



## The Influence of Teacher and Student Interaction on the Social Development of Elementary School Students

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### Abstract

*The research examines how classroom activity's structure and teacher facilitation and empathy combine to affect the formation of collaborative abilities in students enrolled in elementary school. The qualifying study used two elementary schools to collect data from 10 teachers who worked with 30 students between grades 3 to 5. The research collected its data through interviews combined with discussions and classroom observations and document analysis. Group activities that operate smoothly lead students to develop their teamwork abilities as well as their communication skills and their skills for resolving conflicts. Research established that students require the direction and compassion from teachers along with an encouraging learning space to develop their group working capabilities. Students gained increased confidence when working with fellow classmates which coincided with a heightened level of respect and empathy between peers. Research fills an academic void because it defines the role of teacher-led structured activities in advancing social development particularly among elementary school students. These activities create long-standing advantages which students retain to enhance their future cooperative work both in academic studies and social settings. Educators should adopt structured group tasks due to their confirmed ability to develop crucial social abilities while enhancing classroom relationships.*

## Introduction

Observation of child development interactions demonstrates how social skills form because of early childhood development through quality interactions and relationships and communication. Elementary school gives children both social opportunities and basic knowledge acquisition while teaching them proper ways to live together. The actual teacher-student relationship functions as an essential factor during children's development of their pro- and social-emotional abilities together with emotional capacities and self-esteem. The results from teacher-student interactions will assist in improving educational methods while ensuring schools produce socially developed students.

The development of skills required for social relationships represents what social development means. The development process begins in childhood then multiple elements which affect it consist of family interactions together with peer attachments and teacher-student relationships (Wadsworth, 2022; Meltzer et al., 2021). Through their position as leaders and child role models teachers actively shape children's social development by creating learning environments that either enable or restrict suitable social conduct (Hamsiah et al., 2022).

Teaching staff possess the ability to affect the children's development in resolving disagreement and working collaboratively while controlling their empathetic responsiveness.

Some of the existing studies have also focused on how teachers interact with their students with regard to social and emotional learning. Asserted that the quality feedback from the teacher to the students includes warm, responsive, and constructive interaction patterns that result in highly desirable social consequences for the students. In the same Goetz et al. (2021) noted that there is a negative relationship between positive teacher student interactions and negative student behaviors, and positive student behaviors, respectively. The presented results highlight the importance of educators in the construction of the social context of a child's learning.

The classroom forms a part of society; therefore, it contains nearly all aspects of social learning. From learning with the teachers and peers' children learn how to behave with their peers and in general, how to regulate their emotions and, thus, interact with other people (Latifi et al., 2021). Hence, interactions of a specific type? Teachers, by what they do and how they do it their communication patterns and classroom discipline build the environment in which such exchanges take place. The learning environment that supports freedom of discussion, consideration of others, and group actions enable students demonstrate courtesy, respect and cooperation (Husni et al., 2024). At the same time, care must be taken with classrooms that are autocratic in nature; in such environments, students may fail to develop socially resulting in symptoms including withdrawal or aggression (Obispo et al., 2021).

The socioemotional climate of classroom is found to be significantly related to students. According to Gimbert et al. (2023) argued that teachers with positive social and emotional skills in a classroom are in a position to develop healthy interpersonal relationships with learners. These relationships foster a safe Clark environment that makes students appreciated and in turn; create an environment where the students learn to interact with each other with kindness and respect. In the case of elementary school, a remarkable significance is realized in the interactions between teachers and the students where children are still easily influenced and in need of adult direction in managing social conflicts (Rasmitadila et al., 2022).

There are consequences that are not necessarily educational for teacher-student interactions, but social as well. Because schools are the initial organizational arrangements that children meet outside their homes, the quality of interaction in such environment determines their impressions on authorities, communities, and people surrounding them (Young & McGeeney, 2023). Well-meaning relationships with teachers enable students to develop the required self-identity for group involvement, ideas and conflict-solvers assertiveness. These skills are important not only in school, but in future personal and career life as well Zhang et al. (2023).

