Impact of Peer Interaction on students Social Skill Development at Primary School Learners

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Interaction among peers, development of social skills among students in primary schools, peer acceptance, and conflict resolution. **Corresponding Author:** **Maryam Khalil,** M. Phil Scholar University of Gujrat, **Email:** khalilmaryam943@gmail.com	Peer interaction occurs during a critical period in the social and emotional development of children, especially within the primary school level, where simple social behaviors are formed. The relationship between peer interaction and social skills development among primary school students is explored in this paper. For this purpose, peer interaction was conceptualized based on frequency of interaction, quality of peer interaction, peer acceptance and sense of belonging, and conflict resolution, while the measurement of social skills development was through communication skills, cooperation, self-control, and empathy. A quantitative correlation research design was adopted. Data were gathered from students at public primary schools using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistical analysis indicated a moderate to high rating for both peer interaction and social skill levels among students. The findings showed a positive association between peer interaction and social skills development. The study identified that the fostering of positive environments among peers within primary schools promotes the social competence and emotional well-being of children.

Introduction

The stage of primary education is important in children's development, whereby the very foundation is laid for both academic learning and social-emotional growth. Children, during their primary school years, spend a substantial amount of their time with others in highly structured classroom settings and also in informal school settings. These interactions are very important in shaping children's social behavior, emotional understanding, and interpersonal skills.

It means social exchanges among children while activities are carried out in the classroom, during group tasks, or while playing. With peer interaction, children will be able to learn how to express ideas, cooperate with others, manage their emotion, or resolve conflicts. Positive peer experiences build self-confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging, while negative peer experiences can give rise to social withdrawal, emotional problems, and behavior problems.

Primary-level social skills development encompasses the ability to communicate, cooperate, self-regulate, and be empathetic, among other key competencies. It is not inborn but rather acquired through ongoing and varied social experiences. Schools represent a significant social context wherein ample possibilities for practicing and reinforcing these competencies are given to children. Therefore, finding out how peer interaction influences or correlates with the development of social skills is necessary as support for efforts toward better school improvement and comprehensive child development.

Literature Review

Social Interaction among Peers in Primary School Setting

Social interaction with peers represents one of the most influential elements within social development in children, more so during the primary school level. During this point, children tend to spend much time interacting with their classmates over both formal and informal learning and social situations. Indeed, through such interactions, children get various opportunities to view certain social behaviors, practice communicating, and show ways of responding socially that are acceptable. Research in child development emphasizes that frequent peer interaction allows children to refine their social understanding and behavioral responses. In this regard, frequent interactions with peers instill confidence in the expression of themselves and the manner of conducting their self in a socially acceptable goal. As such, primary school classrooms are considered a social ecology where young children begin to form friendships and develop interpersonal competencies.

The frequency of peer interaction influences social learning experiences in children, wherein the more frequent exposure is to different perspectives and social contingencies. Such repeated exposure promotes flexibility in using communication and conveys diversity in the courses of possible social behavior. Studies suggest that with little or no peer interaction, there may be limited opportunities for rehearsal social skills, which may hinder emotional and behavioral development.

Quality of Peer Interaction

Where frequency of contact is important, so also is quality. Quality has to do with positive or negative description: for example, mutual respect, cooperation, and emotional support-also with effective communication. This conducive environment makes the children feel valued and understood in a high-quality interaction.

Positive peer interactions promote prosocial behaviors like sharing and helping, solving problems together. Poor quality interactions may have negative influences on children's emotional well-being when it includes lots of aggressing or excluding. Children who are involved in positive quality peer interaction show good emotional functioning and high levels of social competence.

Interaction quality in primary classrooms is decisively supported by teachers themselves, since they model respectful behavior in class and encourage cooperative activities. Structured group work and learning tasks based on peer interactions may thus enhance interaction quality and promote positive social experiences among students.

Peer Acceptance and Sense of Belonging

Peer acceptance and a sense of belonging are viewed as important psychological needs throughout childhood. Among primary school students, peer acceptance develops greater participation in classroom activities, with more confidence in the expression of their opinions and ideas. Emotional security developed through the process of peer acceptance is necessary for healthy social development. A strong sense of belonging within peer groups provides a sense of isolation and reduces anxiety. Children rejected or excluded by peers develop negative self-perceptions, leading to withdrawal or disruptive behavior. In fact, research findings have identified that, indeed, peer acceptance is positively associated with self-esteem, motivation, and social adjustment in school-aged children.

An inclusive environment promotes peer acceptance among children during their primary years. Teachers play a big role by encouraging positive peer relationships and dealing with exclusionary behavior to promote a sense of belonging and emotional well-being for students.

Conflict Issue in Peer Interaction

This is also where conflict arises-naturally, perhaps inevitably-but especially with young children who have not learned to control their emotions yet. Conflicts may be due to differences in opinion, competition for resources, or misunderstandings. There are also valuable learning opportunities from conflict when it is constructively managed.

