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The effectiveness of roleplaying in teaching preschoolers social skills

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The effectiveness of roleplaying in teaching preschoolers social skills

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Advanced Montessori Programs

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Abstract

The study was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of role-play as a means of enhancing the social skills of preschool students in a Montessori setting. A total of 37 children between the ages of two and a half to six years who participated in a five week study. The interventions were conducted once a week for four weeks, during which children took turns participating in simulated scenarios that mirrored their everyday experiences. After the role-play presentation, assessments and group discussions were conducted to evaluate the children's comprehension. The research data was gathered before, during and after the interventions. The researcher used checklists and observation records to document the number and details of conflicts, as well as the children's behavior and conflict resolution skills. The study revealed a decrease in both the frequency of conflicts and the level of aggression, indicating the effectiveness of role-play in cultivating social skills in children. However, the study also indicated the need for further research and extended observation to support new and younger children in adapting to the environment and to keep track of how effectively children internalize and sustain the skills they have acquired.

Keywords: preschool, role-play, social skill, conflict resolution, Montessori

Introduction

Becoming a Montessori teacher has been my dream job. I find deep satisfaction in helping children develop strong self-esteem, problem-solving skills, and independence which will positively impact their future lives. My journey began when I started working at a Montessori school in Seattle. The majority of my students come from urban, middle-class families with financial stability. Their parents expect their children to be happy, independent, self-confident, socially accepted, and well-behaved. Among the 37 students, 20 are the oldest or only child in their family, limiting their social interactions with peers outside school. As a result, they mainly learn to play and work with others of the same age within our school setting.

In order to support the parents of our students, our school provides Positive Discipline parenting seminars. These seminars are aimed at helping parents develop effective strategies for raising well-behaved and emotionally intelligent children. One of the most popular topics covered in these seminars is teaching children to communicate with peers and adults effectively and manage their emotions.

The importance of social skills and emotional control ability is widely recognized as a critical component of success in both personal and professional life. Wirahandayani et al (2023) found that problems preschool-age children often experience include maladjustment, egocentrism, aggressiveness, anxiety, and the tendency to withdraw from society which can cause behavioral problems that reduce social-emotional development. If this problem is not addressed immediately, it can harm the health and behavior of children in adulthood.

Children who lack social skills may struggle with making friends, adapting to new situations, and causing conflicts with peers. These issues can negatively affect a child's development and well-being if left unaddressed. Conflict-solving skills are crucial for children

and can be practiced life-long. These skills can be developed through various activities, such as using critical thinking to identify problems, understand different perspectives, group discussion, and finding win-win solutions that benefit both parties.

As a strategy for teaching preschoolers social skills, I prefer roleplaying which involves observing and practicing skills. It is a fun and effective teaching method appealing to preschool-aged children. Children are drawn to pretend play and enjoy repeating activities at this stage. Roleplaying allows for real-life situations while incorporating the teaching concept into play. It also allows children to experience different roles and develop empathy and sympathy by putting themselves in another person's shoes. Since preschoolers may not fully grasp the meaning of empathy and sympathy, acting out scenarios is a more intuitive and sensitive approach to learning.

Theoretical Framework

According to Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory (Saracho, 2023), children follow a thinking pattern that advances through a series of stages. This progression is achieved by utilizing a sequence of schemas, combining their reasoning styles about various aspects of the world. A schema is a comprehensive approach to understanding these components. According to Piaget, preschool-age children fall into the definition of preoperational stage. Children in this stage do not yet possess the ability to understand concrete logic, manipulate information mentally, or consider the perspectives of others which Piaget termed as egocentrism. For example, a young child may believe that everyone sees the world as they do and may be surprised to learn that others have different perceptions and experiences. In contrast, adults generally acknowledge that people have diverse points of view and may have varying interpretations of situations.

Egocentrism is a normal and developmentally appropriate stage for preschool-aged children, but it can also create misunderstandings and conflicts in their life. One way to help children overcome egocentrism is through roleplaying activities that require perspective-taking (Farrenkopf, 1995). Roleplaying allows children to act out different scenarios and take on other people's perspectives which can help them develop their empathy and understanding of others. Children can learn to see things differently and understand how others feel and think by putting themselves in someone else's shoes. Roleplaying with peers encourages the moral development of children and enhances social integration.

This study is grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory (Saracho, 2023). According to the constructivist perspective, individuals actively construct their knowledge based on their experiences. The Constructivist Learning Theory asserts that learners actively participate in their own learning and development. Approximately from birth, children have specific knowledge about the world. Such knowledge helps them interpret their perceptions of the world. As they gain new knowledge, they can adjust their current understanding. The acquisition of knowledge and the development of new ways of understanding are continuous processes that extend throughout an individual's life. Instead of regarding knowledge as an absolute truth, constructivists see it as a working hypothesis. Knowledge is not imposed on individuals from external sources; instead, it is constructed within them. People generate knowledge based on their own beliefs and experiences which can differ significantly from one person to another. Therefore, all knowledge is subjective and personal and is a product of our cognitive processes (Schunk, 2012. p 230-231).

This study is also guided by Social learning theory. This theory suggests that social behavior is learned by observing and imitating the behavior of others (Bierman & Motamedi,

2015). Children learn social skills by observing others, imitating, and responding to instructions and verbal feedback. In preschool, teachers can demonstrate positive behavior, promote interaction, and reinforce good behaviors through modeling these attributes. Roleplay can be a technique to facilitate social learning in the same way. Children can observe positive role models by participating in roleplay and learning from each other's behaviors and actions. They can also practice targeted social skills such as communication, problem-solving, and empathy. Children can receive teacher feedback by taking on different roles and acting out the scenario. Roleplay can be especially useful for children who have limited social experiences.

My study also drew inspiration from Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2014). The heart of experiential learning is a "lived experience" that allows learners to "reflect, think, and act"(p. xvii). Experiential learning refers to a unique style of learning that involves drawing knowledge from real-life experiences, as opposed to traditional classroom and lecture-based methods. With this type of learning, the individual has direct exposure to the concepts being studied, unlike someone who only reads, hears, talks, or writes about these concepts without any direct interaction. Experiential learning often focuses on firsthand sensory experiences and practical application, regarded as the primary channels for acquiring knowledge (Kolb, 2014. p. xviii). Learning involves the creation of knowledge through the transformation of experiences (Lisko & O'Dell, 2010). Learning is a continual process that involves creating knowledge by transforming experiences and integrating them into existing cognitive frameworks. This transformation leads to changes in an individual's thoughts and behaviors. To achieve learning, experiences must be transformed through either extension or intention. Extension involves active external experimentation, while intention is achieved through internal reflection on the experience (Lisko & O'Dell, 2010).

