



Improving the Quality of Kindergarten Education Through Ethnoscience-Based Teacher-Child Interaction for Children's Social-Emotional Development at State Kindergarten 1 Arongan Lambalek

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of strengthening the quality of early childhood education learning processes through contextual teacher-child interactions based on local wisdom. This study aims to analyze ethnoscience-based teacher-child interactions as an indicator of process quality and its impact on children's social and emotional development. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. The research subjects consisted of teachers and children in group B at State Kindergarten 1 Arongan Lambalek. Data collection techniques were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies, while data analysis used an interactive analysis model that includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that ethnoscience-based interactions implemented through role-playing activities and local cultural exploration can increase children's engagement, strengthen empathy, cooperation, and emotional regulation as part of the quality indicators of the learning process. This study concludes that ethnoscience-based teacher-child interactions can be integrated into the PPEPP quality assurance cycle as a pedagogical and managerial strategy to improve the quality of learning and children's social and emotional development in a sustainable manner.

1. Introduction

Kindergarten (TK) is a strategic educational stage within both national and global education systems. During this period, children experience a crucial developmental phase often referred to as the golden age, characterized by rapid cognitive, social, emotional, and personality growth that is highly sensitive to environmental stimulation. The quality of education provided during early childhood has long-

term implications for children's academic achievement, social competence, and emotional well-being (Susanti, 2025). Kindergarten education is no longer viewed as a supplementary service but as a fundamental foundation for developing high-quality human resources. International evidence shows that investment in quality early childhood education strengthens character formation, improves readiness for subsequent schooling, and prepares children to face complex social challenges (Nurliyan et al., 2026). Educational quality at this level is reflected primarily in the learning experiences children receive during daily activities (Filina et al., 2024). High-quality experiences promote holistic development and lifelong learning capacity. Improving kindergarten education therefore becomes a strategic priority in national education development (Sativa & Buahana, 2025).

Educational quality in kindergarten is not merely reflected in administrative achievements or graduation rates but in the quality of learning processes experienced by children (Safariyah & Pusparini, 2026). Quality encompasses planning, implementation, evaluation, and continuous improvement of learning (Dika et al., 2023). Research indicates that high-quality learning processes significantly contribute to children's social and emotional development, which influences readiness for further education (Denham, 2006). Kindergarten education must therefore be supported by a systematic Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI). This system requires educational units to manage quality through a continuous cycle of determination, implementation, evaluation, control, and improvement (PPEPP). Effective quality assurance emphasizes not only compliance with standards but also meaningful classroom practices (Bepari et al., 2024). Institutions implementing systematic quality assurance tend to create more conducive learning environments and better developmental outcomes for children (Mabruroh, 2024). Process quality thus becomes a central indicator of educational service quality (Aziziyah & Ahmad, 2024).

Teacher-child interaction represents one of the most important components of process quality in kindergarten education. Warm, responsive, and emotionally supportive interactions enable children to feel secure, valued, and motivated to participate in learning. Such interactions are strongly associated with children's social competence, emotional regulation, and prosocial behavior (Putri et al., 2022). Low-quality interactions characterized by rigid or one-way communication may hinder socio-emotional growth (Hanifah & Handayani, 2025). Teacher-child interaction can therefore be positioned as a key indicator of educational service quality. Social and emotional development is a primary goal of kindergarten education, including the ability to manage emotions, build relationships, cooperate, and adapt to social norms (Kalsum & Sirozi, 2025). Children with strong socio-emotional skills demonstrate higher learning readiness and adaptive behavior in later schooling (Azizah et al., 2026). A supportive learning environment characterized by positive relationships plays a crucial role in fostering these competencies (Azizah et al., 2026).

Integration of local culture into learning through an ethnoscience approach offers a promising strategy for improving both process quality and socio-emotional development. Ethnoscience connects scientific concepts with local knowledge,

traditions, and cultural practices, enabling learning to become contextual and meaningful (Sativa & Buahana, 2025). Cultural activities often involve cooperation, patience, respect, and shared responsibility, which are essential components of socio-emotional learning. West Aceh Regency possesses rich cultural resources, including traditional culinary practices such as Cake kara, Bika Bakar, Cake Seupet, Cake Bhoi, and Cake Bungong Kayei. Exploration of ingredients, preparation processes, physical changes during cooking, and social meanings of these foods can provide meaningful learning experiences. Children learn basic scientific concepts while simultaneously developing cooperation, empathy, and appreciation for local traditions. Cultural context also strengthens children's identity and engagement in learning (Miranda et al., 2025). Ethnoscience-based learning therefore has strong potential to enhance educational quality in kindergarten settings.