Although social relationships between teachers and learners are widely acknowledged as invaluable, there is a lack of research examining the features of such interactions as they affect development in elementary school children. Researchers have explored effects of classroom management methods and attitude of teachers and peer relation on student progress, few of previous literatures have embraced the social development factor squarely (Chen et al., 2021). In addition, most of the previous studies are delivered in Western samples only, and little is known of how the cultural, economic, and organizational factors can influence such relations in other settings (Liang & Bushman, 2021).

To fill these gaps, this research will examine the effects of transactions as well as how teacher-student encounter affects social development of students in elementary school. Hence, to capture the student and teacher participants' experiences, the study uses a qualitative approach

to identify behaviours, cultures, and practices that facilitate social development. The results should be useful for designing educational policies and practices, particularly for the creation of teacher development programs that include social-emotional learning.

## **Method**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore how teacher-student interactions influence the social development of elementary school students. The qualitative approach enabled an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions, and behaviors of both teachers and students in their natural classroom environment. By focusing on the dynamics of these interactions, the study aimed to uncover how specific patterns and strategies contribute to the social growth of students. were selected as the research sites, chosen for their diverse student populations and established teacher-student engagement programs.

A case study methodology was utilized to examine the phenomenon in detail. This approach allowed for an intensive investigation of the interactions between teachers and students, as well as their impact on students' social skills, communication, and relationships. Ten teachers and thirty students from grades 3 to 5 participated in the study. Teachers were purposively sampled based on their active engagement in classroom interactions and a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Students were selected with the assistance of teachers, ensuring a diverse representation of social behaviors. Parental consent and student assent were obtained to ensure ethical compliance.

Data collection spanned three months and incorporated multiple methods to ensure comprehensive insights. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all teacher participants to understand their perspectives on their interactions with students and the observed effects. Focus group discussions were held with groups of students to explore their experiences and perceptions of teacher engagement. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted over five sessions for each classroom, where verbal and non-verbal teacher-student interactions were documented. Document analysis of classroom artifacts, such as student journals and teacher notes, further enriched the data.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, six-phase approach. Initially, the researcher familiarized themselves with the data by reviewing and taking detailed notes. Key features of the data were then coded, and related codes were collated into potential themes. These themes were refined to ensure coherence and relevance to the study's objectives. Once finalized, the themes were defined and named to reflect their essence, and the findings were compiled into a detailed report supported by participant quotations and observational evidence.

To ensure the study's credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation was applied by using data from multiple sources. Member checking allowed participants to verify the accuracy of interpretations, and an audit trail documented all research activities. Ethical considerations, such as maintaining confidentiality and securing informed consent, were strictly adhered to. Overall, the rigorous methodology provided a robust foundation for exploring the influence of teacher-student interactions on the social development of elementary school students.

## **Result and Discussion**

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of effective teacher modeled, well-structured teamwork activities on students' interactions with peers, with emphasis on the significance of teacher intervention, understanding and communication in creating positive outcomes for the processes. Through this research the social process of young learners will be

better understood by analyzing the interaction between teachers and students as well as the students themselves. Therefore, this study employed semi-structured interviews, classroom focus group discussions, structured classroom observations and document analysis to identify critical information of how structured classroom activities can enhance the key collaborative skills, and support the classroom environment for learning.

### **The role of positive reinforcement in fostering confidence and empathy**

Positive reinforcement is a crucial element in shaping students' social development, particularly in building their confidence and fostering empathy. Teachers who actively recognize and reward positive behaviors create a supportive environment that encourages students to engage more confidently and empathetically with their peers. Positive reinforcement operates as both a motivational and developmental tool, helping students internalize values such as respect and kindness while building their self-esteem. In this study, the focus on positive reinforcement highlighted its transformative role in shaping students' social interactions and emotional growth. The interviews with teachers revealed that consistent acknowledgment of students' efforts and achievements played a significant role in boosting their confidence. Teachers emphasized the importance of praising students for their progress, no matter how small, as a way of encouraging further participation and reducing fear of failure.

