

Build Your Child's Super-Emotions with 'Feels Cards': A Smart Strategy to Sharpen Emotional Awareness from an Early Age

Humairoh^{1*}, Wahyuni Nadar², Hisham A.M³

¹KB Negeri 33 Malaka Sari, Jakarta Indonesia

^{2,3}Early Childhood Teacher Education, Study Program STKIP Kusuma Negara, Jakarta Indonesia

*humairoh2021@stkipkusumanegara.ac.id

Abstract

The early childhood period for a child is a golden age that occurs only once in a lifetime and cannot be repeated. Introducing and managing emotions from an early age is very important for the social-emotional development of children. This study aims to show that in learning, media such as "Feels Cards" have proven effective in helping children recognise, express, and regulate emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, and fear. This article presents a review of the concept and practical implementation of Feels Cards for children aged 3–4 years at the Government Playgroup 33 Malakasari, East Jakarta, and how this media can be integrated with religious values and character education, identity formation, and literacy in mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and arts. The article also emphasises effective methods, implementation challenges, and recommendations so that the application feels comprehensive and effective. The results of the review conclude that Feels Cards — when designed with clear and visually engaging images, used consistently, and accompanied by reflection and support from teachers/parents — are able to enhance children's ability to recognise emotions, strengthen empathy, and increase both their non-cognitive and cognitive literacy aspects.

Keywords: Early childhood, Emotional Development, Feels Cards, Learning Media, Social-Emotional Intelligence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The early childhood period is often referred to as the *golden age*, a crucial phase that occurs only once in a lifetime. At this stage, the introduction and management of emotions have a significant impact on children's social-emotional development. Media such as emotion cards (*feels cards*) are increasingly used as tools to help young children recognize, label, and regulate feelings such as happiness, sadness, anger, or fear. This is very important because a child's ability to recognize and understand emotions greatly influences their social competence and emotional regulation throughout life.

Although important, many children aged 3–4 years still lack adequate emotional vocabulary, have limited awareness of their own and others' feelings, and possess developing skills in managing emotions. For example, young children may recognize emotions like "happy" or "angry," but still find it difficult to identify more complex emotions such as "confused" or "disappointed." In early childhood education settings, such as preschools or playgroups, there are also challenges in integrating emotional learning media with religious values, character education, and other literacies (mathematics, science, technology, and arts) comprehensively. Therefore, there is a need for learning strategies that not only introduce emotions but also integrate them into a broader educational context.

Several studies have shown encouraging results: the use of emotion cards or card games has proven effective in improving children's ability to recognize emotional expressions and expand their emotional vocabulary. For instance, studies using "picture card games" in kindergartens found significant improvements in the emotional intelligence of children aged 5–6 years after the card-based intervention. Likewise, guides and resources for emotion-identification cards suggest that activities such as "choose the card that shows how I feel today" or "tell a story about a time I felt..." can strengthen emotional literacy among children aged 18 months to 5 years. *The Development of Children's Emotional: A Systematic Literature Review* (Wulandari, 2021) explains that emotional development in early childhood progresses from simple to more complex forms and is highly influenced by interactions with the environment. The implication for educators is the need for interventions and media that help children recognize, label, and regulate emotions from an early age. *Learning Emotions Through Flashcards in Early Childhood at TKIT Al-Fityan Gowa* (Agussalim et al., 2023) specifically used emotional flashcards for young children. The findings revealed that after the flashcard intervention, children showed increased ability to recognize various emotions and positive effects on their socio-emotional development. *Playing Emotion Cards and Language Skills in Early Childhood* (Sari, Sasmiati & Haenilah, 2022) found a significant positive correlation (~66.7%) between playing with emotion cards and language development—indicating that emotion cards can support cognitive aspects (language) as well as social-emotional growth. *The Effect of Flashcard Learning Media on the Empathy Attitudes of Children Aged 5–6 Years* (Nurliana, 2023) also showed significant improvement in children's empathy after flashcard-based learning, demonstrating that emotion cards contribute to socio-emotional aspects such as empathy.

