

APPLICATION OF GAME-BASED LEARNING IN THROWING AND CATCHING LEARNING TO IMPROVE THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

Social and emotional skills in elementary school students are often neglected in Physical Education, Sports, and Health subjects, because learning focuses more on motoric aspects. As a result, many students still have difficulty working together, regulating emotions, and maintaining sportsmanship when participating in physical activities. Different from previous studies that focused on improving motoric skills, this study focuses on social and emotional skills through the application of game-based learning in Physical Education, Sports, and Health. The purpose of this study is to describe the process of implementing game-based learning in learning to throw and catch a ball and its impact on the social and emotional skills of elementary school students. A descriptive qualitative approach was used in this study, with data collection techniques in the form of observation, interviews, and documentation. The subjects were fourth-grade students of SDN 2 Tente. The results showed that the application of game-based learning created an active, fun, and collaborative learning atmosphere. Active student participation increased from 63,3% to 93,3%, while the number of students who are easily angered decreased from 7 to 2 people, indicating a decrease in irritability levels of 71,4%. Improved social skills are evident in the ability to work together, communicate, and empathize, while improved emotional skills are evident in students' ability to manage emotions, accept defeat with sportsmanship, and support each other within the group. The teacher's role as a facilitator has proven crucial in guiding students in understanding character values such as sportsmanship, empathy, and cooperation. Thus, game-based learning is not only effective in improving motor skills but also contributes significantly to improving students' social and emotional skills while presenting an innovative approach to Physical Education, Sports, and Health that integrates pedagogical and psychological aspects.

Keywords: Game-Based Learning; Social Skills; Emotional Skills; Physical Education, Sports, and Health; Elementary School

Abstrak

Keterampilan sosial dan emosional pada siswa sekolah dasar kerap terabaikan dalam mata pelajaran pendidikan jasmani, olahraga, dan kesehatan, karena pembelajaran lebih banyak menitikberatkan pada aspek gerak motorik. Akibatnya, banyak siswa masih kesulitan dalam bekerja sama, mengatur emosi, maupun menjaga sportivitas saat mengikuti aktivitas fisik. Berbeda dari penelitian sebelumnya yang berfokus pada peningkatan keterampilan motorik, penelitian ini menitikberatkan pada keterampilan sosial dan emosional melalui penerapan *game-based learning* dalam pembelajaran pendidikan jasmani, olahraga, dan kesehatan. Tujuan penelitian ini untuk mendeskripsikan proses penerapan *game-based learning* dalam pembelajaran lempar tangkap bola serta dampaknya terhadap keterampilan sosial dan emosional siswa sekolah dasar. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dalam penelitian ini, dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian adalah siswa kelas IV SDN 2 Tente. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan *game-based learning* menciptakan suasana pembelajaran yang aktif, menyenangkan, dan kolaboratif. Partisipasi aktif siswa meningkat dari 63,3% menjadi 93,3%, sementara jumlah siswa yang mudah marah berkurang dari 7 menjadi 2 orang, menunjukkan penurunan tingkat iritabilitas sebesar 71,4%. Peningkatan keterampilan sosial terlihat dari kemampuan kerja sama, komunikasi, dan empati, sedangkan peningkatan keterampilan emosional terlihat dari kemampuan siswa mengelola emosi, menerima kekalahan dengan sportif, dan saling mendukung antaranggota kelompok. Peran guru sebagai fasilitator terbukti penting dalam membimbing siswa memahami nilai-nilai karakter seperti sportivitas, empati, dan kerja sama. Dengan demikian, *game-based learning* tidak hanya efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan motorik, tetapi juga berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan keterampilan sosial dan emosional siswa sekaligus menghadirkan pendekatan inovatif dalam pembelajaran pendidikan jasmani, olahraga, dan kesehatan yang mengintegrasikan aspek pedagogis dan psikologis.

