

Social skills of elementary school-aged children in urban areas: A sample in Bandung-Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to evaluate social skills in elementary school-age children. This research was conducted using a survey method of 507 elementary school-age children in urban areas (Bandung-Indonesia). This study uses a social skills rating scale with its aspect referring to the theory of Gresham and Elliott [1] which consists of 5 aspects (cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control). Data analysis in this study uses descriptive statistics to calculate the percentage of social skills. The results of this study show that the social skills of elementary school-age children in Bandung are in the category of fairly good with an average of 3,25 or 81,21%. This shows that elementary school students in Bandung can interact well but sometimes need further support and guidance. The aspect with the highest achievement was empathy, with an average of 3,37 or 84,19% (good), and the aspect with the lowest achievement was self-control, with an average of 3,06 or 76,50% (fairly good). Then, other aspects are cooperation (3,25 or 81,18%), assertiveness (3,24 or 81,02%), and responsibility (3,33 or 83,18%). This research is an important picture related to social skills in elementary school children in urban areas (Bandung-Indonesia), and this is the basis for designing appropriate interventions for social skills development in elementary school children.

Keywords: Elementary school-aged children, Social skills, Survey method, Urban areas.

1. Introduction

Psychologists agree that childhood is referred to as group age. In the early years of children (pre-school), the basics of social behavior begin to be learned as a provision for children to face the next social life, and by the end of the child (elementary school-age), they already have the desire to be accepted (self-adjustment) by peers as members of their group [2]. This view from Hurlock [2] is the basis that peer acceptance as an indicator of children's social competence at elementary school-age is described in various studies [3]. In addition, peer acceptance is the key for children to make friendships with their friends.

Peer relationships are an important task for children in achieving social development [4]. These peer relationships help children achieve other tasks, such as the development of social skills, rational awareness, and values, learning good social attitudes, and achieving personal independence. Havighurst [4] emphasizes the importance of children having good social skills, which will help them adapt to the social environment, build healthy and positive relationships, and become the foundation for achieving success in the future. Social skills are the key that children must have with regard to their social development tasks [5] and this is also a necessity for them [6] because social skills are the basis for children to interact and establish relationships with others.

Social skills play an effective role in an individual's communication with themselves and others, exhibiting several behaviors such as responsibility, solidarity, sharing, obeying rules, making friends, solving problems, controlling emotions, and working together [7]. Social skills are an important part that needs to be developed in the phase of child development [8, 9]. The reason is that social skills have an impact on academic achievement [10-13]. It has been explained to Piaget that social interaction has a positive impact on children's cognitive

development. In addition, Willem Doise, who is a professor of experimental psychology, explained that cognitive development is based on the reality of the social environment. Doise also explained that only social interaction and interpersonal interaction with peers and adults can develop cognitive structures in children [14]. In another view, Dewey also argues that effective education comes from social interaction, cooperation, and collaboration [15].

Teachers' assessments of the importance of having social skills for children have been shown to be stable throughout elementary school levels [16]. High-achieving children consistently score higher in social skills and lower in problematic (social) behaviors [17]. Social skills will also have an impact on social functioning, including avoiding negative behaviors [18-20]. Low social skills cause children to have negative social behaviors, and this has an impact on motivation that is also low in various areas [7] decreased self-confidence and self-esteem [21] difficulty in engaging in the learning process at school [22] or according to Mash and Barkley [23] also has an impact on externalization disorders such as delinquency and behavioral disorders [24] included in schools [25]. This indicates that social skills are an important part that must be developed in children.

Children and adolescents face problems related to low social skills, and this affects various aspects of their lives such as academics, social relationships, and overall well-being [26]. Research from Matson, et al. [27] shows that about 10-15% of children during the school year will be ostracized by their peers [27]. In addition, frequent uncontrollable aggressive behavior by peers is the most disliked aspect of children in elementary school [28] and children who are victims (negative social behaviors) also tend to have poor social skills, as do low assertive behaviors [29] and even this has an impact on social exclusion [30]. In addition, cases of violence that often occur in schools are a part that is very related to social skills issues. The Center for Parliamentary Analysis of the Expertise Body of the Secretary General of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia explained the number of violent incidents that occurred in Indonesian schools during 2023 [31]. The data on the cases of violence can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.