Preschool students require hands-on activities to facilitate their learning, as abstract concepts may be too complex to grasp. Social skills are a prime example of abstract concepts essential to learning but can be challenging to teach through traditional lectures. To enable effective learning, children need to see, listen, move, feel, and experience the subject matter, enabling them to better transfer the abstract concept into concrete knowledge.

Literature Review

The Importance of Teaching Social Skills in Early Childhood

Social skills are essential because they enable individuals to interact effectively and harmoniously with others in various social situations. The term "social skills" pertains to one's capacity to behave by social norms and expectations, such as demonstrating concern and understanding toward others, effectively resolving conflicts, and engaging in interactions that align with accepted social values (Frogner, et al, 2022). Social skills are crucial for children in preschool because they are in a critical period of development for learning social behaviors and norms. During preschool, children develop their language and communication skills, emotional regulation, and cognitive abilities essential for building positive relationships with peers and adults. Social and emotional competencies are a skill that children can use to help sort through their thoughts and feelings and help them understand how to behave when interacting with other people (Schoon et al., 2021). In preschool, children are starting to communicate with people outside their families. They are forming relationships with peers and teachers. Good social skills help children communicate, share, take turns, and cooperate with others which are all critical for making and keeping friends. Social skills can also improve preschoolers' problem-solving skills, essential for academic and social success. "Self-control of behavior, emotion regulation, and

interpersonal skills have been repeatedly found to predict educational and career success" (Schoon et al., 2021, p.2). However, children do not gain social skills automatically by themselves. They need to learn how to communicate. When children exhibit disruptive behavior, it is typically because they lack the necessary tools to regulate themselves (Ringgenberg, 2016). As a result, their behavior cannot be inherently considered "bad." Instead, the child is attempting to reorient themselves and comprehend the expectations of their surroundings. In such instances, it is the responsibility of the adult to guide and provide additional context to help the child understand what behaviors are deemed appropriate and acceptable (Ringgenberg, 2016).

Thus, teachers need to set clear expectations concerning behavior and communication. Ringgenberg's (2016) research showed an increase in conflicts successfully resolved after Nonviolent Communication was demonstrated and intervention was provided. Through intervention, children involved would likely progress towards clear communication and independent conflict resolution. This growth in social skills, which transitions from being externally influenced to internally regulated, is fostered by environmental factors and internalization processes. Consequently, a teacher's assistance is critical in developing children's social skills (Hautakangas et al., 2022). Through structured activities and lessons, teachers can help children learn the social norms and values that govern behavior within their peer group and the larger society. Activities such as roleplay help the child with communication strategies, providing opportunities for children to practice and receiving regular feedback that can lead to better social skills.

The Impact of Modeling Nonviolent Communication Skill

As a child develops, they endeavor to utilize learned behaviors that yield rewards from their environment and steer clear of actions that may result in punishment. Through this process, children gradually learn which communication behaviors are expected within specific groups of communicators and which behaviors are socially appropriate (Krawczak & Laskowski, 2020). For example, if a child learns that using polite language when asking for something usually results in getting what they want, they are more likely to use it. On the other hand, if a child learns that using rude or aggressive language leads to punishment, they are less likely to use such language in the future. In Montessori schools, "Montessori guides use a way of problem-solving that does not immediately discipline the child or have the teacher take charge, but instead tries to guide the child in what they can change or do better by themselves at the moment" (Zavala, 2022. p.12). Thus, children take ownership of their actions and will think about what they could do to develop problem-solving skills. They are encouraged to reflect on their choices and take responsibility for their actions. In order to teach children how to use the skills independently and not just obey the teacher, examples will be provided. Rather than providing an immediate solution, the teacher guides the students toward finding a resolution by serving as a positive role model. Jakowich (2020) found that after giving short dramatic lessons and modeling Nonviolent Communication for three weeks, young students can be equipped with practical information that aids students in being socially responsible in and out of the classroom community.

Modeling was used to teach students how to express their emotions and actively listen to others, which has proven effective in conflict resolution (González, 2021). Conflict resolution typically involves active strategies to decrease tension and friction between individuals or

groups, such as conciliation, negotiation, and bargaining. On the other hand, constructive conflict resolution emphasizes using collaborative and positive methods, like bargaining, negotiation, accommodation, and cooperation, to resolve disagreements between people or groups (González, 2021). Conflict resolution is an essential social skill that children need to learn to develop positive relationships with others. Learning how to resolve conflicts helps children develop empathy, communication, and problem-solving skills essential for healthy social interactions. The research found that facilitating fair chances to independently practice problem-solving, communicate emotions, adapt to new circumstances, establish and sustain relationships, articulate requirements, and respectfully listen to the needs of others fosters a constructive and healthy approach to conflict resolution. (Jakowich, 2020). Providing children with the tools and resources to solve problems independently, communicate effectively, and build positive relationships empowers them to handle conflicts positively and productively.

The Impact of Daily Grace and Courtesy Lessons in Conflict Solving

Children are born with basic instincts and reflexes that help them survive. However, they do not possess the complex social and emotional skills to navigate the world positively and responsibly (Davis, 2022). These skills, such as problem-solving, communication, empathy, self-regulation, and decision-making, are developed over time through experiences, modeling, and adult guidance. Therefore, it is the responsibility of adults, particularly teachers, to guide them through their learning journey. Modeling appropriate behaviors and equipping children with the language to articulate their emotions ensure that their learning experiences are safeguarded in a prepared environment. Research has been completed to measure the effectiveness of daily grace and courtesy lessons in an early childhood Montessori classroom setting (Greene, 2020). In Montessori classrooms, grace and courtesy lessons refer to lessons and activities designed to

teach children how to behave in a socially acceptable and polite manner. Grace and courtesy are usually incorporated into daily routines and activities. Teachers model appropriate behaviors and language while children learn more language from lessons and can solve more conflicts independently. The core of Montessori's grace and courtesy lessons is the intentional teaching of skills. Unlike conventional approaches, these lessons are not offered in response to inappropriate behavior but are provided during neutral times. By offering these lessons proactively, children are less likely to feel embarrassed or defensive and are more open to learning the skills being taught. Teachers can use precise language and detailed steps to demonstrate and model conflict mediation and resolution to children. Through these demonstrations, children can develop the necessary skills to manage peer conflicts and build positive relationships effectively (Zhang, 2019). Grace and courtesy education can empower children to resolve social conflicts independently.