*"I always make it a point to praise my students when they try something new or take a risk, even if they don't succeed. It shows them that their efforts matter."*

Such practices enable students to develop a sense of self-worth and resilience, which are essential components of confidence. Classroom observations further supported this finding, with teachers frequently using verbal affirmations, such as "great job" or "excellent thinking," during discussions and group activities. The reinforcement of positive behaviors was particularly impactful for students who were initially hesitant to contribute.

*"When my teacher tells me I did well, I feel more confident to speak up next time. It makes me feel like I can do it."*

These responses underscore how positive reinforcement creates a feedback loop that empowers students to engage actively and confidently. The study also highlighted how positive reinforcement fosters empathy among students by modeling and rewarding empathetic behaviors. Teachers reported using praise and recognition to reinforce acts of kindness, cooperation, and understanding among students.

*"Whenever I see a student helping a classmate or showing kindness, I make sure to acknowledge it in front of the class. It sets an example and motivates others to do the same."*

This practice not only validates the students' actions but also normalizes empathetic behavior as a valued social skill. Observations showed that students often mirrored these reinforced behaviors in their interactions. For example, during a group activity, a student was observed assisting a peer struggling with a task.

*"Thank you for helping your friend. That was very thoughtful of you, It feels good when the teacher notices and appreciates when I help someone. It makes me want to do it more."*

This feedback demonstrates how positive reinforcement nurtures empathy by reinforcing its importance in daily interactions. The findings suggest that positive reinforcement is most effective when it is specific, timely, and consistently applied. Teachers who tailored their

reinforcement to individual students' needs reported better outcomes in terms of confidence and empathy development. Moreover, creating a classroom culture that celebrates collective achievements, alongside individual milestones, amplified the benefits of positive reinforcement. This approach encouraged students to appreciate and support each other, further strengthening their social bonds.

### **How teacher empathy and communication style influence peer relationships**

Teacher empathy and communication style play a critical role in shaping the quality of peer relationships within the classroom. Empathy allows teachers to understand and respond to the emotional and social needs of their students, creating a supportive atmosphere that fosters positive interactions. Similarly, a teacher's communication style whether encouraging, inclusive, or authoritarian can significantly impact how students perceive each other and engage socially. In this study, both factors emerged as pivotal in promoting harmonious peer relationships and reducing conflict among elementary school students. Empathetic teachers are better equipped to identify and address issues that may hinder peer interactions, such as misunderstandings, exclusion, or bullying. By modeling empathetic behavior, teachers set an example for students to emulate, encouraging them to approach their peers with kindness and understanding.

*"When I take the time to listen to my students' feelings and validate their experiences, they learn to do the same for each other."*

This practice not only helps students feel valued but also instills a sense of empathy, which is essential for building strong peer relationships. Classroom observations supported this perspective, showing that teachers who demonstrated empathy often had students who displayed cooperative behaviors and mutual respect. For instance, in one classroom, the teacher intervened in a disagreement by calmly mediating and helping the students understand each other's perspectives.

*"Our teacher always listens to both sides and helps us make up. It makes us feel like friends again."*

This indicates how teacher empathy can directly influence the way students resolve conflicts and maintain positive relationships. A teacher's communication style significantly affects the classroom climate and, by extension, the quality of peer relationships. Teachers who use an inclusive and encouraging communication style create an environment where students feel safe to express themselves and collaborate with others.

*"I make sure to use positive language and involve everyone in discussions. When students see that I value their input, they start valuing each other's opinions as well."*

This approach fosters mutual respect and cooperation among students, laying the groundwork for strong peer connections. Conversely, an authoritarian communication style may lead to tension and competition, undermining peer relationships. Observations revealed that in classrooms where teachers were more directive and less inclusive, students were less likely to engage collaboratively and more likely to form cliques. In contrast, classrooms with teachers who encouraged open dialogue and teamwork demonstrated higher levels of peer support and camaraderie.