Cases of Child Violence in Education Units in Indonesia in 2023.

Releasing Institutions	Period	Number of Cases
Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (SIMFONI-PPA)	January 2023-February 2024	1993
National Commission for Child Protection (Komnas PA)	January-December 2023	3547
Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI)	January-August 2023	2355
Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection	January-December 2023	2325

Based on Table 1, schools are still places where violence occurs. Schools should be safe, comfortable, and fun places for children to develop their potential. In detail, KPAI has also released that 26% of cases of child violence occur in elementary schools. The case needs to be a special concern for policymakers to take preventive measures against violence that occurs in schools. Identifying, evaluating, and developing social skills in children is an important part and solution to preventing violence in schools.

Several studies related to social skills have been conducted, such as the social skills profile of students in one of the elementary schools in Solo [21] and several other studies related to the development of social skills in elementary school students [10, 32, 33]. Overall, this study will evaluate children's social skills at elementary school-age with a more specific subject, namely, in children in urban areas. This is a novelty in research, and there is a need to investigate further how social skills are in elementary school-age children in urban areas. Social skills in this study refer to the theory from Gresham and Elliott [1] which measures five aspects such as cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control [1].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Skills of Elementary School-Age Children

Libet and Lewinsohn [34] offer a more general definition of social skills as the ability to behave in a way that is valued and not behave so that one can be punished or ignored by others [34]. Social skills are socially acceptable learning behaviors that allow individuals to interact with others by generating a variety of positive behaviors and helping to avoid negative responses [1, 35]. Positive behaviors such as joining groups, engaging in interactions, and communicating usually focus on relationships with peers and adults [36, 37].

Social skills are closely related to relational skills, academic skills, self-management skills, compliance skills, and affirmation skills [38]. This means that relational skills are used to interact with others, academic skills are used to learn and achieve a good cognitive level, self-management skills are used to manage and control oneself,

compliance skills are used to follow the rules, and affirmation skills are used to express opinions. Social skills are strongly related to academic achievement, general welfare, adaptation, sanity, and social success [39]. Social skills allow a person to be able to express positive or negative emotions and thoughts in a social environment without losing social support, and it will have a great effect on a child's social-emotional development as well as cognitive and academic skills over a very long period [7].

In practice, social skills are determined based on the measures used to assess their construction. There are a number of measures that refer to norms that focus primarily on social skills or have a dimension of social skills. Social skills are influenced by the characteristics, requirements, and expectations encountered in a particular environment. Then, social skills assessments aim to identify, evaluate, and design intervention programs [40]. Children's social skills need to be assessed in the social environment in which they are active, and they recommend the assessment of children and contextual variables [41]. This social skills assessment aims to understand in detail how a person's social behavior is in their environment, so this assessment is an important part of evaluating and designing appropriate interventions to improve the quality of life of the individual through improving social skills. In assessing social skills, various component aspects are needed. This serves as a clear and structured framework for assessing and measuring a person's social skills. Gresham and Elliott [1] proposed that social skills consist of various aspects of social behavior such as cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control [1].

In detail, In his book Semrud-Clikeman [42] on social competence in children, explains that elementary school-age children are very important to master social skills such as the ability to take turns listening to others speak, demonstrate nonverbally related comprehension, communicate in establishing social interactions, be involved in peer groups, have a sense of humor, entertain, and enjoy playing [42]. At this age, differences of opinion found in social interaction are seen as negative for some children. However, they have also begun to be able to solve problems, such as violations of rules or differences when doing activities together. In addition, there will be many conflicts to be found, and that is precisely with very close friends. However, the conflicts often serve to strengthen relationships and maintain bonds through prosocial and problem-solving strategies. The existence of differences and conflicts signifies the need for other skills that are considered important, such as negotiating, finding solutions, compromising, and disengaging when conflict threatens the relationship.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Designs

This research uses a positivist paradigm. This paradigm seeks to interpret observations in the form of measurable facts or entities [43]. One of the research approaches that is included in the positivist paradigm is quantitative. Quantitative research is an objective, deductive, formal, rigorous, and systematic approach to generating and perfecting knowledge through problem-solving [44]. This is a scientific study that studies phenomena by collecting numerical data, which is then analyzed using statistical methods in both descriptive and inferential forms [45]. Quantitative research has a research design with its research focus on describing, explaining, and predicting specific phenomena using probability sampling and relying on a larger sample size compared to qualitative research [46]. In addition, the purpose of quantitative research is to test hypotheses, see cause and effect, and make predictions, the results are in the form of statistical reports with correlation, comparison of average scores, and statistical significance of findings [47]. This research will use the survey method. The term survey refers to the systematic collection of data regarding samples taken from a specific larger population, and this method is part of the positivist paradigm and quantitative approach [48].