Keywords: *Game-Based Learning*; Keterampilan Sosial; Keterampilan Emosional; Pendidikan Jasmani, Olahraga, dan Kesehatan; Sekolah Dasar

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Introduction

The lack of social and emotional skills in students' physical education, sports, and health learning demonstrates the need for a contextual, enjoyable, and interactive learning approach. physical education, sports, and health is not limited to physical movement alone; it also plays a role in fostering character values, building social interactions, and fostering students' emotional intelligence. These skills include the ability to establish healthy interpersonal relationships, recognize and manage emotions, demonstrate empathy, and be socially responsible. All of these aspects are essential components of emotional intelligence, which has been shown to positively impact students' social behavior. Students with strong emotional intelligence are better able to understand and recognize their own and others' emotions, interact positively, empathize, resolve conflicts peacefully, and collaborate in groups (Azizah et al., 2024). This situation reflects the importance of strengthening social and emotional skills comprehensively in the school environment. Therefore, by integrating social and emotional skills into school programs, educators can create an environment that not only fosters academic success but also fosters emotional intelligence and social competence in students (Aksoy & Gresham, 2024; Septya & Dahlan, 2024).

At the elementary school level, many problems still indicate weak social and emotional skills in students, such as a tendency to withdraw from group activities, impatience in waiting their turn, and irritability in social interactions. This condition aligns with the findings of Lestariningsih et al. (2024), who stated that in physical education, sports, and health, students' poor social skills are caused by a lack of harmonious interactions, which triggers negative behaviors such as fighting over places, teasing, fighting during play, and a tendency to show favoritism in choosing friends. Consistent with this, preliminary observations by researchers at SDN 2 Tente also revealed similar symptoms, with most students lacking enthusiasm for participating in group activities, unable to express emotions healthily, and reluctant to engage in social interactions. This situation highlights the urgency of using a learning approach that explicitly integrates social and emotional skills.

One approach considered a potential solution to these problems is game-based learning, which involves the use of game activities designed with specific pedagogical objectives. game-based learning is believed to create a more effective learning environment through engaging, exciting, fun, and healthy competitive play. Furthermore, this approach encourages students' active participation in positive social interactions and collaboration (Atoullloh et al., 2024; Pratama et al., 2024; Wibawa et al., 2021). Research by Rijkiah et al. (2025) also shows that game-based learning not only improves cognitive abilities such as reading comprehension but can also shape individual character to be active, communicative, and possess good social skills. In the context of Physical Education, Sports, and Health, learning through simple games such as throwing and catching a ball not only trains basic motor skills but also provides a space for students to work together in groups, be tolerant, respect each other, communicate, and manage emotions directly (Ediwitoko et al., 2022; Widodo et al., 2023; Wijayanti et al., 2024).

Several previous studies have also shown that traditional games are effective in fostering values such as cooperation, responsibility, and sportsmanship (Bulubaan et al., 2025; Karatas et al., 2023; Utami, 2024). However, research explicitly integrating traditional games into a game-based learning approach has rarely been studied in depth, especially in relation to students' social and emotional skills. On the other hand, a study conducted by Pujayanti et al. (2023) showed that implementing game-based learning methods can have a positive impact on gross motor skills as well as students' social and emotional abilities. However, the physical education, sports, and health approach in many schools is still dominated by conventional methods such as lectures and demonstrations (Amirzan et al., 2024; Armadhani & Mu'arifin, 2025; Kurniawan & Hidayat, 2015; Riyanto, 2022). In this model, students only perform movement tasks individually, without any emotional involvement or meaningful social interaction. In fact, the independent curriculum prioritizes strategies that focus on character development and students' social and emotional competencies, not only improving competency aspects but also fostering teachers' social and emotional skills, which are crucial (Sanjaya et al., 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of ball-throwing and catching activities into a game-based learning approach in physical education, sports, and health instruction, with an explicit focus on strengthening elementary school students' social and emotional skills. This approach is based on Bandura's social learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through observation and social interaction, and Vygotsky's play-based learning theory, which views play as a means for developing children's social and emotional functions (Bandura, 1971; Wahyuddin et al., 2024). Although various studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of game-based learning in improving motor and cognitive skills, there is little research explicitly examining its impact on social and emotional skills in the context of Physical Education, Sports, and Health. Therefore, this research is expected to fill this gap by implementing game-based learning that integrates structured ball-throwing and catching activities to improve students' social and emotional skills.