The Impact of Peace Lessons in Preschool

In a Montessori environment, kindness is an expected way of treating all individuals. Teachers model using kind and caring language, and children are encouraged to follow this example. The environment is designed to promote peace, and peacemaking activities are included to maintain a peaceful atmosphere. By fostering a culture of kindness and respect, children can develop social and emotional skills to help them in all aspects of their lives (Morningstar, 2015). In Montessori education, peace lessons are introduced to children in preschool and revisited throughout the Montessori curriculum. Morningstar (2015) declared that after giving peace lessons to a suburban Montessori classroom for 32 days, an apparent reduction in conflicts was found, and children became more independent in dealing with the conflicts. Through the peace lesson in Montessori education, children are taught the value of compassion,

respect, appreciation, and empathy. Children understand the importance of peace and conflict resolution and are encouraged to become active agents of peace in their communities and the world. In Montessori schools, early childhood educators have a remarkable opportunity to teach young children essential peacemaking skills that can positively impact their immediate learning environments and the future of our world. By imparting these skills at an early age, educators can help children develop empathy, respect for diversity, and conflict resolution skills, which are all critical for creating a more peaceful and equitable society (Walker et al., 2008). Peace lessons not only foster a culture of peace but also an appreciation for diversity. Since children begin to absorb and adopt the attitudes and beliefs of their ethnic groups during early childhood, even as young as 3 or 4 years old, they may also develop prejudices and stereotypes based on factors such as social class, ethnic background, and other significant differences within the population (Lasi et al., 2017). By teaching peace and conflict resolution skills early on, we can create a generation of compassionate and empathetic individuals better equipped to make positive changes in their communities and the world.

The Effective Drama-supported Cooperative Learning Method

Drama-supported cooperative learning methods are effective teaching strategies that engage students in active and collaborative learning while developing social, emotional, and cognitive skills (Güleç & Macan, 2014). Research showed that significant differences in communication skills were found in favor of the experimental group in a drama-supported cooperative learning method study, "the child generally perceives drama activity as a game and concentrates all his or her energy and attention on this activity. Thus, the child finds the opportunity to play a game and learn many concepts, topics, and social behaviors more

effectively" (2014. p. 533). Fun and engagement are the main reasons children are attracted to drama activities. They enjoy playing games rather than doing work or listening to lectures.

On the other hand, drama-supported learning includes diverse student characteristics and abilities. It incorporates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor objectives simultaneously. It caters to different learning styles, including experiential, active, collaborative, and discovery-based learning, fostering emotional, social, and conceptual learning (Çetingöz & Günhan, 2010). Participation in drama can have a beneficial impact on children's social and emotional development. Drama teaches children various valuable skills, including empathy, communication, self-expression, problem-solving, creativity, and aesthetic sensitivity. It was found to promote community, peace, and solidarity while encouraging children to be open to criticism and different perspectives. Children can develop their identities and learn to act democratically towards others by participating in drama, building the foundation for positive social interactions and responsible behavior. Drama supports children's personal and social growth and fosters self-reliance (Çetingöz & Günhan, 2010). These skills and experiences can contribute to a child's communication and social interaction abilities, especially for preschoolers. Preschool-aged children may not always verbally communicate all the events affecting their daily lives. However, through dramatic play, they can use gestures and expressions to convey their emotions, sometimes including fear, concern, sadness, and happiness (Aksoy, 2019). Overall, drama-supported cooperative learning can effectively promote social skills, problem-solving ability, and collaborative skills among students.

Using Roleplay to Teach Social Skills.

Roleplay is a standard drama-supported cooperative learning method and a valuable teaching strategy for preschoolers as it supports their learning, social and emotional development,

and language skills (Kopema, 2020). Pedagogical and educational sciences recognize the therapeutic role of fun, a fundamental activity for children to learn and develop through play (2020). In a roleplaying game, the child embodies the content through the role they assume, which serves as the primary component and a tool for carrying out the plot. Children may use props, costumes, and toys to enhance the experience and make the activity fun. Roleplay is a spontaneous expression of the child's creativity, involving interaction with adults. The main characteristics of the game, including children's commitment, emotional depth, independence, creativity, and activity, are inherent in the plot and roleplaying aspects of the game (Chorievich, 2020).

Roleplay is a fully developed form of play. Children who exhibit highly developed communication skills during play could effectively resolve conflicts, avoid aggressive behavior, and develop better emotional regulation (Bukhalenkova, 2020; Wirahandayani et al., 2023). Much research is done to measure roleplay's effectiveness in teaching social skills. Wagner (2016) describes how to use child-led play to reduce peer conflicts and increase cooperation: a small group of children aged 9-14 years participated in a roleplaying game. After six game sessions, child conflict decreased, and child awareness increased. He declared that "cooperative, child-led gameplay with mixed-age groups did improve self-management amongst child participants, especially those who experienced participation as a game master" (Wagner, 2016. p.23). Roleplaying games give children unique opportunities to explore and experiment with their identities and social roles. By assuming different roles and personalities, children can better understand themselves and their social environment, developing their self-concept.

Roleplay can support preschoolers' language development by encouraging them to use and practice new vocabulary and language structures. It can also help them develop their

listening and comprehension skills when conversing with others. Engaging in roleplaying games has a practical benefit for children in the middle group by enhancing their vocabulary, inflection, and word-building skills. "The average indicator of the level of proficiency in consistent, logical, coherent storytelling in children increased by 20%" (Chorievich, 2020. p.3). An adult typically initiates roleplaying conversations. They can help children learn new vocabulary, sentence structures, and social communication skills in a safe and structured environment. Teachers can provide guidance and feedback to help children improve their language and social skills and model appropriate behaviors and manners. This scaffolding will eventually prepare children to transition to more child-led roleplaying conversations with vocabulary, social skills, and confidence.

Roleplay can help enhance the learning process for preschoolers. It allows them to use their imagination and creativity to explore different scenarios and ideas, making learning more engaging and memorable (Wirahandayani et al., 2023). Young children are typically in Piaget's Sensorimotor or Preoperational Stage of development (Saracho, 2023). They are capable of engaging in higher-level cognitive thinking. However, since they lack the life experience of adults, experiential teaching can be particularly beneficial for them. Research has shown that learning through experience significantly impacts young children's development (Shih, 2020). Children are more likely to learn better through physical movement. When children engage in hands-on, interactive activities, they are more likely to retain information and develop a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught. During roleplay, children can fully participate and exercise continuously. They learn from positive role models and increase flexibility in dealing with the living environment (Shih, 2020; Nabievna, 2023). By being exposed to different roles, plots with different cultures, and various experiences, children can be prepared to adapt to new

situations and environments. They become more resilient and better equipped to handle challenges in their lives. Roleplay is an effective tool for young children to develop a wide range of skills and abilities in a fun and engaging way.

