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Cooperative Learning In Improving Students' Collaborative

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abstract

This study discusses how cooperative learning strategies can help students work better together in teams. Using a literature review and descriptive qualitative methods, this study looks at theories, models, and challenges in cooperative learning. The results show that cooperative learning can improve social skills, make students more engaged, and encourage shared responsibility in teams. Some learning models, such as Jigsaw, STAD, and TGT, are mentioned as effective ways to help students understand lessons, work well together, and improve their communication skills. This article also discusses the challenges of implementing this method in the classroom as well as solutions such as teacher support and choosing the right learning model.

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a b s t r a k

Penelitian ini membahas bagaimana strategi pembelajaran kooperatif dapat membantu siswa bekerja sama dengan lebih baik dalam tim. Dengan menggunakan tinjauan literatur dan metode kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini melihat teori, model, dan tantangan dalam pembelajaran kooperatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran kooperatif dapat meningkatkan keterampilan sosial, membuat siswa lebih terlibat, dan mendorong tanggung jawab bersama dalam tim. Beberapa model pembelajaran, seperti Jigsaw, STAD, dan TGT, disebutkan sebagai cara yang efektif untuk membantu siswa memahami pelajaran, bekerja sama dengan baik, dan meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi mereka. Artikel ini juga membahas tantangan penerapan metode ini di kelas serta solusi seperti dukungan guru dan memilih model pembelajaran yang tepat.

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century demands a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. This transformation aligns with the need to develop *21st-century skills*, which include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (4C). Among these, collaborative skills have become a fundamental competence that must be nurtured from the elementary level. Students are not only expected to master academic knowledge but also to develop the ability to work together, adapt, and contribute within broader social settings. This is consistent with the view of Trilling and Fadel (2009), who argue that collaboration is one of the core competencies determining individual success in professional and social life in the global era.

However, empirical evidence shows that elementary students' collaborative skills remain relatively low. Observations and prior studies indicate that many students tend to be passive, individualistic, and less engaged in group activities. This condition is reinforced by traditional learning systems that place the teacher as the main source of information while students act merely as passive recipients. Consequently, the learning process tends to emphasize cognitive aspects without adequately fostering social and collaborative skills. Therefore, an appropriate learning strategy is needed to promote social interaction and effective cooperation among students.

One of the most relevant approaches to address this issue is cooperative learning. This instructional model emphasizes learning in small, heterogeneous groups, where each student holds both individual and group responsibility for achieving shared goals (Slavin, 2015). Through cooperative learning, students are trained to interact, discuss, and assist one another in understanding lesson materials. This approach not only enhances academic achievement but also cultivates mutual respect, empathy, and social responsibility—key components in developing collaborative competence.

Furthermore, the implementation of cooperative learning aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) *social constructivism* theory, which posits that learning is a socially constructed process formed through interaction between individuals and their social environment. In this context, group learning activities strengthen knowledge internalization through communication and cooperation among peers. Thus, cooperative learning serves as a strategic means to create a participatory, democratic, and humanistic learning atmosphere.

A number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of cooperative learning in developing students' collaborative skills. Johnson and Johnson (2019) emphasize that cooperative learning designed with the principles of *positive interdependence*, *individual*

accountability, and *group processing* can significantly increase student engagement and foster strong social bonds within groups. Similarly, Gillies (2016) found that the implementation of models such as *Jigsaw* and *Think-Pair-Share* encourages students to support one another in understanding concepts and fosters a sense of shared responsibility. These findings indicate that cooperative learning contributes meaningfully to strengthening students' collaborative character in the context of elementary education.

Based on this background, cooperative learning needs to be examined more deeply as an effective strategy for enhancing students' collaborative skills. This article aims to analyze the concept, implementation, and implications of cooperative learning in developing students' collaborative abilities in elementary schools. Through theoretical and empirical analysis, this paper is expected to contribute to the development of innovative learning practices oriented toward the cultivation of students' social and character competencies.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using a library research design. This approach was chosen because the study focused on theoretical and conceptual analysis rather than empirical field data. The researcher collected and analyzed relevant literature related to cooperative learning and students' collaborative skills in elementary education. The primary data sources consisted of academic books, journal articles, and prior research discussing cooperative learning, collaborative behavior, and social constructivism theory. Secondary data included policy documents, educational reports, and supporting articles from national and international journals published within the last ten years (2015–2025). Literature was obtained through systematic searches using academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and the Garuda Dikti portal, based on relevance, credibility, and publication quality.