Based on the description above, the research problem is how to apply game-based learning in throwing and catching to improve elementary school students' social and emotional skills. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the process of implementing game-based learning in throwing and catching and its impact on elementary school students' social and emotional skills.

Research Methods

The research method used was qualitative and descriptive. This approach was chosen based on the research objective, which emphasizes a detailed description of phenomena based on the reality on the ground. This research was not oriented towards quantitative hypothesis testing, but rather focused on interpreting social phenomena and student behavior that emerged during the learning process. The research was conducted in the even semester of the 2024/2025 academic year, from February to March 2025. The research location was SDN 2 Tente. The location was selected purposively because the school has opened up a space for innovation in physical education, sports, and health and has demonstrated a high interest in implementing game-based learning models.

The research subjects consisted of 30 fourth-grade students of SDN 2 Tente, who were directly involved in a game-based learning activity, throwing and catching a ball. The subject selection technique was purposive, taking into account the appropriateness of the cognitive, social, and motor development levels of fourth-grade children, as well as their active involvement in the physical education, sports, and health process. Learning activities were

conducted over four intervention sessions, each lasting 2 x 35 minutes (70 minutes per meeting). Each session included a preparation stage, implementation of a game-based learning ball throwing and catching game, and a brief reflection with the physical education, sports, and health teacher. Sessions were held twice a week during the research period of February–March 2025. This research was conducted through several stages, which are summarized in the following research procedure table:

Table 1. Stages of procedures in research

Research Stages	Activity
Early Stages (Preparation Stage)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Researchers conducted initial observations and coordinated with physical education, sports, and health teachers to develop learning designs and prepare learning tools based on game-based learning, including a ball throwing and catching game design 2. Preparation of game media in the form of balls and fields as well as the formation of random student groups to encourage collaboration
Core Stage (Implementation)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of the ball throwing and catching game according to the game-based learning design 2. Students participate in activities in turns as a team of throwers and catchers 3. The teacher acts as a facilitator and observer in observing students' social and emotional behavior during the game
Final Stage (Close)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reflection with students to identify social and emotional experiences that arise during learning 2. a short interview with a physical education, sports, and health teacher regarding the effectiveness of the applied learning model

The data collected in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data included student activities and interactions during the learning process, while secondary data included the syllabus, teacher notes, and previous learning documentation. The research instruments used included: observation sheets, interview guides, and documentation. The observation sheets and interview guides were developed by the researcher based on social and emotional skills indicators adapted from theory Goleman (1995) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social and emotional learning (CASEL, n.d.). The instruments were then validated through expert judgment by two expert lecturers in the field of physical education, sports, and health and one experienced physical education, sports, and health teacher to ensure the suitability of the content and clarity of the observation indicators. Revisions were made based on expert input before being used in the study. Data collection techniques were carried out through: participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation studies. The data obtained were then analyzed, the data analysis procedure was carried out using the analysis techniques proposed by Miles et al. (2014) namely: data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Furthermore, to increase the validity of the data, the researcher used source and method triangulation techniques, and conducted member checks with teachers and students to ensure more accurate and contextually valid data interpretation.