Table 2.
Distribution of Participant Data

Gender		Age		
Man	Woman	11	12	13
218	289	97	364	46
507			507	
43%	57%	19%	72%	9%
100%			100%	

3.2. Participant

Participants were taken using the purposive sampling technique. The use of appropriate sampling techniques is very important to ensure the credibility and reliability of the research [49]. Participants in this study consisted

of 507 elementary school-age children in Bandung (urban areas) aged 11-13 years. The detailed participant data is explained in Table 2.

Based on Table 2, 43% of participants were male (N=218), and 57% were female (N=289). Based on age, 19% (N=97) of participants were 11 years old, 72% (N=364) were 12 years old, and 9% were 13 years old (N=46).

3.3. Instrument

This research instrument uses a rating scale as the main instrument to measure the social skills aspect of elementary school-age children. The social skills aspect refers to Gresham and Elliott [1] namely cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control [1]. The total number of valid and reliable social skills instrument statement items for elementary school students was 77 items, with details of cooperation aspects as many as 24 items, assertive aspects as many as 12 items, responsibility aspects as many as 16 items, responsibility aspects as many as 10 items, and self-control aspects as many as 15 items. The criteria for choosing answers from the social skills statement items use a rating scale from the Likert model, namely suitable, fairly suitable, less suitable, and not suitable. The score of the items from the scale is explained in Table 3.

Table 3.
Likert Scale Item Scores.

Criteria	Item Favorable	Item Unfavorable
Suitable	4	1
Fairly Suitable	3	2
Less Suitable	2	3
Not Suitable	1	4

The rating scale is an important instrument for evaluating the social skills of elementary school children. To get this data, the instrument must be declared valid and reliable. Before the validity and reliability test is carried out, the instrument undergoes an internal and external validity process. It has been validated in terms of construct, content, and face validity. In addition, this instrument has been tested for readability for teachers and 5th-grade elementary school students. The validity and reliability test of the instrument was carried out on 500 respondents (elementary school-age children), while the validity ranged from 0.1-0.6 (table = 0.08). Based on the reliability test, Cronbach's Alpha score of the social skills instrument above is 0.943, which indicates that the reliability of the instrument is in the very high category.

The social skills instruments for elementary school children developed above have a higher level of reliability compared to the standard instruments developed by Gresham and Elliott [1]. The Social Skill Rating System (SSRS) developed by Gresham and Elliott [1] has been piloted on 4170 children (grades 3-6) and adolescents (grades 7-12) in four geographic regions of the United States, spread across the south and north-central regions (more samples) and from the west and northeast (fewer samples) [1]. The SSRS that has been tested has a reliability score of 0.83, which is a very high category. When tested again within the next 1 month, the reliability score becomes 0.68 with a high category [50]. This shows that even though it is in the high category, there is a decrease in the reliability score of the Social Skill Rating System (SSRS) instrument. The instrument developed above is a novel alternative for measuring the social skills of elementary school-aged children (ages 9-13), and it allows it to continue to be piloted in larger populations and reviewed from a wide range of diversity and characteristics of the sample (gender, background, race, ethnicity, and culture).

3.4. Data Analysis

Data analysis is an activity carried out after data collection with the aim of completely solving the problem being studied. The accuracy of the conclusion in the study is highly determined by the use of analytical tools used by researchers [51]. Children's social skills are seen using the average and percentage.

$$\text{Percentage (\%)} = \frac{\text{Student respondents' scores} \times \text{scale choices}}{\text{Ideal Score Scale}} \times 100$$

Based on the percentages above, the minimum percentage that will be obtained is 25%, and the maximum percentage is 100%. The achievement criteria for the social skills aspect are based on the following calculations $\frac{100\%-25\%}{4} = \frac{75\%}{4} = 18,75\%$. So, the interval of each achievement criterion is 18.75%, The achievement criteria for the social skills aspect are explained in Table 4.