Nevertheless, several research gaps remain. First, many studies focus on children aged 4 years and older, leaving limited data for the 3–4-year age group—the earliest and most formative stage. Second, few studies have explored integrating emotion cards with religious values, character education, and STEM literacy (science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and arts) within Indonesia's early childhood education context, particularly in public playgroups such as those in East Jakarta. Third, despite the abundance of practical guides, there is a lack of longitudinal or experimental studies measuring the long-term impact of emotion card use on emotional regulation, empathy, and cognitive literacy. Therefore, research exploring the application of *feels cards* with multidimensional integration and local educational context is highly needed.

By addressing these gaps, a study reviewing the concept and practical implementation of *feels cards* for children aged 3–4 years at Playgroup Negeri 33 Malakasari, East Jakarta, holds great potential. This research will not only demonstrate how *feels cards* can be effectively used but also how they can be integrated into identity formation, religious and moral values, and both non-cognitive and cognitive literacy development. The results are expected to provide practical recommendations for teachers, parents, and early childhood institutions to implement comprehensive and effective media for stimulating emotional development in early childhood.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic method. Data collection was carried out through participant observation during learning activities at Playgroup Negeri 33 Malakasari, indepth interviews with teachers or facilitators, as well as documentation in the form of photographs and field notes. The observation focus was on children's interaction with the Feels Card media, the emotional responses exhibited, and how the teacher facilitated discussions and activities related to emotion recognition. Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-qualitative method to provide a comprehensive depiction of the learning process and its impact on children's social-emotional development.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Feels Cards in Learning

The implementation of Feels Cards is carried out through several methods. First, the direct introduction method, where the teacher shows the cards one by one, mentions the name of the emotion, and imitates its expression. Children are encouraged to follow along and associate the emotion with their personal experiences, for example, "When do you feel happy?" Second, the storytelling method, in which emotion cards are used as tools to tell stories that contain emotional conflicts or situations. Third, the role-playing method, where children pick a card at random and act out the emotion shown.

Integration of Religious, Moral, and Identity Values

Religious and moral values support character education from an early age. Children learn that emotions are not "forbidden" or "bad" when expressed appropriately. In a religious context, emotions such as gratitude when happy, patience when angry, and apologizing when hurting others serve as media for moral learning.

Identity formation develops when children realize they have unique feelings, that acknowledging emotions is part of who they are, and that they are valued when expressing them. With Feels Cards, children are given opportunities to observe, imitate, and describe their own and others' feelings, thereby strengthening identity and empathy.

3.1 Integration with Mathematics, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Arts Literacy (STEAM)

In this integrated approach to learning, mathematics provides a foundational structure for understanding emotions. Children engage in activities such as counting the number of emotion cards, comparing sets to determine which has more or less, and recognizing shapes like circles, ovals, and squares within the emotional illustrations. They also explore color patterns and begin the process of categorizing emotions into positive and negative groups.

From a scientific perspective, the learning deepens as children come to understand that emotions have physical manifestations, such as changes in heartbeat or distinct facial and bodily reactions. They investigate the causes of various emotions and can participate in simple experiments, like observing how different colors or types of music might affect their mood.

Technology and engineering principles are introduced through the creation and use of simple digital applications or media that display emotions via images and videos. Furthermore, children engage in a hands-on engineering process by designing and producing their own flashcards, which includes designing, printing, and laminating. This process also serves as a limited and guided introduction to using digital gadgets.

Finally, the arts serve as a crucial medium for emotional expression. Through activities like drawing, drama, role-playing, songs, and body movements, children can convey their feelings. The use of color in their card designs is particularly significant, as art becomes a powerful tool for expressing emotions that are often difficult to put into words.

