proses pembelajaran. Peran guru sebagai fasilitator,

pemberi teladan, dan pemberi penguatan positif menjadi faktor penting dalam keberhasilan pembiasaan tersebut. Dengan demikian, pembelajaran Make a Match dapat menjadi salah satu strategi pembelajaran yang dapat menanamkan dan membiasakan sikap perilaku prososial pada anak usia dini.]

Keywords: Prosocial Behavior, Make A Match, Early Childhood.

Introduction

Early childhood refers to children aged 0-6 years, who experience rapid growth and development, often referred to as the golden age. According to Schunk, as cited in Nurmalitasari, early childhood is also referred to as the critical developmental stage or golden age. At this stage, the majority of brain cells function as controllers of all human activities and qualities. The first two years of life are crucial for a child's development. Children begin to develop sensory, visual, and auditory motor skills, stimulated by their environment (Nurmalitasari, 2015). Therefore, it can be said that the environment is one of the factors that can influence a child's development.

In principle, humans are social beings, therefore social development is very necessary for children to facilitate the learning process and to understand their environment (Matondang, 2016). In the world of education, especially in early childhood education, not only the cognitive aspect is developed, but it must be balanced with the affective aspect. The affective aspect functions to support the child's social aspect. In this social development there is prosocial behavior, therefore this prosocial behavior must be developed well so that children can cooperate well with other individuals. Prosocial behavior must develop in line with other aspects, one of which is the symbolic thinking aspect, where the symbolic thinking aspect is the first step for children to recognize various symbols. Characteristics of the prosocial behavioral aspects of children aged 5-6 years include enthusiasm in playing with friends, obeying rules, respecting others, tolerance and showing empathy to others, both their peers and people older than them.

Early childhood begins to develop social understanding at a very early age. Before the age of one, infants are already aware that other people have perceptions, feelings, and other mental states that influence their behavior and are distinct from the child's own (Hamzah, 2020; Mutmainnah, 2025; Suratman & Rahnang, 2021; Suryadiputra, 2026). Early childhood is a period when initial self-awareness is formed. Self-concept is the image we hold of ourselves based on various categories, such as our external and internal traits (Nisa et al., 2021). Habituation is a method that allows children to encode information in their memory, enabling them to recall and practice a behavior without needing further demonstration; this process involves repetition to train the child's memory (Aini et al., 2023; Lilawati, 2019; Setiyowati, 2019). At this age, children possess a strong capacity for memory retention, and since their personalities are not yet fully formed, they can more easily store information in their memories.

This is achieved through various engaging learning strategies that align with children's developmental characteristics. One such strategy involves incorporating play-based activities into the learning process. Fundamentally, early childhood is a stage defined by play; therefore, learning activities should be designed to be enjoyable, enabling children to learn optimally. Observations conducted by the researcher at Pertiwi I Kandangan Kindergarten revealed that the Make A Match cooperative learning model is employed to foster prosocial behavior in children. This model involves an activity where children search for matching pairs of cards, containing questions and answers, related to the material being studied. The Make A Match method is used to assess students' understanding by having them match cards containing questions and answers based on the material previously presented by the teacher (Sriyanto et al., 2024). This ensures that students engage in the learning process in an enjoyable way, without feeling pressured while acquiring knowledge, as the essence of early childhood education is learning through play (Khoiruzzadi et al., 2020).

One of the advantages of this technique is that students can find a partner while learning a concept or topic in a fun atmosphere. The Make a Match learning model is a cooperative learning model developed by Lena Curran that employs a partner-matching technique for learning concepts in an enjoyable setting (Pista et al., 2016). The Make a Match model is an instructional approach in which the teacher prepares cards containing questions or problems alongside corresponding answer cards, and students then locate the matching pairs. It is a conceptual approach that encourages students to grasp concepts through active, creative, effective, and interactive engagement making the learning process enjoyable thereby ensuring the concepts are easily understood and retained within the students' cognitive structures (Rahmatunnisa et al., 2020; Sambawarana, 2022). In the field of education, this theory has been widely used to shape specific behaviors through the repetition of stimuli followed by desired responses. Several studies have demonstrated its effectiveness in boosting student interest in specific learning activities, such as literacy. Implementing this theory in education helps create a conducive learning environment and supports the formation of positive habits (Sidratur Azis, 2024).