Table 4.
Interpretation of Social Skills Achievement Criteria Score.

Criteria	Average	Percentage
Good	$3.25 < \bar{x} \leq 4.00$	$81.25\% < \% \leq 100\%$
Fairly Good	$2.50 < \bar{x} \leq 3.25$	$62.50\% < \% \leq 81.25\%$
Less Good	$1.75 < \bar{x} \leq 2.50$	$43.75\% < \% \leq 62.50\%$
Not Good	$1.00 < \bar{x} \leq 1.75$	$25\% < \% \leq 43.75\%$

The results of the above percentages are the basis for concluding as a whole, and the results of this data analysis will be linked to various relevant studies.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Social skills of elementary school-age children include a wide range of abilities to interact and relate to others. Then, social skills allow them to adapt to new environments. The social skills measured refer to Gresham and Elliott [1] which includes aspects of cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control [1]. The achievement of this profile can vary from student to student, and various factors influence this.

This social skills profile of elementary school-age children will look at the overall achievement of students' social skills and aspects of their social skills. The achievements can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5.
Social Skills Achievement of Elementary School Children.

Social Skills of Elementary School Students					
Average	3.25				
Percentage	81.21				
Category	Fairly Good				
Aspect	Cooperation	Assertiveness	Responsibility	Empathy	Self-control
Average	3.25	3.24	3.33	3.37	3.06
Percentage	81.18	81.02	83.18	84.19	76.50
Category	Fairly Good	Fairly Good	Good	Good	Fairly Good

Based on Table 5, the overall achievement of social skills of elementary school-age children is 3,25 or 81,21% (fairly good). Based on each aspect, empathy is the aspect with the highest achievement, with an average of 3,37 or 84,19% (good), and self-control is the aspect with the lowest achievement, with an average of 3,06 or 76,50% (fairly good). In addition, the cooperation aspect got an average of 3,25 or 81,18% (fairly good), assertiveness got an average of 3,24 or 81,02% (fairly good), and responsibility got an average of 3,33 or 83,18% (good). Based on the results, students can interact socially well but sometimes need further support and guidance. In addition, the social skills aspect of elementary school students in Bandung shows that sometimes students still have difficulty working together consistently, lack confidence in expressing their opinions, and have difficulty controlling their emotions and behaviours. However, they can take responsibility for their actions and obligations and empathize with others.

4.2. Discussion

Based on the results, the social skills of elementary school-age children in urban areas (Bandung-Indonesia) are in the category of fairly good, with an average 3,25 or of 81,21%. The aspect with the highest achievement was empathy, with an average of 3,37 or 84,19% (good). The empathy aspect is defined as the ability to understand and adapt to others without being personally involved in their feelings. Individuals who have good empathy are able to understand and care about the thoughts and feelings of others as they feel and think. The most prominent indicator and the highest level of empathy is understanding the characteristics of friends. Overall, empathetic behavior is closely related to individual behavior and social behavior [52]. This has an impact on attitudes and relationships between groups in terms of interaction [53]. Elementary school children have been taught empathy from simple things, such as visiting friends who are sick, lending stationery to friends, understanding each other, and helping each other. Training children to have a good empathetic attitude will have an impact on the achievement of their overall social skills [54].

In addition, the aspect with the lowest achievement is self-control, with an average of 3,06 or 76.50% (fairly good). Self-control is defined as the ability to regulate, guide, manage, and direct any behavior that leads to a positive impact or how individuals behave to inhibit negative impacts. Self-control allows individuals to inhibit

certain urges in order to avoid immoral behavior. A person who has good self-control is able to control emotions, motivate themselves, and always behave positively. Self-control is essential in demonstrating constructive behavior, helping to avoid violations of the rules of the family, school, and community environment. In some views, self-control is a very important part of children's elementary school education [55] because this aspect will affect social competence and positive relationships with peers and adults [56]. At elementary school-age, they are still learning about self-control (controlling emotions, motivating themselves, and behaving positively). This is also reinforced by the explanation of the Ministry of Education and Culture that children begin to realize that what others do not like is venting rude expressions. In addition, in the context of elementary school, children will practice controlling themselves in dynamics and group interaction both in and out of the classroom [57].