The ethical aspects of the research were maintained by: (1) obtaining official permission from the school before conducting the research, (2) requesting written informed consent from parents/guardians of students for their children's involvement in game-based learning activities,

- (3) maintaining the confidentiality of student and teacher identities in all research reports, and
 (4) ensuring that student participation was voluntary and without coercion.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study were obtained through observations, interviews, and documentation conducted during the implementation of the game-based learning model in throwing and catching ball lessons at SDN 2 Tente. The research data focused on changes in students' social and emotional behavior that were evident during the learning process. In general, the implementation of game-based learning created an active, fun, and healthy competitive learning atmosphere. Students showed high enthusiasm in participating in each meeting, both during discussions and when involved in game activities. This is evident from the data in the following table:

Table 2. Percentage of active student participation in each meeting

Meeting	Number of active students	Percentage (%)
1	19	63,3%
2	24	80,0%
3	28	93,3%

Table 2 above shows an increase in the percentage of active student participation at each meeting. The percentage of active student participation increased from 63,3% in the first meeting to 93,3% in the third meeting, representing a 30% increase. This indicates that the implementation of game-based learning can increase student motivation and engagement in learning activities. These results align with the findings of Kusuma & Dharma (2024) that a game-based approach significantly increases active participation, learning motivation, and motor skills. This increase also demonstrates that interactive and enjoyable learning models can change students' learning behaviors to be more positive. The following is a picture of student activity participating in a throw-and-catch learning activity:



Figure 1. Throwing and Catching Ball Learning Activities

Figure 1 above shows that students in each group appeared enthusiastic, focused, helpful, and exhibited positive expressions while participating in the ball-throwing game. This was further confirmed by the researcher's interviews with the students, as follows:

- Researchers : *What do you think about the throwing learning activity?*
 Student : *I feel happy and more enthusiastic about learning*
 Researchers : *Do you feel more involved in the group than you did before?*
 Student : *Yes, usually I just watch my friends play. Now I am also involved in playing and helping the group so that I feel closer to my friends*

- Researchers : *In your opinion, does the activity of throwing the ball in physical education, sports, and health affect your social relationships in the classroom or in the school environment?*
- Student : *It has a great influence. So I'm more familiar with my friends. Previously I didn't play but after being included in the learning to throw the ball in a group so I can work together and help each other in the game of throwing and catching the ball*
- Researchers : *Do you feel that your role in the group is appreciated during the activity?*
- Student : *Yes, all members of the group support each other and provide support so I feel that I have an important role in the group as well.*
- Researchers : *What do you like most about this learning activity?*
- Student : *Learning is very fun, you can move, play, and laugh with friends but you can still learn and help each other*

Interviews with students indicated that they were happier, more enthusiastic, and felt closer to and more valued by their teammates. Previously passive students began to participate more actively, providing instructions and supporting their teammates. Student statements such as "Now I'm also involved in playing and helping the group, so I feel closer to my friends" illustrated an improvement in social relationships among group members. This aligns with Nikmah (2025) findings that game-based learning creates an interactive and enjoyable classroom atmosphere, thereby increasing social engagement among students.

In addition to increasing social engagement, implementing game-based learning in throwing and catching can also foster collaboration and communication skills. Students learn to develop strategies, give instructions, and build positive communication with their group members. This is evident in the following figure:



Figure 2. Cooperation and Communication Skills

Figure 2 above illustrates that students in each group were able to work together as a team, giving their partners the opportunity to throw the ball to their opponents, and giving each other clear instructions. This is further supported by the following results:

- Researchers : *What was your experience when participating in a group throwing and catching football learning activity?*
- Student : *At first I was often confused about what to say. But after participating in the learning activities of throwing the ball, I became accustomed to giving instructions, listening to opinions, directions and instructions from friends as well*
- Researchers : *Did you and your friends discuss during the throwing and catching learning activity?*
- Student : *Yes, because during the learning activity of throwing and catching the ball, we have to make a strategy together. I had a discussion with my*

- friends about who threw the ball and who caught the ball. So we must listen to each other and obey each other.*
- Researchers : *If a friend makes a mistake, how do you respond to it?*
- Student : *If someone makes a mistake when throwing the ball, we don't scold each other, but we tell it well. So speak politely so that your friends don't get upset or angry*
- Researchers : *What did you learn about communicating from this activity?*
- Student : *I learned to communicate and give good, clear and quick friend-to-friend instructions, for example 'watch left!' or 'throw now!' or 'catch the ball' so that friends understand and we don't lose the game*

Interview results indicate that students are becoming accustomed to giving instructions politely, listening to their peers' opinions, and discussing strategies. This aligns with research by Untari (2022), which shows that game-based learning encourages students to collaborate, express opinions, and solve problems both individually and in teams. Therefore, the application of game-based learning to throwing and catching has been shown to not only increase active participation but also strengthen students' social skills, teamwork, and communication.