While previous research has explored the impact of teaching communication skills to students (Ringgenberg, 2016; Jakowich, 2020; González, 2021) and its application in Montessori schools (Greene, 2020; Zhang, 2019; Morningstar, 2015), there is a lack of research that investigate the effectiveness of using drama-supported methods to teach social skills in Montessori preschool classrooms through the incorporation of roleplay into the regular curriculum. This study aims to combine the Montessori approach with roleplay methods to assess the impact of social skills education.

Methodology

By utilizing the action research method, I conducted this study to evaluate the effectiveness of roleplaying strategies on enhancing social skills in preschoolers among a population of 37 children, ranging in age from two and half to six years, enrolled in a private Montessori preschool. The study commenced by sending an assent form via email to all parents, providing them with a two-week period to respond. I received no opt-outs from parents indicating their agreement to include their child's data in the research. Data collection involved a combination of checklists and observation records (see Appendices A and B), student assessments (Appendix C), and student-teacher conferences.

Before, during and after the intervention, I employed checklists and observation records to assess the impact of the roleplaying strategy. The checklists were used to record the frequency of conflicts or aggressive behaviors in the classroom or playground. They contained a succinct and comprehensive list of the type of conflict, time, and individuals involved. The checklists

aided in identifying the particular social skills or behaviors we aimed to improve by implementing the roleplaying strategy.

Observation records were utilized to document the process of conflicts and the corresponding responses for each student. The collected data provided specific details of the conflicts targeted for reduction. These observations allowed for the necessary adjustments in the intervention, such as selecting relevant scenarios for students to practice, designing an appropriate language to express apologies, accepting apologies, and using language to develop new friendships.

Students completed a worksheet after the intervention to identify their feelings regarding conflicts. The worksheet gave a more detailed understanding of conflicts' nature and impact. It also provided insight into the effectiveness of the intervention. Since some preschool students may require additional support to understand and respond to the survey questions, I utilized student-teacher conferences to facilitate discussion regarding their feelings and thought processes. This approach enabled me to provide additional prompts and assistance to help students express themselves verbally and effectively.

The social skills I prioritized in this action research project were making friends and resolving conflicts. I began observing for three weeks, utilizing observation records and checklists to identify classroom and playground disputes. I then utilized these observations to develop scenarios and scripts appropriate for the student's age, background, and experience. Before starting the roleplay, I established guidelines and rules for the activity during circle time. I ensured that all the children understood the purpose of the roleplay and were comfortable with their chosen roles by asking clarifying questions. I adopted the "I do, we do, you do" teaching strategy to facilitate learning (Schmidt & Ralph, 2016). I modeled a role and selected some

students to participate in the activity with me. I read the script and let students become familiar with the line of each role. In the second round, children practiced the roleplay by themselves, said the line according to the script, or used their own words. With the scripts drawn randomly, they could choose their roles. I taught the rest of the children how to be a good audience when waiting to be in the play, such as how to appraise their peers and watch quietly. I encouraged them to practice the roleplay several times until they were comfortable with the lines and actions. After everyone had a chance to participate in the roleplay (with some students opting to watch), we held a debriefing session to discuss the play and provide feedback. Students took turns expressing their feelings during the roleplay, what they learned, and how they could apply their newfound skills in real-life situations.

The script consisted of positive and negative scenarios, with short lines accompanied by drawings to aid the young children in reading and staying in character. Half of the scenarios exemplified positive social skills such as greeting others politely, listening attentively, and sharing fairly. Some scenarios demonstrated negative behaviors, such as interrupting, disregarding others' emotions, and taking toys from friends. To make the roleplaying enjoyable for the children, I provided costumes, hats, props, and materials such as name tags and simulated settings. The roleplay circle was held once a week for four weeks, allowing the children to practice and enhance their social skills through repeated activities and varied scenarios and roles. Post-intervention data collection began immediately after the intervention, using checklists and observation records to monitor conflict changes and assess the children's roleplay application to real-life situations.

As the roleplay scenarios were tailored to the student's age, experience, and real-life situations, they could openly express their emotions following the activity. After the roleplay, all

students completed a worksheet where they would select stickers depicting happy or sad faces to illustrate their feelings about the scenarios and actions. Individual student-teacher conferences ensured that every student comprehended the scenario, enabling children to communicate more efficiently. During these one-on-one conferences, children asked questions, obtained clarification, showed their feelings, and provided feedback about the activity and their emotions. I hold individual teacher-student conferences and group discussions to help students understand the connection between the observations and their lives.

In this study, children could participate in roleplaying activities and observe their peers. This hands-on approach was practical for learning because it allowed children to practice and apply what they had observed to their daily lives. By seeing conflict mediation modeled meaningfully, they learned to use those same steps to solve their problems. As they continue practicing these skills, they can internalize them and become more independent in solving their conflicts. Additionally, they could develop the ability to communicate effectively with others and manage their emotions.

Data Analysis

The observation record and checklists of conflict incidents in the classroom and playground began prior to the intervention's implementation. The data collected lasted five weeks and has been analyzed. The intervention was planned for four weeks and was step-by-step in the following order: seeing and respecting others, sharing with others, helping others, and solving conflicts. Each week there was a distinct theme.

During week one of the intervention, children participated in the role-play "Goldilock," focusing on respecting others' belongings. They then had a guided discussion. 33 children attended the discussion and responded to the question, "How do you feel when someone touches

your things without asking?" 87.9% of children said they feel sad, 9.1% answered "angry," and 3% said it's neutral.

In the second week, the role-play topic is sharing with others. After several turns to roleplay in the scenario I designed, a guided discussion was held with 35 children about the importance of sharing with friends. The children were asked how they feel when sharing with others or being shared with, and 91% of them answered with "happy," while 9% were unable to identify their feelings.

In the third week, the role-play theme is helping others. A guided discussion was held with 35 children on helping others after the activity. All of the children responded that they feel happy when helping others.

During the fourth and final week of the intervention, the role-play is focused on how to solve conflicts, and a three-step method is taught and modeled: "stop, say, and respect". Children practiced the methods in three scenarios: conflict, apology, and care for others. The three-step approach was emphasized in each scenario. In the conflict resolution scenario, the children were taught to stop fighting, express their needs, and choose a respectful way to solve the conflict. In the apology scenario, one child accidentally bumped into another, and the hurt child expressed feelings while the other child provided a solution to show an apology. In the caring scenario, the children were taught to notice the needs of others, stop what they were doing, ask and clarify the condition, and then provide help.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, observations were made before, during, and after its implementation. The week prior to the intervention, a total of 14 conflicts were observed over four days, resulting in an average of 3.5 conflicts per day. During the first week of the intervention, the average number of conflicts per day remained the same as the previous

week at 3.5. However, in the second week, the average number of conflicts decreased to 2.25 per day. Unfortunately, in the third week, the average number of conflicts increased to 5.25 per day, as shown in Figure 1. In the fourth week, the average number of conflicts dropped back to 3.5 per day. One possible explanation for the increase in conflicts during the third week is the enrollment of three new students in the classroom who are younger and have not yet adapted to the environment and social interactions with other children.