The data were analyzed using content analysis techniques, which involved three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the reduction stage, relevant information was selected and categorized into themes such as the concept of cooperative learning, implementation strategies, impacts on collaboration, and challenges in practice. The presentation stage involved organizing the findings coherently to identify connections across sources. Finally, conclusions were drawn through logical interpretation and critical comparison among previous studies to reveal the relationship between cooperative learning and students' collaborative skill development. To ensure the validity of findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing various references and perspectives from different researchers. This process strengthened the credibility and reliability of the study's conclusions regarding the role of cooperative learning in enhancing collaborative competencies among elementary school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Basic Concept of Cooperative Learning

In the cooperative learning approach, groups are prioritized with members who have varying levels of ability (high, medium, low) and come from a variety of racial, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, while paying attention to gender equality where possible. To achieve learning objectives, students must work together in groups to solve problems. In collaborative learning, students with diverse abilities work in small groups, support each other, and depend on each other to achieve common goals and ensure shared learning success (Amiruddin, 2019).

The term "cooperative learning" refers to a teaching method that is teacher-guided and student-focused. In small groups, each student is responsible not only for his or her own learning, but also for helping his or her group mates learn. Students work together to achieve shared learning goals. Cooperative learning is rooted in the concept of constructivism developed by Vygotsky in 1986, which emphasizes the importance of interactions, language,

culture, and social relationships in the learning process. According to Slavin (1990), the main principle of cooperative learning is that by discussing difficult ideas with peers, students can more easily understand and identify them (Nisrina et al., 2017).

According to Roger and David Johnson cited by Lie (2003), not all group activities can be categorized as cooperative learning. In order to deliver maximum results, the five main components of the cooperative learning model must be implemented as follows:

a. Positive interdependence
b. Individual responsibility
c. Face-to-face
d. Communication between members
e. Evaluation of group processes (Hasanah & Himami, 2021).

According to Ritu Chandra (2015), collaborative learning requires respect and mutual respect between group members. Each member has different skills and contributions. Responsibilities and authority are shared among the group members. Collaboration and group projects are essential in this learning, which involves social interaction between lecturers and students to exchange knowledge and experiences. Here are some of the features of collaborative learning:

a. Positive dependency
b. Interaction
c. Individual and group responsibility
d. Development of interpersonal skills
e. Formation of heterogeneous groups
f. Sharing knowledge between teachers and students
g. Sharing authority between teachers and students
h. Teacher as a mediator (Tenrisau, 2023)

Mulyadiana (in Trianto, 2000:10) explained that cooperative learning offers various benefits. First, this method encourages students to be more independent, less dependent on teachers, and able to seek information from various sources and learn from peers. Second, cooperative learning makes it easier for students to convey ideas or concepts so that they are easier to understand than if done individually. Third, this approach teaches students to appreciate others, recognize their own weaknesses, and accept differences. Fourth, cooperative learning provides opportunities for students to be more responsible for their learning process. Fifth, this method has proven to be effective in improving academic and non-academic achievement. Sixth, students can test their understanding and get feedback from others. Seventh, cooperative learning helps students in using information and applying knowledge practically in real life.

Mulyadiana (in Trianto, 2007:16) revealed that cooperative learning has several weaknesses. First, understanding this learning philosophy takes time, especially because there is a difference between students who feel superior and those who feel less confident. Second, cooperative learning focuses on student cooperation to solve a problem. Third, the assessment in this method is based on the results of the group project. Fourth, building awareness of the importance of group work takes a long time. Finally, while collaboration skills are essential, many real-world activities are more demanding on individual abilities (Jaelani, 2015).