Furthermore, aspects of emotional regulation and sportsmanship have also shown significant improvement. This is evident in the data in the following table:

Table 3. Changes in Students' Emotional Behavior Based on Observation

Indicators	Meeting 1	Meeting 3	Change (%)
Irritable students	7 students	2 students	-71,4%
Students who can accept defeat	10 students	24 students	+140%
Students who show empathy	13 students	26 students	+100%

Table 3 above shows positive changes in students' emotional behavior, with the number of students who easily get angry decreasing from seven to two, the number of students who are able to accept defeat increasing from ten to twenty-four, and the number of students who show empathy increasing from thirteen to twenty-six. These changes indicate that the implementation of game-based learning can train self-control, tolerance, and sportsmanship in a competitive atmosphere. The following image shows moments of student reflection and sportsmanship during the ball throwing and catching learning activity taking place on the school field:



Figure 3. Emotion Management and Sportsmanship Strengthening

Figure 3 above shows students' ability to manage their emotions while playing, such as remaining calm, encouraging each other, and maintaining positive communication even in competitive situations. The results of the researcher's interviews with students also confirmed this:

- Researchers : *How do you feel when you take part in the learning to catch the ball?*
 Student : *It feels good, especially playing with friends. So even if I win or lose, it's still exciting and doesn't upset me.*
- Researchers : *Have you ever felt upset or angry while playing, especially if you lose?*
 Student : *I used to be upset or angry when I lost. But now I know that the important thing is to have tried and in essence playing as a team or group is the most exciting*
- Researchers : *What do you do if your friend makes a mistake in the game?*
 Student : *Now I don't scold him right away. But I encouraged him and said 'it's okay, let's get excited, try again'. So it's calmer and supportive of each other.*
- Researchers : *What do you think makes you calmer and can accept defeat?*
 Student : *The problem is that we often play together and the teacher also says that in the important game is cooperation and sportsmanship. So now I'm more focused on enjoying the game*

These findings indicate that students are no longer easily angered when they lose, but instead focus more on enjoying the game with their friends and learning to provide support to group members, including by encouraging friends when they make mistakes. This aligns with research by Camacho-Sánchez et al. (2023), which shows that game-based learning in physical education, sports, and health fosters intrinsic motivation, sportsmanship through social interaction, and a sense of competence through the dynamics of collaboration and healthy competition. Meanwhile, research by Yang et al. (2018) revealed that children's emotional intelligence is directly related to their performance in gaming and academic achievement, making game-based activities an effective means of practicing emotional regulation.

These findings can also be explained by Goleman (1995) theory of emotional intelligence, which encompasses five main components: self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Through group play activities, students learn to control their emotional reactions to defeat (self-regulation), understand their peers' feelings (social awareness), and build positive relationships (relationship skills). This aligns with the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) framework developed by CASEL, which emphasizes five core competencies in social-emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Collaborative for Academic, Social and emotional learning [CASEL], n.d.)