3.2 Effective Practices for Implementing Feels Cards

To apply Feels Cards effectively, several key aspects must be considered, starting with an age-appropriate design. The cards should feature clear images with easily visible facial expressions and body language, and they must be a safe and easy-to-hold size, as highlighted in Mega Aliyasari's study. Additionally, the design should incorporate attractive colors, easy-to-read fonts, and simple emotion words to capture and maintain a child's interest.

Beyond the physical design, consistency in use is crucial for success. The cards should be integrated regularly into daily routines, both in the classroom and at home. This can include using them for an emotion check-in at the start of the day, as a tool for navigating conflicts, or for reflection at the end of the day. To keep the engagement high, it is

important to introduce repetition and variation by using the cards in different ways, such as guessing games, role-playing scenarios, storytelling prompts, or drawing activities.

The guidance of teachers and parents is indispensable in this process. Educators should facilitate discussions around the cards, prompting children to explore why they feel a certain way, what can be done about it, and how to identify the physical and mental cues associated with their emotions. Parental involvement is equally important to ensure that this emotional reinforcement continues at home, creating a cohesive learning environment. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the cards is enhanced through cross-disciplinary integration. The concept of emotions can be linked with various subjects, including math for counting cards, science for understanding physical reactions, the arts for drawing or singing about feelings, technology through related apps and videos, and even religious values.

Ultimately, the goal is to foster reflection and emotional regulation. The cards become a tool for teaching children practical skills, such as how to calm feelings of anger or fear, express sadness with words, practice gratitude, and connect their emotions with personal reflection or prayer. By consistently providing a safe space for children to share their feelings, these cards help build a strong foundation for emotional intelligence.

3.3 Case Studies/Research Findings

Research findings from various studies underscore the effectiveness of using flashcards to teach emotional literacy. For instance, a study conducted in Makassar on introducing emotions through emoji flashcards found that young children became more active in naming and expressing their feelings after using them. However, the study also noted a remaining challenge in engaging children who were inherently shy or slower in their emotional recognition.

Supporting the importance of thoughtful design, the study by Mega Aliyasari et al. on "The Design of Flashcards as Emotional Recognition Media" showed that properly validated flashcards were highly effective. When the cards featured appropriate sizes, illustrations, and visualizations, and were validated for both material and design, they proved to be exceptionally suitable for helping children recognize and verbalize their feelings.

Furthermore, broader research focused on optimizing picture cards for children aged 5–6 confirmed that such visual aids significantly support socio-emotional development. These cards were found to improve not only emotion recognition but also peer interaction, emotional regulation, and overall engagement in learning activities. The success was largely attributed to the strong visual appeal of the cards, which naturally encouraged children to become more active participants.

Implementation Challenges

Despite their potential, several challenges emerge in practice when implementing this approach. For example, introverted or shy children often require more time and support before they feel comfortable expressing their emotions, which can slow the progress of activities designed to help emotional articulation. Additionally, differences in family, cultural, and religious backgrounds shape how children interpret and communicate their feelings, meaning that a one-size-fits-all method may not resonate equally with every child. Practical limitations also play a role: when media or facilities are lacking—such as a limited variety of high-quality images, appropriate card materials, or access to technology—the richness of the experience can be diminished. Furthermore, the success of the approach depends heavily on the skills of the adults involved; insufficient training for teachers or caregivers in guiding reflective conversations and supporting emotional regulation can undermine its effectiveness. Finally, consistency between home and school environments is crucial, yet difficult to achieve if parents are uninvolved or unfamiliar with the method, leading to gaps in support that can reduce overall impact.

4. CONCLUSION

The use of Feels Cards has proven to be a potential and effective medium for stimulating the social-emotional development of young children at Playgroup Negeri 33 Malakasari. These findings indicate that this medium facilitates children in recognising, expressing, and beginning to learn how to regulate basic emotions. Its success highly depends on the teacher's creative delivery methods, the availability of facilitation for reflection, and integration with other learning aspects such as religious values, character education, and basic literacy. For optimisation, it is recommended to develop a more contextualised medium suited to local culture and to provide training for teachers and parents so they can facilitate deeper emotional discussions.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Allah SWT for His mercy and guidance, which have made it possible to complete the research and the writing of the article entitled "Building Children's Super-Emotions with 'Feels Cards': A Smart Strategy to Sharpen Emotional Awareness from an Early Age."