Figure 1

Average Number of Daily Conflicts Each Week

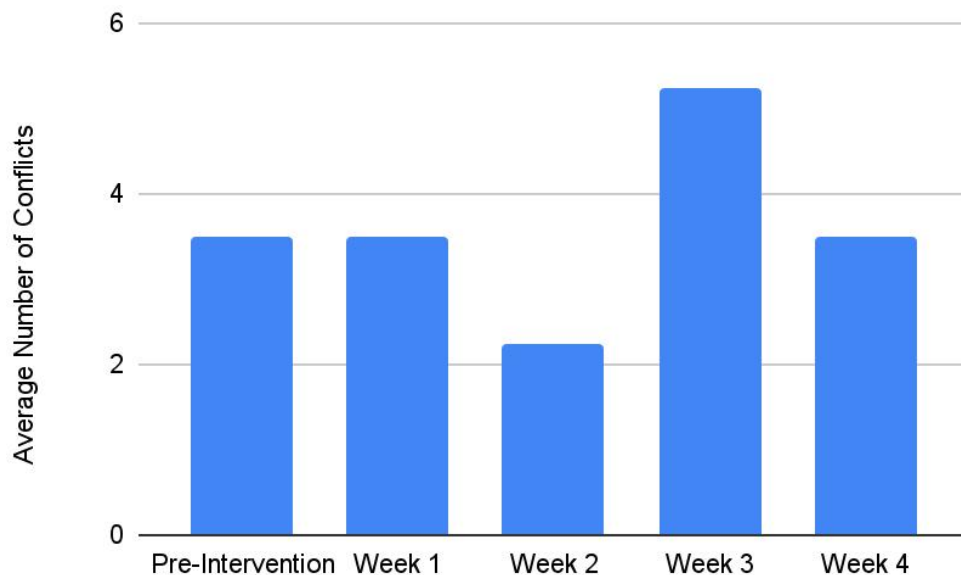


Figure 2 further supports the hypothesis that the increase in conflicts during week three was due to the enrollment of new students who were still adjusting to the classroom environment. When separating the data of the new students from the rest of the class, it shows a decrease in the conflict number. Without new students, the number of conflicts per day in the third week is 2.85 and 1 for the fourth week. This suggests that the new students contributed to the overall increase in conflicts during the third week and also in the fourth week. It is important to note that

the new students did not participate in the intervention due to their enrollment situation. They were facing difficulties interacting with peers and adapting to the classroom environment. From this perspective, the observations suggest that the intervention effectively reduced conflicts among the students who participated in the roleplay and have been normalized in the environment. Since new enrollment occurs at any time of the year, it is crucial to address the needs of new students and provide them with additional support to help them integrate into the classroom environment.

Figure 2

New Students and Others in Participating Conflicts Each Week

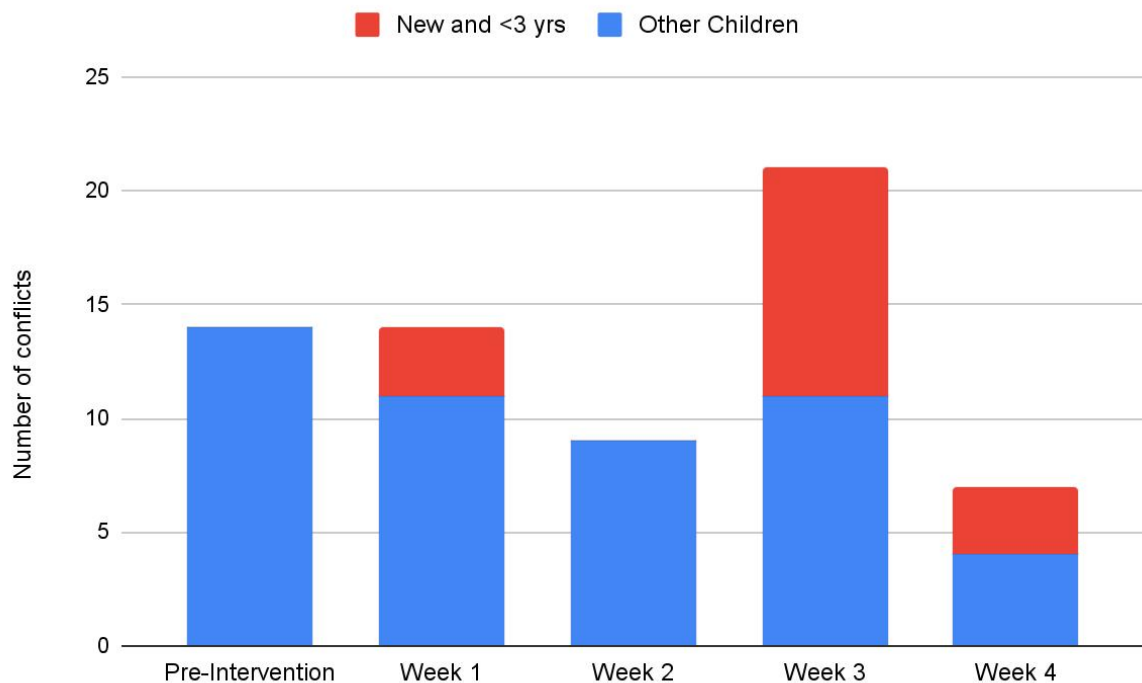


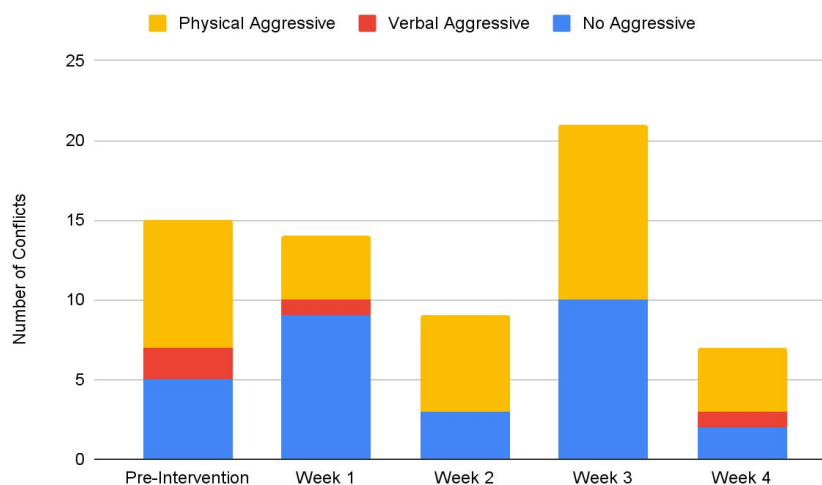
Figure 3 provides insight into the changes in aggressive behavior observed during the study. The observation records revealed that before the intervention, there were more instances of physical aggression (8 out of 14). However, physical and verbal aggression decreased in the