The link between this theory and learning practices in the field is clearly evident through the role of teachers as primary influencers in fostering students' social and emotional competencies. The presence of physical education, sports, and health teachers as facilitators also plays a crucial role in shaping character values. Teachers provide consistent guidance on the importance of sportsmanship, cooperation, and mutual respect among group members. This teacher role aligns with the findings of Lestari et al. (2024) that implementing game-based learning with teacher guidance can increase student motivation, enthusiasm, and participation in learning activities. Furthermore, Nurbait & Bastian (2021) emphasize that developing emotional intelligence through sports activities at school is expected to help students in their daily lives, particularly in increasing positive interactions with their environment, managing emotions, and utilizing emotional knowledge to support thinking skills. The following teacher provides directions and strategies for playing throw and catch, namely:



Figure 4. The Role of Teachers in Shaping Social and Emotional Values

The image above shows that the physical education, sports, and health teacher guides students in understanding the role and value of sportsmanship in learning to throw and catch a ball. This is further reinforced by the teacher's statement in the interview:

- Researchers : *How do you respond after seeing the role of the game of throwing and catching the ball in shaping students' social and emotional attitudes?*
- Teacher : *This game is very helpful. I saw a real change, especially in the cooperation and the way they managed emotions while playing.*
- Researchers : *Did you give any special directions during the activity?*
- Teacher : *He, I always remind them to play sportsmanship, support each other, and not blame friends. From the beginning I emphasized that the important thing is not the win, but how they can work together and respect each other.*
- Researchers : *What are the most noticeable changes in the student during this learning process?*
- Teacher : *Children are increasingly able to work in teams and be patient. At the beginning, many were selfish or angry, now they can respect each other and show empathy when playing.*

Overall, the application of game-based learning in throwing and catching lessons has proven effective in improving students' social and emotional skills. Students demonstrated progress in active participation, cooperation, communication, emotional regulation, and sportsmanship. The competitive yet collaborative learning provided a space for students to learn empathy, accept defeat calmly, and appreciate differences in ability among peers. The results of this study are consistent with the view of Sian & Soon (2023), who asserted that game-based learning can foster 21st-century soft skills, including communication, collaboration, and self-control, which are crucial in social and academic life. These findings provide empirical evidence that the application of game-based learning models has significant potential for broader application in the context of physical education, sports, and health at the elementary school level.

However, this effectiveness must be considered within the context of the limited scope of the study. This study was conducted in only one school with a limited number of participants and over a relatively short period of three meetings. Therefore, further research with a broader scope and longer duration is needed to strengthen the generalizability of the findings and test the consistency of the results across different settings. Nevertheless, the results of this study still provide an important contribution in implementing a physical education, sports, and health model that not only emphasizes physical skills, but also the formation of students' social and emotional character.

Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion regarding the application of game-based learning in fourth-grade students' throwing and catching at SDN 2 Tente, it can be concluded that this approach is effective in improving the social and emotional skills of elementary school students. This improvement is evident from observations, documentation, and interviews, which consistently show positive changes in student behavior and engagement during learning. Students become more active participants, able to work collaboratively in groups, communicate positively, and demonstrate better emotional regulation, such as the ability to control anger, accept defeat with sportsmanship, and foster empathy for peers. Thus, the application of game-based learning in simple game activities such as throwing and catching has a significant impact on the development of students' social and emotional behavior in an integrated manner.

Empirically, this research demonstrates that game-based learning is effective in developing social skills (communication, collaboration, and positive interactions) and emotional skills (self-control, empathy, and sportsmanship) in elementary school students. Practically, these findings provide important implications for physical education, sports, and health teachers and educators to integrate game activities into learning by emphasizing social and emotional values through reflection, positive communication, and providing feedback during the activity. Teachers are expected to act as facilitators who encourage collaboration and empathy among students, rather than simply directing motor activity. However, this study is limited in context and duration, as it involved only one school with a limited number of participants (30 students) and was conducted over a relatively short period of time (two months). This limits the generalizability of the findings to broader learning contexts. Therefore, further research is recommended at different levels and regions, with longer durations, and to compare the effectiveness of game-based learning with other active learning models such as cooperative learning or problem-based learning. Future research could also explore the role of teachers and student group dynamics in more complex game-based learning contexts.

Thus, game-based learning can be used as an alternative strategy for physical education, sports, and health, sports, and health that emphasizes not only physical skills but also integrates comprehensive social and emotional character development. This approach has the potential to support the achievement of educational goals that harmoniously balance cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects at the elementary school level.

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