This study builds upon previous research, specifically the work of Nur Rakhma Ardiani. That study outlined strategies for developing children's prosocial behavior to support their social-emotional development. The findings indicated that efforts to foster prosocial behavior were carried out through the implementation of direct instruction, interactive learning, and expository learning strategies. The success of this development was influenced by environmental factors, encompassing both the school and home environments (Rakhma Ardhiani & Darsinah, 2023). *Second*, a study by Tjahyaningsih et al. (2024), examines efforts to enhance the cognitive abilities of children aged 4-5 years using the Make a Match learning medium. The findings indicate that implementing the Make a Match medium is effective in improving children's cognitive abilities. This effectiveness is reflected in the increase in the average percentage of learning outcomes across each cycle. At the initial stage (pre-cycle), children's cognitive ability achievement stood at 41%, falling into the "Beginning to Develop" (MB) category. Following the intervention in Cycle I, the figure rose to 65% categorized as "Developing as Expected" (BSH) and subsequently increased to 89% in Cycle II, reaching the "Developing Very Well" (BSB) category (Tjahyaningsih et al., 2024). *Third*, a study by Matondang focuses specifically on prosocial behavior. In this study, prosocial behavior was fostered through multi-age grouping, where children aged 3-6 years were placed in the same class during the learning process (Matondang, 2016). This study aims to explore in greater depth how prosocial attitudes and behaviors are cultivated through Make a Match learning activities.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach and a case study strategy, conducted at Pertiwi 1 Kindergarten in Hulu Sungai Selatan Regency, South Kalimantan Province. The participants consist of 20 individuals specifically the class teacher, the assistant teacher, the school principal, and 17 students from the B1 group, who serve as sources of information relevant to the research. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted both during the pre-research phase and throughout the study itself; the researcher adopted a non-participant role, acting solely as an observer of the phenomena under investigation. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the informants the class teacher, the assistant teacher, and the principal of Pertiwi 1 Kindergarten using questions formulated based on indicators of prosocial behavior and symbolic thinking development in children aged 5-6 years.

The data analysis technique employed in this study involves processing and preparing the data, reading the data in its entirety, conducting a detailed analysis through data coding, applying the coding process, providing descriptions, and interpreting or deriving meaning from the data (Creswell, 2010).

The research process will be conducted by visiting the research site in person and observing the activities firsthand to understand the process of fostering prosocial attitudes and behaviors through the Make a Match learning method.

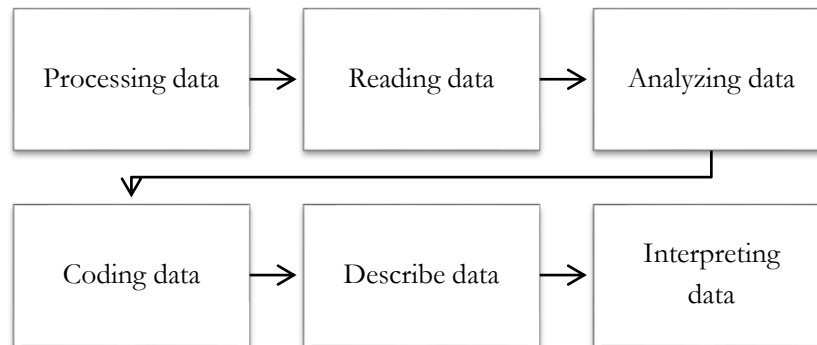


Figure 1. Creswell's qualitative research data analysis technique

Results and Discussion

Instruction using the Make a Match method was conducted once or twice a week. Researcher observations and interviews regarding the learning process specifically when employing the Make a Match model revealed that students were highly enthusiastic and eager to participate, largely because the activity took the form of a game. This enthusiasm was evident in the students' expressions and their active engagement in the game. One factor contributing to this excitement was that, rather than remaining seated at their desks, the students stood facing one another. Furthermore, when tasked with finding the matching answer, the students moved freely around the room, accompanied by laughter and lively chatter. These findings align with research conducted by Sri Laksmi at TK Gugus VI, TK Negeri Pembina, and TK Aisiyiah; that study similarly showed that children displayed great enthusiasm and eagerness when teachers explained the learning objectives and the procedures for the Make a Match activity (Laksmi et al., 2017).