first, second, and fourth weeks during the intervention. In the first week of intervention, verbal aggression accounts for one of the conflicts and physical aggression accounts for 4 out of 14. In the second week, verbal aggression is 0, physical aggression is 6 out of 9. In the fourth week of intervention, verbal aggression is 1 while physical aggression is 4 out of 7.

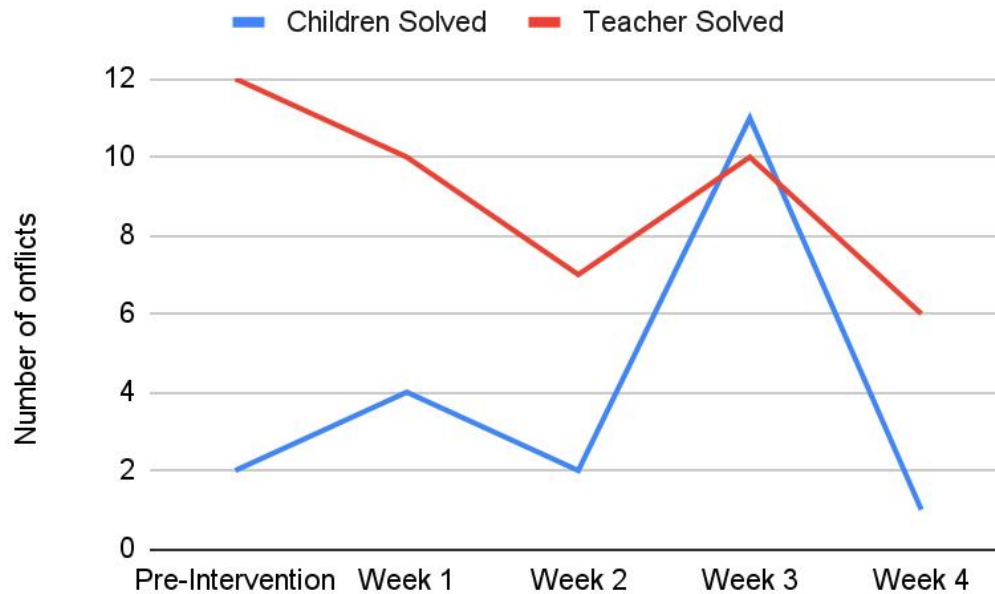
In the third week, there was a significant increase in physical aggression with 11 out of 21 while no verbal aggression was detected. As previously noted, this may be attributed to the enrollment of new students who were still adjusting to the classroom environment and learning how to interact appropriately with their peers. These students may have been more prone to exhibiting aggressive behavior as they were still learning to communicate their needs and emotions effectively. Given their young age, they don't have the language abilities to express themselves and have been more reliant on physical means of interaction which cause conflicts with peers. However, the observation data shows that the intervention effectively reduced the overall levels of aggression observed during the study

Figure 3

Aggressive Levels of conflict Each week



This study aims to assess the development of children's social skills, specifically their ability to effectively resolve conflicts. Before the intervention, children solved 14.3% of the conflicts, while teachers were involved in 85.7% of the observed conflicts. As the intervention progressed, children's ability to solve conflicts independently increased (see Figure 4). Compared to the week before the intervention, when adults helped resolve 85.7% of conflicts, adults only helped resolve 71.5% of conflicts in the first week of the intervention and 77.8% in the second week. In the third week, the children verbally and independently resolved more than half of the conflicts when adults helped only 47.6%. This shows that the intervention positively impacted children's conflict resolution skills and their confidence in resolving conflicts without adult intervention. The decreasing trend of conflicts in the fourth week suggests that the intervention had a lasting effect on children's behavior. By learning and practicing conflict resolution skills, children could apply them to their daily interactions with peers, reducing conflicts overall. The number of conflicts children independently solved dropped in the last week while the total number of conflicts decreased. It is important to note that while adult intervention was still needed in some conflicts, the decrease in adult involvement shows that children are more capable of resolving conflicts independently.

Figure 4*Results of conflicts Each week*

During the observations, I specifically looked at how conflicts were resolved. It's great to see that children use various conflict resolution strategies, including saying no, walking away, and reasoning. The fact that walking away was the most commonly used strategy which is found in 65% of conflicts solved by children independently suggests that children recognize when a conflict is happening and take steps to remove themselves from the situation. Walking away is essential to prevent conflicts from becoming more severe or physical aggressions, leaving time and space for both sides to calm down. Additionally, 55% of conflicts solved by children independently involved at least one party trying to solve the issue using language and saying no. This suggests that children are beginning to develop assertiveness and are learning to express their boundaries. In fact, the ability to say no is one of the fundamental skills that children learn in a Montessori classroom, as it is crucial for establishing healthy relationships and fostering positive social interactions. Furthermore, active listening was only found in 25% of conflicts

resolved by children independently. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in teaching children to express accurately, listen carefully and empathize with one another's perspectives.

The behavior log and observation records also revealed that conflicts may be caused by a limited number of factors, including: fighting over toys, wanting to play with others, questioning game rules, acting aggressively without apparent reason, or accidents (Figure 5). Notably, conflicts primarily arise from the desire to possess or play with a particular toy, accounting for 48.4% of conflicts over the five-week period. Most often, preschoolers focus on the toy they want and seize it without regard for others' feelings, indicating that they are still learning to share, wait and take turns. As such, children require guidance and support in developing their communication skills, particularly in asking for permission or waiting for their turn. Children may also experience conflicts when attempting to play with a specific friend or join a different group and being denied. Children are not accustomed to being turned down and may not know how to cope with it. When they feel sad or angry, they may be more likely to get into conflicts. It is also noteworthy that conflicts sometimes arise over game rules, and it is interesting to observe how children negotiate and sometimes even change the rules to resolve the conflict. Additionally, it is essential to mention that some conflicts were caused by physical aggression, such as hitting or kicking without reason, which may be a natural behavior for children at this age as they test boundaries and learn to regulate their emotions.

