Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

Development of Everyday Situation-Based Play Activities to Develop Adaptive Behavior in Early Childhood

Reski Raditia[1*]

[1]*Universitas Islam Negeri Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi*

(Received: July 22, 2026; Revised: July 21, 2026; Accepted: September 15, 2026; Available online: September 30, 2026)

Abstract

Adaptive behavior refers to children's ability to adjust their behavior, emotions, communication, and social responses to environmental demands. In early childhood, this ability is reflected in simple activities such as following routines, communicating, waiting for turns, following rules, completing simple tasks, regulating emotions, and transitioning between activities. This article aims to develop a design of everyday situation-based play activities to stimulate adaptive behavior in early childhood. The study applies a Research and Development approach using the ADDIE model; however, for this course assignment, the development is limited to needs analysis, design, and development, while field trials and effectiveness testing have not yet been conducted. The development is based on a synthesis of the provided studies concerning adaptive behavior, macro role play, social-emotional adaptability, adaptive learning, deep learning, and children's independence. The product consists of five play situations: arriving and interacting at school, eating and organizing belongings, playing a market, using transportation, and responding to simple changes or problems. Each activity includes objectives, materials, play procedures, teacher roles, and adaptive behavior indicators. The design positions everyday experiences as learning contexts so children can practice communication, self-direction, socialization, independence, emotional regulation, and problem solving in meaningful ways. The article produces a conceptual prototype of play activities that can be further developed through expert validation and field testing.

Keywords: adaptive behavior; everyday situations; play activities; independence; social-emotional development

1. Introduction

Early childhood education is not only oriented toward the acquisition of knowledge but also toward developing children’s ability to carry out daily activities with increasing independence and in accordance with the demands of their environment. One of the important abilities in this context is adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior refers to an individual’s ability to respond to the environment, perform personal activities, communicate, interact socially, and adjust to the norms and situations encountered. The journal articles that serve as the basis for this study indicate that children’s adaptive behavior is influenced by various factors, including physical condition, personality, education, environment, religion, culture, intelligence, emotional intelligence, and social support.(1)

In early childhood, adaptation is not an ability that emerges suddenly. Rather, it develops gradually through repeated experiences, social interactions, habituation, and opportunities to encounter meaningful situations. A study of children aged 5–6 years in the provided source indicates that adaptive abilities are demonstrated through the ability to follow routines, obey rules, interact with peers, and cope with changes in situations. The findings also show that children’s adaptive abilities range from moderate to high and continue to develop gradually.(2)

DOI: https://doi.org/10.35730/85tmdh25

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

lay activities have a strategic role because play is a form of learning that is closely connected to children's world. One of the journals provided found that macro role-playing activities involving situations such as shopping, using public transportation, visiting museums, and playing various professional roles are associated with self-adjustment, social interaction, cooperation, emotional regulation, and simple problem-solving among children aged 5–6 years (3). These findings provide a basis for incorporating real-life situations into the play environment, allowing children to practice adaptive behaviors without making the activities feel like rigid training.

The need for contextual play activities is also in line with studies on deep learning in early childhood education. Meaningful learning emphasizes exploration, interaction, reflection, and real-life experiences. In the provided journal, activities such as gardening and role-playing are considered to have the potential to support children's critical thinking, autonomy, and self-reflection. Therefore, the development of play activities based on everyday situations can be positioned as a form of learning experience that is concrete, contextual, and adaptive.

On the other hand, adaptive learning emphasizes the importance of considering children's individual needs and characteristics. The discussion of individual differences and adaptive learning in the provided sources explains that a standardized approach may overlook the diversity in how children receive and process learning experiences. Adaptive learning seeks to adjust methods, materials, and learning environments according to individual needs.(4) This principle is important in developing play activities because children do not always respond to the same situation in the same way. Therefore, teachers need to provide flexible choices of roles, levels of assistance, materials, and ways of communicating.

Another study on adaptive guidance and counseling for inclusive early childhood education emphasizes comprehensive developmental assessment, flexible and child-centered service design, play-based interventions, collaboration, and continuous evaluation (5). This principle reinforces the idea that play activities designed to develop adaptive behavior need to be planned according to children's needs and evaluated through developmental observation, rather than based solely on the final outcome of a task.