Preliminary observations at Arongan Lambalek 1 State Kindergarten indicate that integration of local culture into classroom learning remains limited. Cultural elements are often introduced incidentally rather than systematically incorporated into lesson planning and pedagogical interaction. Teachers may experience difficulties linking cultural practices with learning objectives and socio-emotional development goals. This situation suggests a gap between established educational standards and actual classroom practices, particularly in terms of process quality. Contextual learning that values children's cultural background has been shown to enhance confidence, collaboration skills, and empathy. Lack of systematic implementation reduces the potential impact of local cultural resources on children's development. Addressing this gap is essential for improving both learning quality and educational relevance. Optimizing teacher-child interaction through ethnoscience-based approaches offers a strategic pathway for quality improvement.

This study argues that improving kindergarten educational quality requires systematic strengthening of teacher-child interactions that are responsive, culturally grounded, and aligned with quality assurance principles. Ethnoscience-based interaction can transform everyday cultural practices into meaningful educational experiences that support holistic child development. Such an approach enables learning to become contextually relevant, emotionally supportive, and developmentally appropriate. Improvement of process quality is expected to contribute significantly to children's social and emotional outcomes. Research focusing on this approach remains limited, particularly in the context of early childhood education in West Aceh. Empirical evidence is needed to understand how ethnoscience-based interactions operate in real classroom settings. Findings may provide practical implications for improving quality assurance implementation in kindergarten education. This study therefore aims to analyze how ethnoscience-based teacher-child interactions contribute to improving the quality of the learning process and supporting children's social and emotional development in Arongan Lambalek 1 State Kindergarten, West Aceh Regency.

2. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand learning phenomena in a natural context, specifically learning practices, teacher-child interaction patterns, and the meaning of children's learning experiences in kindergarten (Isik, 2025). Qualitative research positions the researcher as the primary instrument, attempting to capture social reality holistically and contextually. This approach is relevant for examining early childhood learning processes, which are dynamic, contextual, and fraught with social and emotional interactions that cannot be reduced to statistical figures (Sugiyono, 2020).

The main focus of this research is ethnoscience-based learning practices implemented through role-playing and how these practices shape teacher-child interactions and support children's social-emotional development as part of the quality of the learning process. Role-playing is seen as a pedagogical strategy that is appropriate to the characteristics of early childhood because learning occurs through play activities, imagination, and meaningful social interactions. to see the ability to work together, empathy, emotional control, social interaction with peers, and compliance with rules, in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood (Wirahandayani et al., 2023).

A qualitative descriptive approach allows researchers to describe in detail the stages of implementing ethnoscience-based role-playing, the teacher's role as a facilitator and cultural mediator, and the children's social and emotional responses during the learning activities. Through this approach, researchers can capture the meaning, values, and context of the local culture of West Aceh integrated into the role-playing activities, which are a key characteristic of ethnoscience learning (Ayton et al., 2023). This type of qualitative descriptive research was chosen because this study aims to describe and analyze the reality of learning as it occurs, without manipulating research variables. Ethnoscience-based learning through role-playing is understood as a learning practice that has been designed and implemented by kindergarten teachers in their daily activities, so that the researcher acts as an observer who systematically describes, interprets, and analyzes the phenomenon (Creswell, 2018).

This approach and type of research is considered the most appropriate for examining improvements in the quality of kindergarten education from the perspective of the quality of the learning process, particularly through the quality of teacher-child interactions in ethnoscience-based role-playing activities that are oriented towards children's social-emotional development. That is the ability to work together, empathy, emotional control, social interaction with peers, and compliance with rules, in accordance with the characteristics of early childhood. This research was conducted at State Kindergarten 1 Arongan Lambalek, West Aceh Regency. The research location was selected purposively, considering that this educational unit has integrated local cultural elements (ethnoscience) into early childhood learning activities, particularly through play activities contextualized to the local social and cultural environment. Arongan Lambalek State Kindergarten 1

has characteristics relevant to the research focus, namely the implementation of learning that emphasizes teacher-child interaction, experiential learning activities, and the use of local culture as a learning resource. This situation allows researchers to examine in-depth ethnoscience-based learning practices implemented through role-playing methods, as well as how teacher-child pedagogical interactions are developed within this learning context (Sugiyono, 2020).

The selection of research locations was also based on accessibility, the school's openness to research activities, and the appropriateness of the learning context to the research objectives. In qualitative research, selecting an information-rich setting is crucial for obtaining in-depth and meaningful data (Creswell, 2018). The research was conducted over approximately three months, encompassing preparation, data collection, data analysis, and report preparation. This timeframe was deemed sufficient to conduct repeated observations of learning activities, particularly the implementation of ethnoscience-based role-playing, allowing researchers to more comprehensively understand teacher-child interaction patterns and children's social-emotional development (Moleong, 2017).