Experts strongly agree that children must learn to socialize (social interaction) in order for them to develop optimally. Positive socialization (i.e., teaching children to cooperate, get along well, and share) is one of the goals of the educational program [58]. Adler believed that humans are essentially social beings and that human behavior can be understood in a social context [59]. School is an important social context for children where social expectations and norms are applied, children can engage in classroom activities by organizing themselves and interacting harmoniously with peers and teachers [60]. Peer relationships are particularly influential during elementary school, as children engage in activities, spend much time at school, and play to interact with others their age [61]. Social relationships have a profound impact on psychosocial [62] and this has been identified as an important factor among elementary school-age children. For example, children who have positive social relationships (friendships, peer acceptance, and peer support) tend to feel more positive about school [63].

The social development of children in the elementary school-age phase is marked by the expansion of relationships, namely with peers and teachers, so that the space for their social relationships becomes wider [57]. The expansion of these social relationships requires special abilities such as emotional regulation and social skills [42] and these skills are an important foundation for initiating friendships [64]. Children need social skills, especially in elementary school, to get along with others and establish good relationships [65]. Social skills are an important aspect of effective schooling [20]. One of the non-cognitive factors that play a role in students' success in school is social skills [66]. Social skills are also seen as having a very close relationship with school adjustment in childhood and adolescence and have a relationship with work competence in adulthood [67, 68].

Social skills have a positive impact on the socialization process among children at school, affecting the way they interact, including in their communication and behavior toward others [69]. In a study conducted by Lane, et al. [70] that the majority of teachers view at least seven things related to social skills that are very important for students' success in the classroom, namely 1) following directions, 2) paying attention to instructions, 3) controlling temperament with peers, 4) controlling temperament with adults, 5) getting along with different people, 6) respond appropriately when hit, and 6) acceptably use leisure time [70].

Given the length of time spent at the school level, especially in elementary school, and most of the activities require socialization and interaction, stakeholders (teachers, parents, individuals/children) are obliged to provide input on various activities that support the development of social skills [71]. All elementary schools should provide direct instruction and interventions related to social skills Pelco and Reed-Victor [9]. UNICEF [72] has also explained that there are demands from society and politics to teach social skills in educational institutions on the grounds that social skills are part of life skills [72]. Social skills gradually develop through childhood and adolescence [73]. Thus, acquiring and developing social skills is important during elementary school, and this becomes the foundation of educational life for children [74].

4.3. Limitations

This study has several limitations, including 1) although the participants of this study consist of 507 children, it is necessary to see how the socio-economic and cultural context affects the achievement of social skills, 2) the participants are only taken from 1 city (Bandung), and certainly cannot be a complete conclusion related to other cities in Indonesia, 3) this study only uses 1 instrument (rating scale) to evaluate social skills so that this can limit conclusions and cause bias. These limitations highlight the need for further research to adopt a more comprehensive approach to evaluating the social skills of elementary school-age children both in urban and rural areas, and the need for more comprehensive research on appropriate interventions in developing children's social skills at elementary school-age.

5. Conclusion

The social skills of elementary school-age children in urban areas (Bandung-Indonesia) are fairly good, with an average of 3,25 or 81,21%. This shows that elementary school students in Bandung can interact well but

sometimes need further support and guidance. The empathy aspect got the highest achievement, with an average of 3,37 or 84,19% (good), and the aspect with the lowest achievement was self-control, with an average of 3,06 or 76.50% (fairly good). Other aspects are cooperation got an average of 3,25 or 81,18% (fairly good), assertiveness got an average of 3,24 or 81,02%, and responsibility got an average of 3,33 or 83.18% (good). From this study, schools must strive to take a proactive approach to social skills development, especially to remind children of the aspect of self-control because this is considered an important aspect. However, in practice, children are still learning and need direct guidance related to self-control, self-motivation, and positive behavior. Social skills are indispensable to achieving social resilience. They need to be taught, learned, and practiced in a specific environment and generalized to other environments broadly.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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