The cooperative learning model consists of six main stages:

a. The instructor motivates and explains the learning objectives.
b. The instructor conveys information through readings or demonstrations.
c. Instructors help students form study groups and ensure a smooth transition.
d. The instructor supervises the group while working on the assignment.
e. Each group presents their work or the instructor evaluates the achievement of the learning objectives.
f. Instructors reward individual and group learning outcomes (Asma, 2006)

Cooperative Learning Models

Various types of cooperative learning can be chosen according to the needs and characteristics of students. Some types of cooperative learning models include (Sulistio & Haryanti, 2022):

a. Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD)

According to Kuntjojo (2010), Robert Slavin and a team from Johns Hopkins University developed a cooperative learning model known as the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD). This model is one of the popular cooperative learning techniques because of its ease of application. In STAD, teachers form small groups of four to five students. Each group was given an assignment in the form of an academic worksheet, which was done through discussion and helped each other in understanding the material. Even so, each student still has to take the exam independently without the help of group members.

b. Jigsaw

Slavin (2008) explains that Elliot Aronson and his team at the University of Texas originally created the cooperative learning model Jigsaw I. Later, Slavin and his team at Johns Hopkins University developed Jigsaw II by modifying the model. In Jigsaw I, students focus on learning one idea and learning more through discussions with other team members. Jigsaw I takes less time than Jigsaw II. In Jigsaw II, each student has the opportunity to master the material more deeply before learning a specific topic. This learning involves heterogeneous groups of five to six people, with a separate native group and expert group.

c. Group Investigation (GI)

According to Rusman (2012), Shlomo Sharan and Yael Sharan from Tel Aviv University, Israel, developed a group investigation method. This learning technique encourages students to actively seek information from various sources, such as textbooks or the internet. This approach helps students develop the ability to think and communicate independently. Students are involved in planning from the beginning, choosing the topic and method of research to be used. Their participation during the learning process provides an opportunity to understand the material better.

d. Team Game Tournament (TGT)

Robert (2008) mentioned that the Team Games Tournament (TGT) was developed by David DeVries and Keith Edwards as the first learning model from Johns Hopkins. According to Mohamad Syarif Sumantri (2015), the TGT model uses academic tournaments, quizzes, and assessments that focus on individual development. In this model, students compete to represent their team against other students with similar achievements. Agus Suprijono (2009) added that the TGT method involves all students regardless of status, allows them to become peer tutors, and combines elements of play and reinforcement.

e. Think Pair Share (TPS)

According to Trianto, the Think Pair Share (TPS) cooperative learning method is a learning approach in which students work together, which directly affects their interaction patterns. Anita Lie (2018) explained that TPS, developed by Frank Lyman, is one of the methods that supports collaboration in cooperative learning. Meanwhile, Miftahul Huda (2015) mentioned that TPS provides opportunities for students to think about solutions to problems or questions asked by teachers. After that, students share ideas and help each other according to their abilities, before finally presenting the results of their discussion in front of the class.

f. Numbered Heads Together (NHT)

Trianto stated that Numbered Head Together (NHT), or "numbered thinking together," is a cooperative learning method that aims to change the way students interact and replace traditional ways of learning. This NHT model, developed by Spencer Kagan in 1992, according to Anita Lie (2018), allows students to share ideas and find solutions together. NHT focuses on structures that support student interaction and aim to teach specific materials. With this method, the division of tasks not only speeds up learning, but also makes students feel more accountable to their group.

g. Make a Match type cooperative learning model

According to Kokom Komalasari (2010), the "create a match" learning model is a technique that helps students find answers or develop ideas from a concept through paired card games. This model was first developed by Lorna Curran in 1994, according to Miftahul Huda (2014). This method teaches students to actively seek answers, prepare for assignments, and be disciplined in managing time. Today, "make a match" is one of the important strategies in the classroom to deepen the material, analyze further information, and provide interesting learning opportunities.

h. Practice the Rotating Trio Exchange Skills

The Rotating Trio Exchange cooperative learning model, developed by Melvin L. Silberman, offers a way for students to discuss a variety of topics with their peers. This method encourages students to work together, support each other, and hone their social skills. Although interacting with all members of the group can be challenging, Melvin and Silberman (2007) emphasize the importance of building positive interactions between students as part of their development in the classroom. This approach aims to improve students' communication skills, both with teachers, other groups, and fellow group members. In addition, this model is designed to encourage students to be more active in the learning process, increasing their interest and concentration, while fostering curiosity and critical thinking skills.