*"Our teacher always says we should work together and help each other. It makes me feel like my classmates are my team."*

This highlights how a teacher's communication style can create a culture of inclusion that strengthens peer bonds. The combined effect of teacher empathy and a supportive communication style creates a powerful foundation for positive peer relationships. Empathy enables teachers to understand the individual needs of students, while an inclusive communication style ensures those needs are addressed in a way that benefits the entire classroom. Teachers who were both empathetic and communicative reported fewer incidents of conflict and stronger peer dynamics.

*"When I connect with my students emotionally and communicate clearly, I see them doing the same with each other."*

This dynamic was evident during group activities where empathetic teachers used inclusive communication to encourage collaboration. Observations showed that students were more willing to assist each other and celebrate each other's successes in such settings.

*"Our teacher always tells us to be kind and to talk things out if there's a problem. It makes our class feel like a big family."*

These comments emphasize the interconnected roles of empathy and communication in fostering a supportive and inclusive classroom environment.

### **The impact of structured classroom activities on collaborative skills**

Structured classroom activities serve as a powerful tool for developing collaborative skills among students. These activities, designed with clear objectives and defined roles, encourage students to work together, communicate effectively, and resolve conflicts constructively. By participating in tasks that require mutual effort, students learn to appreciate diverse perspectives, adapt to group dynamics, and achieve shared goals. This study found that structured activities were instrumental in fostering teamwork and enhancing interpersonal skills among elementary school students. Activities such as group projects, role-playing, and cooperative problem-solving exercises enable students to experience the value of teamwork firsthand.

*"When students are given tasks that require them to depend on each other, they quickly realize that success comes from working together."*

A group activity where students had to create a classroom mural allowed them to divide tasks, share materials, and discuss ideas collaboratively. This not only improved their ability to work together but also strengthened their interpersonal connections. Students also expressed the benefits of these activities.

*"I like working on group projects because we get to help each other. If someone doesn't understand something, we can explain it."*

This reflects how structured activities provide opportunities for peer teaching and support, essential elements of effective collaboration. Structured activities also play a crucial role in improving communication among students. Clear instructions and defined roles encourage participants to express their ideas, listen to others, and provide constructive feedback. Observations revealed that during a science experiment, students actively discussed their findings, debated hypotheses, and reached consensus through open dialogue.

*"These activities teach students how to express their thoughts clearly and respectfully, which is an important skill for collaboration."*

Structured activities often require students to navigate conflicts and disagreements. By guiding students to resolve these issues constructively, teachers help them develop critical conflict resolution skills. One teacher recounted,

*"In group activities, I always remind students to focus on solving problems together instead of blaming each other. Over time, I see them learning to compromise and find solutions."*

These skills not only enhance collaboration in the classroom but also prepare students for social interactions outside of school. Structured classroom activities often emphasize shared responsibility, which fosters empathy and mutual respect among students. When students collaborate on tasks with shared objectives, they develop a sense of accountability not only for their contributions but also for the group's overall success.

*"When we work together, I feel like we're a team, and I don't want to let my friends down."*

This sense of shared responsibility encourages students to support each other and strengthens their bonds. Teachers also highlighted how structured activities helped students develop empathy.

*"When students work together, they start to understand each other's strengths and challenges. It's amazing to see them encouraging and helping each other."*

Observations confirmed this, as students often cheered for their peers during group presentations or offered assistance during collaborative tasks. The collaborative skills gained through structured activities extend beyond the classroom, equipping students with the tools to navigate social and professional settings in the future. Teachers emphasized the importance of these skills in preparing students for real-world scenarios.

*"Structured activities not only help students work together now but also teach them how to collaborate effectively in any situation, whether it's in their families, communities, or future workplaces."*

This highlights the lasting impact of fostering teamwork and collaboration at an early age. Students also recognized the long-term benefits of collaboration.