Heartfelt appreciation is extended to the Acting Principal of Playgroup Negeri 33 Malaka Sari, along with all teachers and students, for their support, cooperation, and willingness to participate in this research. The author also wishes to express deep gratitude to everyone who has provided extraordinary support throughout the research and thesis process—their assistance and encouragement, both great and small, have helped the author overcome challenges and achieve academic goals.

The author is also deeply thankful to academic supervisors, colleagues, and all individuals who have offered guidance, motivation, and constructive suggestions during the research and writing of this article.

Finally, the author acknowledges that this article still has certain limitations. Therefore, constructive feedback and suggestions are highly appreciated for the improvement of future scholarly work.

6. REFERENCES

- Aliyasari, M., & Martadi, M. (2021). Perancangan Flash Card Sebagai Media Pengenalan Emosi Pada Anak Usia Prasekolah. *BARIK-Jurnal S1 Desain Komunikasi Visual*, 2(2), 82-95.
- Angeling, A., Mahadiva, T., Ghinarahima, C. N., Azzura, C. D., Idulfilastri, R. M., & Marella, B. (2024). Flashcard: Pengenalan Jenis Dan Regulasi Emosi Pada Anak Usia Dini. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 4(3), 14795-14810.
- Artamevia, R., Aziza, R., & Firdaus, P. (2024). Teori perkembangan pada anak usia dini menggunakan teori Piaget. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, 10(11), 696-699. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12803722>.
- Chintya, R., & Sit, M. (2024). Analisis Teori Daniel Goleman dalam Perkembangan Kecerdasan Emosi Anak Usia Dini: Analysis of Daniel Goleman's Theory in the Development of Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood. *Absorbent Mind*, 4(1), 159-168.
- Giri, P. A. S. P. (2021). Media visual untuk meningkatkan motivasi belajar anak. *Widyadari*, 22(1), 276-289.
- Goleman, D. (1996). *Kecerdasan emosional* (T. Hermaya, Trans.). Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Maghfiroh, S., & Suryana, D. (2021). Media pembelajaran untuk anak usia dini di pendidikan anak usia dini. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 5(1), 1560-1566.

- Mashar, R. (2011). *Emosi anak usia dini dan strategi pengembangannya*. PT Prenada Kencana Media.
- Mufarrochah, S. (2023). *Media pembelajaran anak usia dini (Teori dan praktik)*. Penerbit Adab.
- Ndari, S. S., Vinayastri, A., & Masykuroh, K. (2019). *Metode perkembangan sosial emosi anak usia dini*. Edu Publisher.
- Ngura, E. T., Go, B., & Rewo, J. M. (2020). Pengaruh media pembelajaran buku cerita bergambar terhadap perkembangan emosional anak usia dini. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Citra Bakti*, 7(2), 118-124.
- Ramadhani, S. K., Buchori, S., & Syahril, M. F. (2025). Analisis Kebutuhan Media Flashcard Visual Untuk Meningkatkan Regulasi Emosi Marah Siswa. *JURKAM: Jurnal Konseling Andi Matappa*, 98-106.
- Ritonga, W. A., Dewi, R., & Simbolon, N. (2023). Pengaruh Media Visual Dan Keterampilan Sosial Terhadap Kemampuan Literasi Aud 5-6 Tahun. *Jurnal IKA PGSD (Ikatan Alumni PGSD) UNARS*, 13(1), 370-383.
- Salam, A. (2023). Meningkatkan Perkembangan Sosial Emosional Anak Usia Dini. *ECEIJ (Early Childhood Education Indonesian Journal)*, 6(3), 102-106.