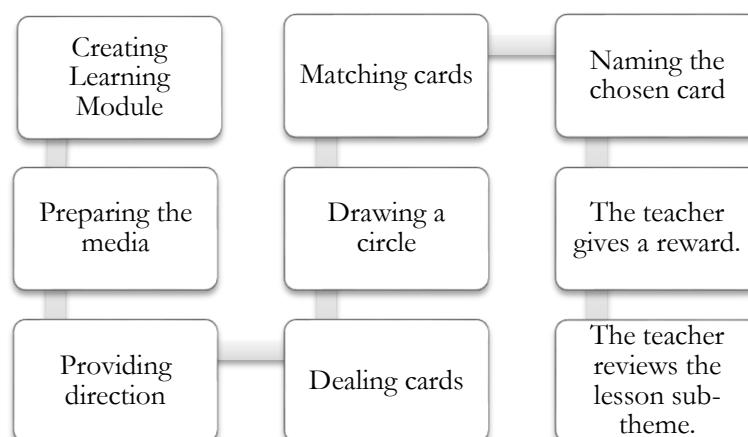


Figure 2. Stages of the Make a Match learning method

The chart above outlines the steps teachers must prepare to implement the Make a Match learning model, designed to facilitate the game's flow and foster prosocial behavior in children. Based on observations, interviews, and documentation conducted at TK Pertiwi I Kandangan, the cultivation of prosocial behavior in early childhood was achieved through the application of the Make a Match cooperative learning model. This method involves children finding matching pairs of question and answer cards based on the current learning theme. The activity is structured as a game, allowing children to learn in a fun and engaging atmosphere. Research findings indicate that the Make a Match model effectively fosters various forms of prosocial behavior in young children. The prosocial behaviors observed during the activity included cooperation, mutual assistance, caring for peers, respect for others, and the ability to interact with peers.

Cultivating a Disciplined Attitude

Discipline is one of the forms of prosocial behavior observed during the implementation of the Make A Match learning activity. Children are accustomed to following mutually agreed-upon game rules such as listening to the teacher's instructions, finding matching cards within the allotted time, and participating in an orderly manner. Throughout the activity, the children demonstrate the ability to wait for their turn and adhere to the rules set by the teacher. Cultivating discipline through the Make A Match activity involves repetition, helping children understand the importance of following rules during group tasks (*Amelia, 2018*). This practice fosters self-control and a sense of responsibility regarding their participation in learning activities. Consequently, discipline manifests not only during the game itself but also begins to appear in other learning activities.

Discipline refers to the attitude students demonstrate regarding *school rules* (*Sari, 2025*). It is crucial for students; without it, they lack boundaries, so a disciplined attitude must be instilled from an early age. The trait of discipline needs to be cultivated early on and reinforced to the fullest extent during the primary school years. While individuals possess positive potential from birth, this potential must be continuously nurtured and developed through their surrounding environments including the family, the school, and the community.

Cultivating a Habit of Mutual Assistance

Another indicator of prosocial behavior that develops through the Make A Match learning activity is the attitude of mutual assistance. Observations revealed that when a child struggled to find a matching card, others would take the initiative to offer hints or help locate the correct match. This assistance was provided spontaneously, without any direct instruction from the teacher. The Make A Match activity offers children the opportunity to interact actively with their peers. Through these interactions, children learn that success in the game is achieved by cooperating and helping one another. Cultivating this habit of mutual assistance serves as a crucial foundation for shaping children's social character from an early age.

The findings of this study align with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, which posits that children's cognitive and social development occurs through interactions with more competent individuals. Assistance provided by peers in completing a task constitutes a form of scaffolding that enables a child to achieve capabilities they could not previously demonstrate independently (*Tabi'in, 2017; Vygotsky, 1978*). In the Make a Match activity, the assistance provided by a peer to a child struggling to find a matching card constitutes a form of peer scaffolding that supports social skill development while reinforcing prosocial behavior.

Establishing the Habit of Tidying Up Toys

Prosocial behavior is also evident in the children's habit of tidying up game cards and learning materials once an activity concludes. Before the lesson ends, the teacher guides the children to gather and

reorganize the cards that were used. The children are seen cooperating to return the game materials to their proper places. This act of tidying up represents a form of social responsibility that should be instilled from an early age. Through the Make A Match learning activity, children learn to care for and maintain shared facilities. Cultivating this habit not only fosters discipline but also develops an awareness that every child bears responsibility for the shared learning environment.

