

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SIXTH GRADE STUDENTS DURING LEARNING INTERACTIONS IN AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

¹Nikeisha Nauri Desveliksa, ²Feti Kumala Dewi, ³Intan Dyah Rahmawati

¹Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto

^{2,3}Universitas Harapan Bangsa

Email: nikeizhanauri@gmail.com, fetikumala@uhb.ac.id, intandyah@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Social emotional development is an important aspect of the learning process in elementary schools because it influences students' ability to interact with others, regulate their emotions, and participate effectively in learning activities. **Objectives:** This study aimed to describe the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students in the context of learning interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka. **Methods:** This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design. The study participants consisted of 51 sixth-grade students. Data were collected using a social-emotional development questionnaire covering six dimensions: self-awareness and emotional security, emotional regulation skills, the need for social support and attachment, empathy and social concern, independence and responsibility, and student-teacher relationships. Data were analyzed descriptively using mean, standard deviation, median, and categorical assessment scores. **Results:** The results indicated that the overall social-emotional development of sixth-grade students was categorized as good, with a mean score of 74.55. The dimensions of student-teacher relationships and the need for social support and attachment demonstrated the highest achievement levels. Meanwhile, the dimensions of self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy were categorized as moderate, with a tendency toward good performance. **Conclusions:** In conclusion, supportive learning interactions and positive teacher-student relationships are essential factors in promoting the social-emotional development of elementary school students. Therefore, creating a positive and supportive classroom environment should be prioritized to enhance students' social and emotional competencies.

Keywords: Learning Interactions; Social Emotional Development

INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional development plays a crucial role in elementary education because it is closely related to students' ability to interact positively with others, regulate their emotions, and participate effectively in the learning process. Students who demonstrate well-developed social-emotional skills tend to exhibit higher learning motivation, stronger collaboration with peers, and behaviors that align with school norms and regulations. Therefore, strengthening social-emotional competencies has become an integral component of achieving the objectives of elementary education (Nengsih et al., 2024).

Sixth-grade students are in the final stage of childhood development, characterized by increased self-awareness, a stronger need for social acceptance, and more advanced social reasoning abilities. At this stage, students encounter more complex academic and social demands, both in their relationships with peers and in their interactions with teachers. Consequently, sixth-grade students become more sensitive to classroom learning situations and social dynamics, making an understanding of their social-emotional development particularly important (Boeriswati, E, 2024).

The classroom learning process serves as the primary environment for the development of students' social-emotional competencies. Through learning activities such as discussions, group work, and teacher–student interactions, students learn to regulate their emotions, respect the perspectives of others, and take responsibility for assigned tasks and classroom rules. However, in many elementary school settings, students' social-emotional development has not yet received optimal attention. Educational assessments continue to focus primarily on cognitive achievement, while students' social-emotional conditions are often not systematically and comprehensively documented (Aprilyani et al., n.d.).

Several studies have demonstrated that social-emotional development among elementary school students remains an area requiring considerable attention within educational practice. A study conducted by (Nur Faizah & Irmawati Liliana, 2025) found that some elementary school students still experience difficulties in regulating emotions, demonstrating empathy, and establishing healthy social interactions during learning activities. The study also emphasized that the quality of teacher–student interactions plays a significant role in fostering students'

emotional security and social behavior. These findings suggest that social-emotional development should be intentionally integrated into the learning process, particularly for upper-grade students who are experiencing developmental transitions.

Social and emotional problems among elementary school students continue to be an important issue in education. (Hartati, 2023) reported that social and emotional difficulties often affect both learning outcomes and students' psychological well-being. The study highlighted the importance of support from the school environment, particularly through learning interactions and teacher guidance, in helping students regulate emotions and develop positive social behaviors. These findings indicate that understanding students' social-emotional conditions should be a priority in elementary education.

Previous research has also shown that strengthening social-emotional competencies can be supported through literacy-integrated learning practices. (Widiastuti, 2022) found that reading habits, particularly exposure to reading materials containing social and emotional values, contribute positively to empathy development, emotional regulation, and the quality of students' social interactions. These findings underscore the importance of a supportive learning environment and the teacher's role in integrating social-emotional literacy into classroom instruction. This evidence further highlights the need to map students' social-emotional conditions, especially among upper-grade elementary school students who are undergoing developmental transitions.

Furthermore, social-emotional development is influenced by multiple factors originating from both family and school environments. (Rachmawaty & Bahiroh, 2025) found that parenting skills significantly affect children's social and emotional interaction skills. Positive parenting practices and emotional support within the family contribute to children's ability to regulate emotions and interact socially at school. However, the study also emphasized that children's social-emotional development is influenced not only by family factors but also by classroom interactions and the broader school environment, indicating the need for further investigation within the context of classroom learning.

Social-emotional learning has been widely recognized as an essential component of elementary education because it contributes to students' character formation and holistic development. A literature review conducted by (Ismatun Nisak et al., 2024) demonstrated that social-emotional

learning positively influences social skills, emotional regulation, empathy, and academic achievement among elementary school students. The review further indicated that successful implementation of social-emotional learning depends on teacher support, integrated curricula, and conducive learning environments. Nevertheless, various challenges remain in implementing social-emotional learning programs in elementary schools, emphasizing the need for contextual assessments of students' social-emotional conditions within classroom learning environments.