Figure 5

Percentage of Different Reasons for conflicts Throughout the Study

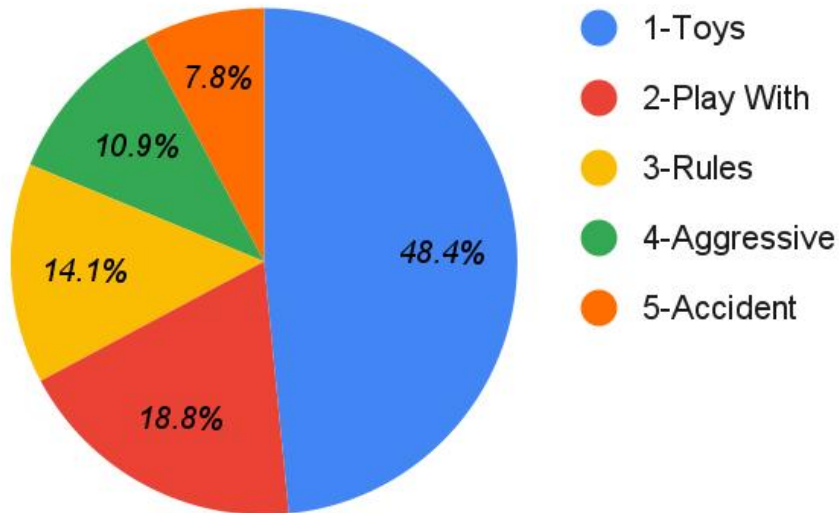
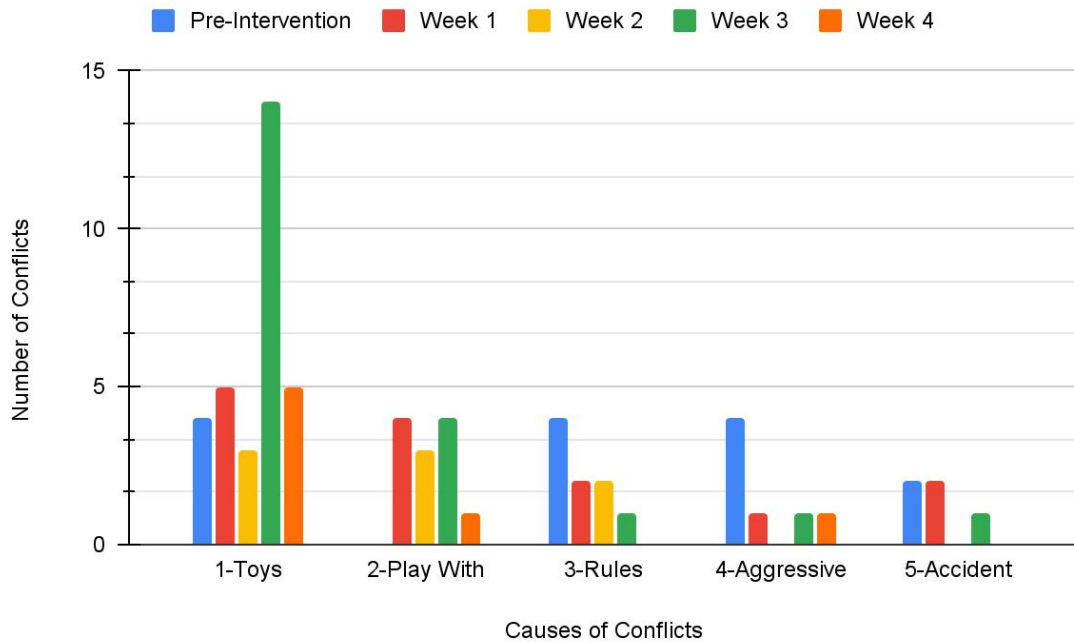


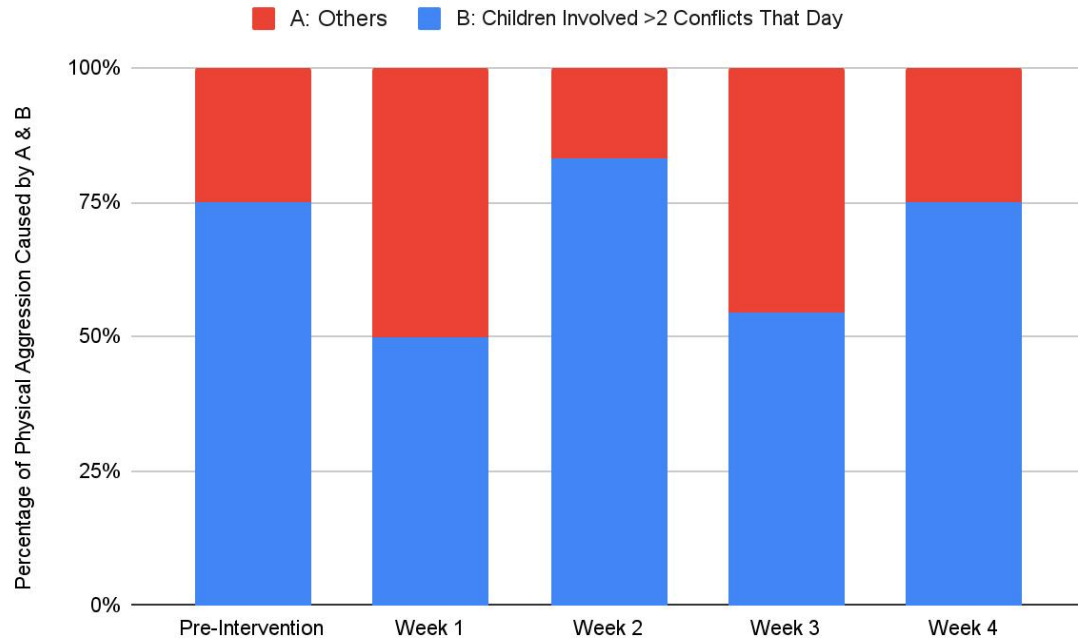
Figure 6 shows that during intervention, the number of conflicts caused by aggressive, game rules have decreased significantly. There was not much change detected for the number of conflicts caused by fighting for toys and desires to play with. Since the topics of the intervention are how to respect and share with others, the result doesn't show much improvement for this point. Further study needs to be implemented.