*"I feel more confident working with others because I've learned how to share ideas and listen to my friends."*

This confidence in collaborative skills suggests that structured activities lay a solid foundation for interpersonal success as students grow and face more complex social challenges.

In this research, the author examined how structural classroom activities affect the development of team work among learners in the elementary school. By focusing on teacher-led, well-organized group tasks, it addressed an important gap in the literature: the processes by which those structured form of lessons directly impacts on social and collaborative skills. Previous research has stressed the value of cooperative learning in the improvement of teamwork and communication (Filippou et al., 2022; Riivari et al., 2021), but little practical information is available about the differentiation of teacher strategies or students' behaviors in elementary classrooms.

Prior research on CPSL mainly focuses on higher learning environments or unscripted peer relations. According to Saleem et al (2021) social constructivist theory, learning with peers is essential to the learning process, but these theories do not elicit how teachers' intervention

facilitate this learning process. This study sought to fill this gap by showing that structured classroom activities, which teachers supervise enhance the collaborative skills environment more purposefully.

The study supports and builds on Strode et al. (2022) study which concluded that clear roles and objectives on group tasks improves teamwork. Whereas their work focused on older students, the present study further develops those findings concerning younger learners and may be concluded that elementary students also have much benefit from structured approaches. Additionally, this research extends extant literature by focusing on the moderating effect of teacher empathy and communication regarding group cohesion which is a subject not explored in detail by prior research.

Unlike prior research that mainly exogenously expects peer interactions as the main source of collaboration (Sharma & Mishra, 2022), this study emphasizes the importance of teacher mediation. Co-observations showed that while teachers monitored and accompanied and regulated students' conflicts, the students themselves promoted teamwork and mutual support. The authors directly relate to Taheri & Nazmi (2021), affirming this work's assertion that teacher scaffolding improves interaction quality though they build from this by pinpointing structured classroom activities as the main way in which such scaffolding happens.

Furthermore, perception of teacher empathy was found relevant in determining students' willingness to learn in groups, or groups learning environment. Measured in terms of empathy, the various levels of teacher student interaction fostered the discussion of ideas and the development of a favourable group climate. In addition to supporting teamwork, structured activities introduced students to components of communication and conflict solving being one of the crucial gaps in the literature. In the literature, the cognitive aspects of collaborative learning are already well appreciated while the social processes involved, conflict resolution and peer empathy are understudied. This study adds to this discourse by showing how structured classroom learning activities give students a useful framework when engaging in conflict and consensus building.

The research findings exposed the efficacy of structured activities in the long-term for empowering confidence in collaborative situations. The results showed that the students perceived more preparedness to undertake culture related tasks in group activities within and beyond the classroom. This aligns with Magano et al. (2021) conclusions on it as the transferable skill that develops collaboration in the professional and social domains, but supports the practice of early intervention within elementary education newly proposed here.

The focus of this study on organized activities within the classroom makes the findings particularly useful to teachers. This is to support the development of the virtuous skills of collaboration through goals clarification, roles differentiation and teachers' intervention. Previous studies have supported the framework promoting the use group work, which this research identifies as most effective when carefully structured by the teacher and focused on the teacher-proposed activities.

The findings fit into a gap focusing on culturally sensitive approaches essential in multicultural setting classrooms. Using results and analyzing the students' feedback, the teachers will be able to address the aspects related to social and cultural differences and develop various types of activities that encourage teamwork and interaction among the students. This vision reopens debates regarding equity-focused education systems (Lindenmuth, 2023), of which structured activities are promising to reduce social inequalities.

## Conclusion

The research established both the role of structured classroom activities and their impact on improving elementary school students' collaborative aspirations through the study of teaching interventions and teacher-pupil empathy. The identification of classroom activities supports understanding of effective teamwork and communication while resolving conflicts in learning environments thus advancing our knowledge of social development processes in educational contexts. This study contributes both theoretical concepts to collaborative learning research as well as practical guidelines for teacher engagement and task development for enhancing peer relationships in learning environments.

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