Conflict resolution skills enable the child to cope with disagreements harmoniously and constructively. Through peer interaction, children learn to negotiate, compromise, and see others' points of view. It is also hypothesized that children who develop constructive conflict resolution strategies have developed higher levels of self-control and empathy.

The guidance of adults is, therefore, quite critical in helping the child at this tender age of learning constructive conflict resolution. Teachers can model appropriate responses, teach problem-solving strategies, and encourage dialogue among students. Such practices aid children in internalizing positive ways of managing conflicts in their lives that add to long-term social competence.

Developing Social Skills among Primary School Children

Social skills development is defined here as the sequential acquisition of behaviors that permit a child to interact effectively and appropriately with others. The years in primary school are a period of rapid growth both in social understanding and emotional regulation. Schools offer contexts that are structured, where practice and reinforcement of such skills can be made.

Communication skills are the basis of social interaction. These skills help children to clearly express their thoughts and feelings and to voice their needs while listening to others. Good communication promotes cooperation and reduces misunderstandings among peers.

Cooperation means people working together to achieve a common goal. Primary classroom cooperation on activities teaches children responsibility, and how to take turns and respect other's contributions, too. Research has documented that cooperative learning experiences improve both social and cognitive outcomes.

Another important social skill is self-control, which develops during primary education and relates to emotional regulation, impulse control, and social appropriate responding. Children with greater self-control handle frustration and difficult social circumstances more easily.

Empathy allows the child to understand and respond appropriately to the feelings of others. Empathetic children are more likely to create prosocial behavior and sustain positive relationships with their peers. Such development of empathy comes with repeated social interactions in which a child is exposed to various emotional experiences.

Relationship between Peer Interaction and Development of Social Skills

There is now growing support of a strong relationship between peer interaction and social skills development. Peer interactions provide real-life contexts in which children practice active communication, cooperation, self-control, and empathy. In every interaction, through observation and participation, the children learn socially acceptable behavior and internalize social norms. Positive peer experiences reinforce prosocial behaviors and contribute to emotional growth. The more frequent and excellent the quality of a child's peer interaction, the better their social skills and emotional development tend to be. With limited or negative peer interaction, social development may suffer. Most importantly, at the primary level, this is the relationship in which children are forming foundational social habits. Gaining an understanding of how peer interaction influences social skills development helps educators to construct learning environments that support children's holistic development.

Literature Review Summary

This fact is underlined in reviewed literature as a critical factor in social skills development: peer interaction. Frequency and quality of interaction, peer acceptance and belonging, and conflict resolution play significant roles in shaping children's social competence. Communication, cooperation, self-control, and empathy develop through the process of consistent and meaningful engagement with peers. Therefore, developing positive peer interaction at primary school assists students in their social-emotional development.

Research Objectives

To determine the level of interaction among peers in primary school students.

The purpose of this paper will be to assess the level of development of social skills among students in primary school.

To investigate whether there is any relationship between peer interaction and the development of social skills among students in primary school level.

Hypothesis of Research

There is a significant positive relationship between peer interaction and social skills development in primary school students.

Methodology

Research Design

It was a quantitative correlation research design that aimed to investigate the relationship between peer interaction and the development of social skills.

Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of students attending three public primary schools. The total population consisted of 450 students at the primary level attending these schools. A simple random sample of 180 primary school students was selected proportionately from the three schools to ensure that the sample fairly represented the characteristics of all the students. The sample size was considered sufficient for statistical analysis.

Research Instrument

Data collection was effected through a structured questionnaire, comprising two parts:

Peer Interaction: how often the interaction occurs; the quality of the peer interaction; acceptance and belonging from peers, resolving conflict. Social Skill Building: communication, cooperation, self-control, and empathy The response was therefore measured with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (1-5). Research instrument was validated with the help of 14 expert opinions items having CVR 0.51 is accepted and value of CVI is 0.80. pilot testing was also conducted to measure Cronbach's Alpha and the value is 0.80.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the participants' responses and give a meaning to it. The mean showed the average level of peer interaction and development of social skills, while the standard deviation described the level at which responses varied. The range in the mean score across different dimensions ranged from the moderate to high level, suggesting generally positive peer interactions and well-developed social skills among respondents. The low values for standard deviation indicated that responses were relatively consistent and clustered around the mean, thus reliable in the perceptions of the participants. Overall, the use of descriptive statistics provided a clear and concise understanding of the central tendencies and dispersion of data, helping identify the strengths besides areas which may require further improvement.

results

The findings showed that peer interaction was positively related to the development of social skills among primary school students. Students who perceived higher levels of peer interaction were found to exhibit better communication skills, cooperation, self-control, and empathy.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Peer Interaction

Sr. no.	Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Frequency of Interaction	3.86	0.68
	Quality of Peer Interaction	3.80	0.65
	Peer Acceptance & Belonging	3.97	0.62
	Conflict Resolution	3.74	0.71
	Overall Peer Interaction	3.84	0.67