Based on this synthesis, there is an opportunity to develop play activities that specifically connect play experiences with situations that children actually encounter. Unlike role-play activities that focus only on a single occupational theme, the design presented in this article. The design combines several everyday situations that require communication, independence, compliance with rules, cooperation, emotional regulation, and problem-solving. Therefore, this article aims to develop a design of everyday situation-based play activities to develop adaptive behavior in early childhood.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Adaptive Behavior in Early Childhood

Adaptive behavior can be understood as a child's ability to use personal and social skills to cope with the demands of everyday life. The provided source describes several domains of adaptive behavior, including communication, self-direction, socialization, daily activities, and the ability to move or engage in motor activities (6). In the context of early childhood education, these domains need to be translated into observable behaviors, such as expressing needs, following simple instructions, waiting for turns, organizing belongings, asking for help appropriately, completing simple tasks, and adapting when activities change.

Adaptive ability is also part of social-emotional development. Children who are learning to adapt need to develop the ability to recognize and manage emotions, understand social rules, interact with peers, and adjust their responses to changes. Because these abilities develop gradually, learning activities should provide repeated but varied experiences so that children can use the same skills in different contexts. (2)

3. Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

3.1 Play as a Context for Developing Adaptive Behavior

Play provides children with opportunities to try roles, make decisions, interact, and experience the consequences of their actions in a relatively safe environment. A study on macro role play, which is one of the main sources of this article, shows that simulations of real-life situations can be associated with cooperation, discipline, following rules, emotional control, adaptation, and problem-solving. International research also indicates a relationship between play and children's emotional regulation and executive functions. Longitudinal findings in early childhood even show that free-play experiences are associated with the development of self-regulation in later years.(7)

The teacher's role remains important in play activities. Teachers do not merely provide play materials but also prepare the environment, introduce situations, ask stimulating questions, assist children who experience difficulties, and conduct observations. Studies on play-based learning in kindergarten also demonstrate the importance of teacher support in ensuring that play experiences retain their educational value without taking over the children's entire play experience.

3.2 Everyday Situations as Learning Resources

Everyday situations have the advantage of allowing children to connect play experiences with experiences they have had or may encounter in the future. For example, market play activities can be used to practice communication, waiting for turns, choosing items, following simple transaction rules, and dealing with changes in choices. Eating together can be used to practice independence, cleanliness, sharing space, and asking for help. Thus, everyday contexts are not merely themes but also serve as simulation environments for practicing adaptive behavior. This principle is consistent with studies of deep learning in early childhood education, which place exploration and meaningful experiences as important components of learning.(2)

4. Methodology

model, which consists of Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate. In this study, the development process is limited to the first three stages, namely needs analysis, design, and development. This limitation was applied because field trial data or expert validation results from the researchers were not yet available; therefore, this article does not present fabricated effectiveness figures. The resulting product is a prototype design of play activities that can be tested in the next stage of the research.

The development data were derived from a synthesis of several journals that had been reviewed, particularly studies on factors influencing adaptive behavior in early childhood, macro role play and adaptive behavior, adaptive abilities of children aged 5–6 years, adaptive learning, deep learning, adaptive guidance and counseling, and learning media that support independence. To strengthen the conceptual framework, this article also draws on international studies on play, self-regulation, play-based learning, and adaptive learning. The analysis was conducted by identifying recurring concepts, grouping adaptive behavior indicators, and then translating them into play situations that are closely related to children's everyday lives.

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

The development stages can be summarized as follows:

Stage	**Activity**	**Output**	Description
Analyze	Identifying the need for stimulation of adaptive behavior and situations that are familiar to children.	Needs and Indicators Map	Based on the literature synthesis.
Design	Determining the objectives, scenarios, materials, roles, play steps, and indicators.	Design of Five Activities	Arranged flexibly according to the characteristics of the children.
Develop	Developing activity prototypes, observation sheets, and teacher guidelines.	Play activity prototype	Has not been empirically tested.
Implement	Trial implementation with a group of children and observation of their behavior.	Implementation and developmental data	Conducted in the next stage of the research.
Evaluate	Expert validation, revision, and evaluation of trial results.	Final product	Not conducted in this task article.