The research was conducted in accordance with the school's academic calendar to ensure data collection did not disrupt the learning process. Observations were conducted during learning activities, particularly during core activities involving role-playing, so that the data obtained reflected natural and authentic learning practices. The subjects of this study were determined purposively, that is, selected based on their direct involvement and relevance to the research focus. In qualitative research, purposive subject selection aims to obtain rich and in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied (Moleong, 2017).

The subjects of this research include:

1. Kindergarten teachers are directly involved in planning and implementing ethnoscience-based learning through role-playing. Teachers are the primary subjects, acting as learning facilitators, cultural mediators, and key actors in building pedagogical interactions with children during role-play activities.
2. Kindergarten children, namely students who participated in ethnoscience-based learning activities through role-playing. Children were the subjects of this research because their active involvement in role-playing allowed researchers to directly observe their social-emotional development, social interaction patterns, and emotional responses during the learning process.
3. The principal, as a supporting informant who provides information related to school policies, support for the implementation of ethnoscience-based learning, and efforts to improve the quality of the learning process in educational units.

The selection of this research subject allows researchers to gain a comprehensive perspective on ethnoscience-based learning practices through role-playing, both from the planning, implementation and school policy aspects (Moleong, 2017). The object of this research is the quality of the learning process as examined through ethnoscience-based teacher-child interactions in role-play activities. The focus of this research object includes:

1. The ethnoscience-based learning process uses role-playing methods, which include planning, implementation, and reflection on learning that utilizes the local culture of West Aceh as a context and learning resource.
2. Teacher-child interactions that occur during role-play activities, both verbal and nonverbal interactions, reflect teacher responsiveness, emotional warmth, dialogic communication, and support for children's participation and independence.
3. Children's social and emotional development, which is evident in children's behavior during role play, such as the ability to work together, empathy, emotional control, courage to communicate, and compliance with game rules.

This research object was chosen because the quality of the learning process in early childhood education is largely determined by the quality of pedagogical interactions that occur during play activities. Role-playing, as an ethnoscience-based learning strategy, allows for intense social and emotional interactions, making it relevant to study from the perspective of improving the quality of kindergarten education (Musi, 2017). The subject and object of this research are designed to provide a complete picture of how ethnoscience-based teacher-child interactions through role play contribute to improving the quality of the learning process and children's social-emotional development at State Kindergarten 1 Arongan Lambalek, West Aceh Regency. With a total of 6 teachers, 1 principal and 50 students.

The data collection techniques in this study were adapted to a qualitative approach and the focus of the research, namely ethnoscience-based learning practices through role-playing, teacher-child interactions, and children's social and emotional development. To obtain comprehensive and in-depth data, this study utilized several data collection techniques, namely observation, interviews, and documentation (Creswell, 2018). The data analysis technique in this study was conducted qualitatively using an interactive analysis model. Data analysis was conducted from the beginning of data collection and continued until the study's conclusion. Qualitative data analysis aimed to understand the meanings, patterns, and relationships that emerged from ethnoscience-based learning practices through role-playing, particularly in the context of teacher-child interactions and children's social-emotional development (Creswell, 2015). Data analysis in this study includes three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions/verification. Data validity in qualitative research is crucial to ensure that research findings are trustworthy and reflect real-world conditions. In this study, data validity was maintained through the application of several techniques, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Moleong, 2021).

3. Results and Discussion

Overview of the Implementation of Ethnoscience-Based Learning

The implementation of ethnoscience-based learning at State Kindergarten 1 Arongan Lambalek was carried out through structured role-playing activities

integrated into the Daily Learning Implementation Plan (RPPH). Document analysis of the RPPH shows that teachers explicitly included indicators of social-emotional development, such as cooperation, empathy, emotional regulation, communication, and rule compliance. One teacher stated during the interview, “*We intentionally design activities in the RPPH so that children not only play, but also learn to cooperate, wait their turn, and respect others.*” This indicates that ethnoscience-based learning was not incidental but systematically planned as part of the instructional process.

Classroom observations revealed that the learning process began with discussions about children's real-life experiences related to traditional West Acehese cakes, such as kue kara, bika bakar, kue bhoi, and kue bungong kayei. Children actively shared their experiences of helping parents prepare ingredients at home. This contextual introduction functioned as a bridge between prior knowledge and new learning experiences. The integration of cultural context created a familiar learning environment, which increased children's engagement and participation. Compared to conventional activities, children appeared more enthusiastic and communicative when discussing culturally relevant topics.

Role-playing activities were organized by assigning roles such as cake makers, ingredient preparers, sellers, and customers. Observations documented dynamic classroom interactions, including negotiation, conflict, and collaboration. For example, one observation note recorded: “*Two children insisted on becoming the seller and refused to take other roles, leading to visible frustration and raised voices.*” This situation reflects a common challenge in early childhood classrooms where children are still developing self-regulation skills. Teacher intervention in this context became crucial in guiding children toward constructive social interaction.