Figure 6*Number of different Reasons of conflicts Each Week*

It is interesting to note that some conflicts are caused by one student repeatedly during a single day. This suggests a child's emotional state can significantly impact their behavior and peer interactions. This is particularly indicated on the level of aggression displayed. Among the physical aggression, such as hitting, kicking, or poking with sticks, observed during the five-week period, there are high percentages caused by the children who were involved in at least two conflicts that day (Figure 7). During the pre-intervention, the percentage was 75%, week one was 50%, week two was 83.3%, week three was 54.5%, while week four was 75%. It appears that there may be a correlation between the frequency of conflicts and the level of aggression displayed by the children. Further research is needed to investigate the potential relationship between these variables.

Figure 7

Percentage of Conflicts Caused by Children Involved Repeated Each Week



Action Plan

The purpose of this action research was to measure the effectiveness of using role play to teach preschoolers social skills. The intervention consisted of a series of role-playing activities that simulate common social situations that preschoolers may encounter, including: seeing and respecting others, sharing and helping others, and conflict solving. The data collected from the observation records were focused on the difference in the number of conflicts and their resolution before and after the intervention. The target was to evaluate whether the intervention using role play effectively enhances preschoolers' social skills, as evidenced by a decrease in the number of conflicts and an improvement in conflict resolution strategies.

Based on the analysis of the data, it appears that the role-playing intervention was effective in reducing conflicts among the participating preschoolers. While there was a minor decrease in the overall number of conflicts, the increase in conflicts during the third week may be attributed to the arrival of new students who had not yet normalized to the school environment. However, when the data was separated to only include students who participated in the role-play and had normalized to the school environment, there was a significant decrease in the number of conflicts. This suggests that the role-play intervention was effective in enhancing the social skills of the students and equipping them with strategies to resolve conflicts. The repetition of scenarios that focused on respect, sharing, helping, and conflict-solving may have helped the students develop language and build up the necessary schemas to interact positively with peers. These findings suggest that role-playing can be a useful instructional strategy for teaching social skills to preschoolers.

The increased number of conflicts during week three highlights the need for further research and support for the new students. It's essential to recognize that young children learn primarily through their environment and peer interactions, and as new students enter the school environment, they do not have the necessary language ability and understanding to communicate, they may require additional support to adjust and become familiar with the routines and social norms. It is essential to evaluate whether the role-play intervention can be modified or extended to address the needs of new students, such as incorporating more activities that focus on socialization and building relationships, using more movement rather than script and language, and providing additional support and guidance to new students. This would help them adjust to the new environment and feel more comfortable interacting with their peers.

The study's findings on the reduction of physical and verbal aggression levels among the preschoolers after the intervention is promising. It suggests that role-play intervention has a positive impact on children's behavior, allowing them to practice and develop peaceful ways to interact and communicate effectively with their peers. By participating in the role-play scenarios that focused on conflict resolution, sharing, and respecting others, preschoolers had the opportunity to learn and practice those social skills through repetition and positive reinforcement. As a result, preschoolers were less likely to resort to aggressive behaviors to get what they want, and instead, they were better equipped to handle conflicts and communicate their needs assertively. The role-play intervention helps to create a culture of kindness and cooperation. Children are more likely to feel safe, included, and valued in this type of environment, which can foster more positive and desired behavior. This can have a ripple effect on the classroom culture to create a more harmonious and positive learning environment.

According to the research, the intervention had a positive impact on the preschoolers' conflict resolution skills. As a result, children became more confident in their ability to solve problems independently, leading to a significant increase in the number of conflicts resolved successfully.

However, it is interesting to note that during the five-week period, the three-step conflict resolution methods that were emphasized in the role-play intervention were not observed. Instead, the children appeared to rely on simpler strategies such as saying no, walking away, and reasoning to solve conflicts. While these strategies can be effective in some situations, it is important to also teach children more complex conflict resolution techniques that can be applied in a variety of scenarios. The three-step methods that were taught in the role-play intervention, which involved identifying the problem, expressing feelings, and finding a solution, are designed

to promote more effective communication and problem-solving. It is possible that the children have not yet fully internalized the three-step methods and need more time and practice to apply them in real-life situations. Additionally, it may be helpful to reinforce the use of these methods during classroom discussions or provide additional opportunities for role-play to help children apply what they have learned. While it is encouraging to see children successfully using some conflict resolution strategies, it is also important to continue promoting more complex and effective techniques to help children navigate a wide range of social situations.

The observation of conflicts may not have been comprehensive due to limited time and availability. As a result, it is possible that some conflicts may have gone unnoticed, which could affect the overall data. Moreover, there could be other factors that contribute to children's behavior beyond the intervention itself. For example, hunger, fatigue, or homesickness could impact a child's ability to focus and participate fully in classroom activities, including conflict resolution. To gain a more complete understanding of the impact of the intervention, it may be beneficial to consider these external factors and conduct further research to explore their potential influence on children's behavior.

In addition, it may be helpful to seek feedback from parents or guardians regarding their observations of their child's behavior and well-being at home. This could provide valuable insights into how factors outside of the classroom may be affecting children's social skills and conflict resolution abilities.

While the study showed a correlation between the frequency of conflicts and aggression level, it is important to note that this correlation may not necessarily imply causation. There may be other factors at play that contribute to both conflict and aggression, such as personality traits or environmental factors. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship

between conflict and aggression, further research is needed. This could include a larger sample size, a longer period of study, and more rigorous data collection methods.

In addition, it may be helpful to consider other variables that could impact the effectiveness of the intervention, such as the age or developmental stage of the children. By accounting for these variables and conducting more thorough research, we can gain a better understanding of the benefits and limitations of using role play to teach social skills.

Ultimately, by continuing to study and refine interventions like role play, we can better equip young children with the tools they need to navigate social situations and build positive relationships with others.

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Appendix A

Checklist for observation

Date	Name of child	Cause of conflict	Result of conflict:	Language used	Aggressive Behavior Observed
			Children solve the conflict verbally. Physically aggressive. Verbally aggressive. Teacher involved. Other		
			Children solve the conflict verbally. Physically aggressive. Verbally aggressive. Teacher involved. Other		
			Children solve the conflict verbally. Physically aggressive. Verbally aggressive. Teacher involved. Other		
			Children solve the conflict verbally. Physically aggressive. Verbally aggressive. Teacher involved. Other		
			Children solve the conflict verbally. Physically aggressive. Verbally aggressive. Teacher involved. Other		

Appendix B

Observation records

Date and Time:

The number of participants:

Ages of participants:

What causes the conflicts to happen?

What did the children say and do? Both sides?

What is the overall mood of the children? Of the room?






How did the conflict end?

What was happening in the environment during this happening?

Any change for other children or teachers?

Appendix C

Assessment Chart -Goldilock

<u>Color the face you feel like if you are:</u>	
Goldilock before being caught	
Daddy bear	
Mummy bear	
Baby bear	
Goldilock after be caught	
A friend of Goldilock	