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

Results and Discussion

Results of the Development of the Activity Design

The results of the analysis and design stages produced five play activities based on everyday situations. The five activities were selected because they represent experiences that children commonly encounter and allow for the development of more than one adaptive behavior. Each activity was designed based on the following principles: real-life situations or realistic simulations, opportunities to make choices and decisions, interaction with peers, simple rules, opportunities to solve problems, and gradual teacher support.

No.	Play Situation	Adaptive Objectives	Example Activity	Teacher's Role	Indicators
1	Arriving at School	Communication, socialization, self-direction	Greeting others, storing belongings, choosing an initial activity, expressing feelings	Providing examples and stimulating questions	Greeting others, storing belongings, expressing needs/feelings
2	Eating and Organizing Belongings	Independence, responsibility, routines	Preparing eating utensils, eating appropriately, disposing of waste, organizing belongings	Providing assistance as needed	Following the sequence of activities and completing simple tasks
3	Mini Market	Communication, social rules, problem-solving	Choosing items, asking about prices, paying, waiting for turns	Facilitating dialogue and role changes	. Communicating, waiting for turns, following rules, solving simple problems
4	Traveling by Transportation	Adapting to rules and changes	Choosing a vehicle, queuing, sitting according to rules, dealing with route changes	Providing simple change scenarios	Following rules, adjusting behavior, managing emotions
5	Dealing with Problems or Changes	Emotional regulation,	A toy breaks, a friend does not want to	Encouraging children to	Expressing emotions, asking for help,

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

		flexibility, problem-solving	share, a schedule changes	find several solutions	trying solutions, accepting changes

Discussion

The first activity design, namely arriving at school, places routines as a context for adaptation. Routines can help children understand the sequence of actions and social expectations. Children are not only directed to carry out activities correctly but are also given opportunities to communicate their feelings and needs. This is important because adaptive ability is not limited to compliance but also includes the ability to use communication and self-direction in everyday life.(1)

The eating and organizing belongings activity focuses on independence and responsibility. Children are encouraged to carry out a sequence of simple actions with teacher assistance that is gradually reduced. This design has a conceptual relationship with studies on developing independence through learning media that provide children with opportunities to take initiative, demonstrate responsibility, and complete tasks(8). However, the product in this article intentionally uses real-life activities and social play rather than AI-based media, making it easier to implement in early childhood education settings with limited facilities.

The mini-market activity is a direct development of findings from studies on macro role play. In the source study, simulations of shopping and real-life roles were associated with cooperation, social interaction, emotional regulation, and problem-solving. In this new design, the market context is expanded to provide integrated practice of several adaptive skills: children choose items, communicate, wait for their turns, follow rules, and seek solutions when the desired item is unavailable.

The transportation activity is designed to develop children's ability to follow rules while also fostering flexibility. The teacher can introduce simple changes, such as making the initially selected vehicle unavailable and then asking the child to choose an alternative. Activities like this provide children with opportunities to cope with changes in a play-based environment. This is relevant to the concept of adaptive ability as the capacity to adjust responses to rules, routines, transitions, and changing situations.(2)

The fifth activity specifically provides opportunities for emotional regulation and problem-solving. Children may encounter scenarios that are familiar from their daily lives, such as a friend refusing to share or a change in the play schedule. The teacher does not immediately provide a solution but instead uses questions such as, "What can we do?", "How do you feel?", and "What other options are there?". This strategy allows children to practice identifying problems, expressing emotions, considering options, and trying appropriate responses.

Overall, the five activities demonstrate that adaptive behavior can be developed through simple experiences that are closely connected to children's everyday lives. This approach is also consistent with the principles of adaptive learning, which emphasize adapting learning experiences to individual needs. Children who require more assistance can receive modeling or visual support, while children who are more ready can be given additional challenges. Thus, the activities do not have to follow a single solution or method that is the same for all children.(5)

This design also positions the teacher as a facilitator. Teachers need to observe children's responses during play, record the behaviors that emerge, and conduct reflection after the activity. This principle

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

is consistent with studies on play-based learning and social-emotional learning, which emphasize the importance of the classroom environment, teacher support, and opportunities for repeated practice. (8)

Although the design has a strong conceptual foundation, its effectiveness cannot yet be concluded at this stage. This article does not yet include expert validation data, pretest-posttest data, or field observation results. Therefore, the claims that can be made are limited to the development of the prototype and theoretical arguments. Further research is needed to examine the feasibility, implementation, and effectiveness of each activity

Example of an Adaptive Behavior Observation Instrument

The following instrument can be used during the trial stage. Scores from 1–4 can be assigned based on the frequency of the behavior and the level of assistance required by the child.