Practice Cooperative Skills

Although everyone needs to develop cooperative skills in a similar way, some students don't get enough opportunities to learn and practice these skills. According to Hill & Hill (1993), these skills should be clearly explained, practiced, reflected, and given feedback. To assess the success of group work, teachers and students participate in observation, exercise, and feedback during the collaborative learning process.

According to Johnson & Johnson (1987), there are four important aspects of cooperative skills, namely: 1) group formation, 2) working in groups, 3) problem solving, and 4) difference management. These four skills are interrelated, and sometimes, such as when students are solving problems, other skills, such as memorizing, also need to be honed.

Hill & Hill (1993) explain that some positions in a team can develop leadership skills, which require the ability to work together. Some of these abilities include being an observer, recorder, questioner, summarizer, motivator, explainer, regulator, timekeeper, and others. Everyone on the team has this role and is interdependent on each other. Students can be encouraged to develop skills such as 1) formulating problems, 2) brainstorming, 3) clarifying ideas, 4) confirming ideas, 5) developing ideas, 6) reviewing results, 7) criticizing ideas, 8) organizing information, and 9) solving problems through group work. Group members work together to exercise these abilities (Suryani, 2016).

The Impact of Cooperative Learning in Improving Students' Collaborative Skills

Cooperative learning helps students develop social, communication, and cooperative skills, in addition to academic skills. This approach can motivate students to achieve common goals and create an inclusive learning atmosphere. There are many benefits of cooperative learning for students and the educational process as a whole. Here are some of the main advantages and impacts (Nababan Damayanti et al., 2023):

a. Social skills development:
   Students learn to work together, communicate, listen, and respect the opinions of others, which helps them hone important social skills in daily life.
b. Increased motivation:
   Group work can make students more motivated because they feel more engaged in learning and know that their success also contributes to the success of the group.
c. Better understanding of the material:
   By sharing ideas and helping each other, students can better understand the material. Group discussions also help explain difficult concepts.
d. Development of problem-solving skills:
   Students learn to work together in solving problems, finding solutions, and making decisions together. It hones their ability to solve problems, both at school and in everyday life.
e. Increased student engagement:
   Cooperative learning makes students more active and feel responsible for their own and group learning.
f. Communication skills development:
   Through group discussions, students can improve their communication skills, both verbal and written, and learn to convey ideas clearly.
g. Empowering students:
   Cooperative learning gives each student the opportunity to participate in learning, feel valued, and actively participate

Challenges and Strategies for Implementing Cooperative Learning

The application of cooperative learning often faces problems that can hinder students' ability to improve teamwork. Here are some of the main problems faced and their solutions. The following are the challenges of implementing cooperative learning:

a. Difficulties in Choosing the Right Model
   Many teachers find it difficult to choose a cooperative learning model that matches the character of the students and the material being taught. This can make the learning process less effective.
b. Low Student Motivation and Interest
   Students are often less motivated to actively participate in group learning, perhaps because they don't feel like they have the courage to ask questions or express opinions. Students often show low motivation to actively participate in cooperative learning, which can be due to a lack of courage to ask questions or express opinions
c. Material Readiness and Teacher Preparation
   Teachers must prepare the material well and plan the assignments accordingly. This preparation is important for creating a good learning atmosphere, but it is often an obstacle for teachers (Handayani, 2020).
d. Group Dynamics Management
   Managing interactions between group members can be difficult, especially if there is conflict or an imbalance of contributions. Some students may talk too much, while others are more silent.
e. Adaptation to New Methods
   Students who are used to traditional ways of learning may find it difficult to adapt to a more active and cooperative approach, making learning less effective (Gusman & Fitriani, 2023)

   The strategies to overcome these challenges:

a. Training and Professional Development for Teachers

Providing training to teachers on cooperative learning models and how to choose the one that suits the needs of students can increase teaching effectiveness (Gusman & Fitriani, 2023).

b. Application of Varied Methods
Using various cooperative learning methods, such as Jigsaw or Think-Pair-Share, can make learning more exciting and increase student engagement.

c. Building a Supportive Learning Environment
Create a safe and supportive classroom atmosphere, so that students feel comfortable sharing ideas and working together. It also means encouraging open and respectful communication between students (Triani, 2016).

d. Regular Evaluation and Feedback
Conducting regular evaluations of the learning process and providing feedback to students can help them understand each other's contributions and improve future cooperation.