Ethnoscience-Based Teacher–Child Interaction as an Indicator of Process Quality

Findings indicate that teacher–child interactions during ethnoscience-based activities were characterized by responsiveness, dialogic communication, and emotional support. Teachers consistently used open-ended questions to stimulate children's reflection and emotional awareness. For instance, during one observed session, the teacher asked, “*How do you feel when your friend helps you?*” A child responded, “*I feel happy because we can finish it together.*” This interaction illustrates how teachers facilitated emotional expression while reinforcing cooperative values. The quality of interaction was particularly evident in conflict situations.

Observational data showed that teachers did not immediately impose solutions but instead encouraged children to express their perspectives. In one case, the teacher said, “*Tell your friend what you feel and listen to them as well.*” This approach allowed children to develop communication and negotiation skills. Interview data from the principal further confirmed that teacher responsiveness and emotional support are key indicators in academic supervision. The principal explained, “*We*

observe how teachers respond to children's emotions, not just whether the activity runs well." These findings suggest that interaction quality functions as a central component of process quality. Ethnoscience-based contexts appear to provide more opportunities for meaningful interaction compared to routine activities because children are more engaged and emotionally involved. This aligns with the view that contextual learning environments support deeper social and emotional engagement.

Impact on Children's Social and Emotional Development

Analysis of repeated observations over three months indicates gradual changes in children's social and emotional behavior. Initially, several children showed impatience and difficulty waiting for their turn. However, over time, improvements became evident. Observation notes recorded: "Children began to organize roles independently and reminded each other to take turns without teacher instruction." This shift indicates the emergence of self-regulation and cooperative behavior. Interview data also support these observations. One teacher stated, "*At the beginning, children often argued, but after several weeks, they started reminding each other about the rules.*"

In addition, instances of spontaneous helping behavior were observed. For example, one child assisted a peer in arranging play materials without being prompted. This behavior reflects the development of empathy and prosocial tendencies. Communication skills also improved as children became more confident in expressing ideas and negotiating roles. Children who were initially passive began to participate more actively in group interactions. These findings suggest that ethnoscience-based role-playing is associated with positive tendencies in social competence and emotional regulation. The learning experience extended beyond specific activities and influenced overall classroom behavior.

Dynamics and Challenges in Implementation

Despite its benefits, the implementation of ethnoscience-based learning revealed several contextual challenges. Teachers initially experienced difficulty integrating local cultural elements into structured lesson plans. Interview data indicated that cultural content had previously been introduced only during special events. One teacher explained, "*We used to teach traditional cakes only during celebrations, not as part of daily learning.*" This highlights a gap between curriculum expectations and classroom practice. Classroom management also posed challenges, particularly when children competed for preferred roles.

Observations documented frequent conflicts during early implementation stages. Teachers addressed this issue by introducing role rotation and explicitly discussing fairness. Over time, this strategy reduced conflict and increased participation. Another challenge involved aligning cultural activities with developmental indicators. Teachers needed to continuously adapt their strategies to ensure that play activities remained meaningful and goal-oriented. Reflection sessions conducted after role-playing activities helped children process their experiences and emotions.

This adaptive process demonstrates that successful implementation requires teacher flexibility and ongoing refinement.

Table 1. Summary of Key Findings from Data Sources

Aspect Observed	Empirical Evidence	Interpretation
Learning Planning (RPPH)	Inclusion of social-emotional indicators in lesson plans	Learning is systematically designed, not incidental
Classroom Interaction	Dialogic questions and emotional support	High-quality interaction enhances engagement
Child Behavior	Turn-taking, helping peers, reduced conflict	Indicates development of social-emotional skills
Challenges	Role competition, difficulty integrating culture	Requires adaptive teaching strategies
Teacher Strategy	Role rotation, guided dialogue, reflection	Improves classroom dynamics over time

4. Conclusion

This study confirms that ethnoscience-based teacher-child interactions play a strategic role in improving the quality of the learning process in early childhood education by strengthening the quality of responsive, contextual, and reflective pedagogical relationships. The integration of local wisdom in learning not only provides meaningful learning experiences but also effectively supports children's social and emotional development, including the ability to cooperate, empathize, take responsibility, and regulate emotions. Analysis from a quality assurance perspective through the PPEPP cycle shows that the quality of interactions can be set as a process standard, implemented consistently, evaluated through authentic observation, controlled through academic supervision, and continuously improved through reflection and practice improvement. These findings demonstrate that the quality of early childhood education is dynamic and is largely determined by the quality of classroom interactions. Strengthening ethnoscience-based learning needs to be positioned as a pedagogical strategy as well as a managerial strategy in building a quality culture oriented towards children's developmental needs.

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