No.	**Indicator**	**Score 1–4**	Teacher's Notes
1	The child is able to communicate their needs or feelings in an understandable manner.	1 2 3 4	
2	The child follows simple rules during play activities	1 2 3 4	
3	The child is able to wait for their turn and interact with peers..	1 2 3 4	
4	The child completes simple tasks, such as putting away play materials.	1 2 3 4	
5	The child asks for help when experiencing difficulties.	1 2 3 4	
6	The child is able to adapt when simple changes occur.	1 2 3 4	
7	The child tries to find solutions when facing problems during play.	1 2 3 4	
8	The child demonstrates the ability to regulate emotional responses	1 2 3 4	

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

	with appropriate assistance.		

Scoring description**:** 1 = not yet observed; 2 = beginning to emerge with substantial assistance; 3 = developing as expected with minimal assistance; 4 = consistently demonstrated and relatively independent. This scale is a proposed instrument for further research and has not yet undergone validity and reliability testing.

Conclusion

The development of everyday situation-based play activities resulted in a conceptual design consisting of five play contexts: arriving at school, eating and organizing belongings, a mini market, traveling by transportation, and dealing with problems or changes. The activities were designed to provide children with opportunities to practice communication, independence, self-direction, socialization, emotional regulation, compliance with rules, flexibility, and problem-solving. The development was based on a synthesis of journals highlighting the importance of adaptive behavior, role play, social-emotional adaptive abilities, adaptive learning, and meaningful learning experiences. The product is still in the prototype stage and cannot yet be considered effective because it has not undergone expert validation or field testing. Further research is needed to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of these activities with groups of young children and to adapt the scenarios to children's cultural characteristics, environments, and individual needs.

Declarations

Funding: This article was compiled as a lecture assignment and does not receive external research funding.

Conflict of Interest: The author states that there is no conflict of interest in the preparation of this article.

Data Availability: This article is a development design based on literature synthesis; no field research dataset is claimed to be an empirical result.

Ethical Statement: Trials with children have not been carried out in this assignment article. If the research is continued, the implementation needs to obtain institutional permission, parent/guardian consent, and pay attention to the protection and comfort of the child.

References

[1] Balqis RR. FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI PERILAKU. :85–90.
[2] Puspitasari RN. Kemampuan Adaptasi Anak Usia 5-6 Tahun sebagai Komponen Perkembangan Sosial- Emosional Adaptive Ability of Children. 2026;14(2):204–18.
[3] Bahasa J, Protasis P, Ramadhan EH. Penerapan Model Pembelajaran Berbasis Proyek untuk Membantu Siswa Berpikir Kreatif. 2023;2(2).
[4] Ginting RL, Violina EI, Nainggolan E. Bimbingan dan Konseling Adaptif untuk Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini Inklusif : Sebuah Kajian Konseptual. 2026;12(1):47–60.
[5] Hidayat H, Suri A, Yanre MA, Sari NP, Sari SA. PERBEDAAN INDIVIDU DAN PEMBELAJARAN ADAPTIF MENUJU PENDIDIKAN YANG RESPONSIF TERHADAP KEBUTUHAN UNIK PESERTA DIDIK Hafiz. 2025;10:301–9.
[6] Bone SA gazali. Deep Learning sebagai Strategi Adaptif dalam Meningkatkan Kualitas Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini. 2026;3(1):1–11.

Vol. 1, No. 2, 28 September 2026, 168-176

[7] Nurhayati S, Zarkasih Putro K, dan Permainan Anak Usia Dini B, Nur Hayati S, Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta U. Pendidikan Islam Anak Usia Dini Bermain dan permainan anak usia dini. J Pendidik Islam Usia Dini. 2021;4 nomor 1:1–13.
[8] Anggraini K, Susilaningsih C, Ariyanti G. Pengembangan Media Berbasis AI " Kiko Kancil " untuk Meningkatkan Kemandirian Anak Usia Dini. 2026;10(1):503–13.