By using this tactic, the difficulties in implementing cooperative learning can be reduced, so that the teaching and learning process becomes more efficient and enjoyable for all students. cooperative learning is a learning strategy that emphasizes collaboration among students in small groups to achieve common learning goals. This model not only focuses on academic achievement but also develops social and collaborative skills, which are essential in 21st-century education. The findings of this study show that the application of cooperative learning encourages students to actively interact, exchange ideas, and help each other in completing group tasks. These findings are consistent with Slavin (2015), who stated that cooperative learning provides opportunities for students to learn from their peers through meaningful social interactions, thereby improving conceptual understanding and teamwork abilities.

In the context of elementary education, cooperative learning provides an effective space for students to develop collaborative skills from an early age. Models such as *Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD)*, *Jigsaw*, and *Think Pair Share* have proven effective in fostering shared responsibility and reducing participation gaps among students. Johnson and Johnson (2019) found that the effectiveness of cooperative learning depends on three main elements: *positive interdependence*, *individual accountability*, and *group processing*. These components help students understand that group success depends on the contribution of each member. This is reflected in classroom practices where active students not only influence group outcomes but also encourage others to participate and stay motivated in the learning process.

Furthermore, cooperative learning also contributes to the development of students' social and emotional skills. Through group discussions and collaborative problem-solving, students learn to respect others' opinions, practice empathy, and develop effective communication skills. Based on Vygotsky's *social constructivism* theory (1978), social interaction plays a crucial role in learning; knowledge is constructed through collaboration and the exchange of ideas among individuals. Therefore, cooperative learning acts as a strategic approach to creating a participatory, democratic, and constructive learning environment that nurtures students' interpersonal growth.

However, the implementation of cooperative learning is not without challenges. One common issue is the teacher's difficulty in managing group dynamics effectively. Gillies (2016) pointed out that teachers often struggle to ensure equal participation from all members in a group. Additionally, differences in students' academic abilities may cause imbalance in contribution, where stronger students dominate while others remain passive. To overcome this, teachers must design heterogeneous groups and assign clear roles and responsibilities to each student to maintain balance and accountability within groups.

Another important factor is student readiness. Students who are not accustomed to working collaboratively may exhibit passive behavior or dominate discussions. Therefore, teachers need to foster cooperation, responsibility, and effective communication as part of the

classroom culture. Elendiana (2020) emphasized that the success of cooperative learning depends on continuous teacher guidance and modeling of social interaction skills. With consistent mentoring and structured routines, students can gradually adapt to collaborative learning situations.

Overall, the analysis shows that cooperative learning plays a significant role in improving students' collaborative skills. Through group interaction, students learn to contribute, listen actively, and appreciate differing perspectives. At the same time, cooperative learning fosters a participatory and democratic learning atmosphere. In the context of elementary education, this model is highly relevant because it not only enhances cognitive achievement but also shapes social character, preparing students to face future challenges in a rapidly changing world. Therefore, cooperative learning should be implemented consistently, systematically, and accompanied by reflective teaching practices to maximize its impact on students' collaborative skill development.

CONCLUSION

Cooperative learning improves students' ability to work together more effectively. By working in groups, this method helps students develop communication, social, and shared responsibility skills. Learning models such as Jigsaw, STAD, and TGT allow students to interact, deepen their understanding of the material, and encourage active participation in learning. Cooperative learning helps students work better together. In groups, students can hone communication, social, and shared responsibility skills. Methods such as Jigsaw, STAD, and TGT encourage interaction between students, deepen understanding of the material, and increase active participation. While it has many advantages, cooperative learning also has its challenges, such as student skill differences, the selection of the right model, and group dynamics that can be difficult. To overcome this, teachers are advised to prepare well, use various approaches, and conduct regular evaluations. Cooperative learning helps students not only in academic achievement, but also in developing skills to work together in the future.

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