These research findings align with the study by Gibhard et al., which explains that prosocial behavior in early childhood develops through real-life experiences in various social activities, such as helping, sharing, and cooperating. That longitudinal study found that repeated prosocial experiences reinforce the development of prosocial behavior in subsequent developmental stages. Thus, the activity of tidying up play materials together during Make A Match lessons constitutes a form of social experience that contributes to the development of children's social responsibility (Gibhardt et al., 2024).

Cultivating a Caring Attitude

A caring attitude is the most frequently observed indicator of prosocial behavior during Make A Match learning activities. Children demonstrate care when they notice a peer who has not yet found a matching card, is struggling to understand instructions, or feels upset about failing to find the correct answer. Several children offer support, encouragement, and assistance to help their peers successfully complete the task. This caring behavior emerges because the Make A Match activity enables children to interact directly and remain attentive to their peers' situations. Through these experiences, children learn to understand the needs of others and demonstrate empathy in various contexts. The caring attitude developed during these lessons serves as a valuable asset for children in building positive social relationships, both within the school environment and beyond. A sense of caring is an attitude that does not develop on its own. Therefore, it requires practice, familiarization, and intensive cultivation so that this attitude can grow and take deep root within an individual (Sinulingga & Sinulingga, 2023).

Table 1. Aspects of Prosocial Behavior at Pertiwi 1 Kandangan Kindergarten	
Aspects of Prosocial Behavior	Examples of Behavior
Discipline	The child waits for their turn to take a card before the game begins.
Helping Others (Mutual Helping)	The child gives guidance to a peer who has difficulty finding the matching card.
Tidying Up Toys and Learning Materials	The child helps tidy up the classroom after the game ends.
Caring (Showing Care for Others)	The child encourages a peer who has not yet succeeded in finding the matching card.

(Source: Researcher's interviews and observations at Pertiwi I Kandangan Kindergarten)

Based on the table above, children's prosocial behavior during the Make A Match learning activity can be observed through four aspects: discipline, mutual assistance, tidying up toys or learning materials, and caring. The aspect of discipline is demonstrated by the children's ability to wait for their turn in accordance with the game's rules. Mutual assistance is evident when children offer help or guidance to peers who are experiencing difficulties. The aspect of tidying up toys or learning materials is seen when children take responsibility for returning and organizing the materials used after the activity concludes. Meanwhile, the aspect of caring is shown through the attention and support children offer their peers, such as encouraging a friend who has not yet succeeded in finding their

matching card. These four aspects reflect the development of prosocial behavior that can be fostered through the Make A Match learning activity.

The development of prosocial behavior in early childhood is largely directed toward individuals with whom the child is close or has previously interacted or communicated. This aligns with the view that preschool-aged children tend to demonstrate empathy toward those closest to them, such as family members, teachers, close friends, or classmates (Izzaty, 2017; Prima, 2018). The level of children's prosocial behavior can be influenced by several factors, including their stage of development, instructional strategies, and environmental conditions that provide opportunities for them to develop prosocial behaviors. Based on the researchers' analysis and in accordance with the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation (Permendikbud) No. 137 concerning the Standards for Early Childhood Development Achievement Levels, particularly the indicators of prosocial behavior, the prosocial behavior of the children in Group B1 had developed in line with their developmental stage. These findings indicate that fostering prosocial behavior among young children at Pertiwi I Kandungan Kindergarten particularly in the areas of discipline, helping others, tidying up toys, and showing care for others can be effectively achieved through the Make a Match learning model.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the Make A Match cooperative learning model is effective in fostering prosocial behavior among early childhood students at TK Pertiwi I Kandungan. This process was facilitated through a card-matching game, which encouraged prosocial behaviors such as adhering to game rules, assisting peers facing difficulties, caring for the environment by tidying up play materials after use, and demonstrating care and respect for others during the learning process. The teacher's role acting as a facilitator, role model, and provider of positive reinforcement was crucial to the success of this initiative. Thus, the Make A Match model serves as an effective instructional strategy for instilling and habituating prosocial behavior in young children. However, as this study was limited to a single group of students at one educational institution, the findings cannot be broadly generalized. Consequently, future research should involve more diverse samples and examine the effectiveness of the Make A Match model across various early childhood educational contexts.

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