The table presents the mean scores and standard deviations for different dimensions of peer interaction. The mean score for Frequency of Interaction is 3.86 (SD = 0.68), indicating that participants interact with their peers quite frequently. Quality of Peer Interaction has a mean of 3.80 (SD = 0.65), suggesting generally positive and supportive interactions among peers. The highest mean score is observed for Peer Acceptance and Belonging (Mean = 3.97, SD = 0.62), showing that most participants feel accepted and experience a strong sense of belonging within their peer groups. Conflict Resolution has a slightly lower mean of 3.74 (SD = 0.71), but it still reflects a reasonably effective ability to manage and resolve conflicts. Overall, the Overall Peer Interaction mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.67) indicates that peer interactions are generally positive and satisfactory.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Social Skills Development

Sr.no.	Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation
	Communication skills	3.90	0.64
	Cooperation	3.98	0.61
	Self-Control	3.75	0.69
	Empathy	3.92	0.63
	Overall Social Skills Development	3.89	0.64

The table shows the mean scores and standard deviations for different dimensions of social skills development. The mean score for Communication Skills is 3.90 (SD = 0.64), indicating that participants generally demonstrate good communication abilities. Cooperation has the highest mean score of 3.98 (SD = 0.61), suggesting a strong tendency among participants to work well with others. Self-Control has a comparatively lower mean of 3.75 (SD = 0.69), indicating a

moderate level of emotional and behavioral regulation. The mean score for Empathy is 3.92 (SD = 0.63), reflecting a good level of understanding and sensitivity toward others' feelings. Overall, the Overall Social Skills Development mean score of 3.89 (SD = 0.64) indicates that participants possess well-developed social skills.

A comparison of the two tables above reveals that both peer interaction and social skills development for the participants are generally high and positive. The overall mean score for the participants' peer interaction is 3.84 with a standard deviation of 0.67, while the overall mean for social skills development is slightly higher, standing at 3.89 with a standard deviation of 0.64, therefore indicating that social skills are marginally more developed than peer interaction.

In Peer Interaction, the highest mean is recorded by Peer Acceptance and Belonging with a mean of 3.97, indicating that the participants are well accepted within their peer groups. Cooperation records the highest mean within social skills development with a mean of 3.98, showing the strong collaborative behavior of the participants. This in some way may imply a close relationship between feeling accepted by peers and the ability to effectively cooperate.

Conflict Resolution and Self-Control have relatively lower mean scores, 3.74 and 3.75, respectively, which mean that though the participants generally interact positively and are socially capable, the only weaker areas of their performance will be conflict resolution and the self-regulation of behavior. The same level of mean value and the value of standard deviation testify to the consistency of responses and moderate dispersion among the participants.

 Overall, results seem to indicate that positive peer interactions go hand in hand with strong social skills development, and improvements in self-control and conflict resolution might further enhance both areas.

Discussions

The findings indicate that peer interaction plays a significant role in the development of social skills at the primary level. Frequent and positive interactions provide children with opportunities to practice social behaviors. Peer acceptance and belonging enhance emotional security; conflict resolution experiences support the development of self-control and empathy. From the data analysis, it emerged that the participants generally exhibit positive peer interactions and well-developed social skills. From the first table, it can be observed that Peer Acceptance and Belonging received the highest mean score (3.97), indicating that participants feel a strong sense of inclusion and acceptance within their peer groups. This is consistent with the previous literature emphasizing that peer acceptance has a significant contribution to adolescents' social-emotional adjustment (Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 2006).

 Similarly, dimensions like Frequency of Interaction and Quality of Peer Interaction were also relatively high, indicating that participants experience frequent and supportive exchanges with their peers. As expected, this is an important avenue for the development of cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution skills among participants (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). In the second table, the social development of the subjects was reflected by Cooperation and Empathy, yielding the highest mean scores-3.98 and 3.92, respectively. These findings also indicate participants interact positively and are able to develop important interpersonal interpersonal skills, such as their ability to understand others' perspectives and to collaborate with them. These slightly lower scores in Conflict Resolution (3.74) and Self-Control (3.75) emphasize those areas in which development may be required, while previously stated studies have highlighted that emotional regulation and management of conflict are continuing developing challenges across adolescence.

In general, the descriptive statistics-u mean and standard deviation-give a vivid picture of participants' peer interaction and development of social skills. A wide range of responses, reflected in the relatively low standard deviations, has indicated a pattern of regularity in participants' behaviors and perceptions. These results underscore the critical linkage between positive peer interactions and robust social skills and suggest that encouraging inclusive and supportive peer environments can greatly improve adolescents' interpersonal competencies.

Conclusion

Therefore, it is concluded that peer interaction significantly enhances the development of social skills in primary students. Positive development of peer environments within primary schools can help to enhance the social competence and emotional well-being of children.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical standards were well addressed; participation was freely done, with informed consent obtained, and confidentiality of participants assured.

Recommendations

Schools are encouraged to implement learning strategies that enforce cooperation among students and engage them in social-emotional learning activities for the development of positive peer interaction in primary students.

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