Similarly, (Qomariyah & Iswatiningsih, 2025) found that teachers' roles as role models, facilitators, and providers of learning stimuli contribute significantly to the development of empathy, emotional regulation, participation, and self-confidence among students both inside and outside the classroom. These findings indicate that the quality of teacher–student interactions and a supportive classroom climate are critical factors in fostering emotional security and adaptive social behavior. Therefore, assessing students' social-emotional conditions within the context of learning interactions is particularly relevant for upper-grade elementary school students.

State Elementary School 1 Toyareka has sixth-grade students with diverse characteristics in terms of abilities and backgrounds. In the context of classroom learning, teachers require accurate information regarding students' social-emotional conditions in order to design learning activities that are aligned with their developmental needs. To date, data specifically describing the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students during learning interactions at this school remain limited.

Based on these considerations, this study was conducted to describe the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students during learning interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka. The study focuses on six dimensions: self-awareness and emotional security, emotional regulation, the need for social support and attachment, empathy and social concern, independence and responsibility, and student–teacher relationships. The findings are expected to provide a foundation for teachers and schools in designing more comprehensive learning strategies, creating supportive classroom environments, and optimizing students' overall development.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design. Quantitative research is a systematic method used to examine phenomena through numerical data and statistical analysis, while descriptive research aims to provide an objective and accurate description of a particular phenomenon without manipulating the variables under investigation (Iskandar, A., Fitriani, R., Ida, N., & Sitompul, P. H. S, 2023). This design was selected because the purpose of the study was to describe the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students during learning interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka. The research did not involve any intervention or experimental treatment but rather sought to portray the existing social-emotional conditions of students at the time the study was conducted (Suhardi, M, 2023).

The study was conducted in January 2026 at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka, located in Kemangkong District, Purbalingga Regency, Central Java Province, Indonesia. The school was selected as the research setting because it accommodates students with diverse academic abilities and social backgrounds, making it a suitable context for examining social-emotional development within classroom learning interactions. The target population consisted of all sixth-grade students enrolled during the 2025/2026 academic year. Since the total number of students was relatively small and manageable, a total sampling technique was employed. Total sampling is a sampling method in which all members of the population are included as research participants, allowing researchers to obtain comprehensive information regarding the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, all 51 sixth-grade students were included as respondents in this study.

The research procedure was conducted through four sequential stages. The first stage was preparation, which involved developing the research proposal, obtaining permission from the school administration, and preparing as well as validating the research instrument. The second stage was implementation, during which data were collected by administering a social-emotional development questionnaire to all respondents. The third stage involved data processing, including coding responses, calculating scores, and organizing data for analysis. The final stage consisted of reporting the research findings and discussing the results systematically in accordance with scientific writing standards.

The study utilized primary data collected directly from the respondents. The data focused on students' social-emotional development during learning interactions in the classroom. Data collection was carried out using a social-emotional development questionnaire developed based on indicators of social-emotional competencies commonly observed among elementary school students. The instrument consisted of 24 statements distributed across six dimensions: self-awareness and emotional security, emotional regulation, social support and attachment needs, empathy and social concern, independence and responsibility, and student–teacher relationships. Each dimension was represented by four questionnaire items. The instrument employed a four-point Likert scale adapted to the developmental characteristics of elementary school students, consisting of strongly appropriate, appropriate, less appropriate, and not appropriate response options. According to (Tawakkal, G. T. I., & Subekti, T, 2023), the Likert scale is widely used in educational research because it enables researchers to measure attitudes, perceptions, and behavioral tendencies quantitatively.

The questionnaire was administered directly to students within the school environment. During the data collection process, researchers and teachers provided guidance to ensure that participants clearly understood each statement and completed the questionnaire honestly based on their actual experiences in classroom learning activities. This approach was intended to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the responses obtained.

Data analysis was performed systematically using descriptive statistical techniques. Prior to analysis, all questionnaires were checked for completeness to ensure that no responses were missing. Each response was then assigned a numerical score based on the predetermined scoring system: 4 points for strongly appropriate, 3 points for appropriate, 2 points for less appropriate, and 1 point for not appropriate. The scores for each dimension were calculated by summing the responses to the four corresponding items. Therefore, the minimum possible score for each dimension was 4, while the maximum possible score was 16.

To facilitate interpretation, the total scores for each dimension were classified into three categories of social-emotional development. Scores ranging from 13 to 16 were categorized as good, scores ranging from 9 to 12 were categorized as moderate, and scores ranging from 4 to 8 were categorized as poor. Subsequently, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted by calculating measures of central tendency and variability, including the mean, median, standard deviation, minimum score, and maximum score for each dimension of social-emotional

development. Descriptive statistical analysis is commonly used to summarize and present data in a meaningful manner, allowing researchers to identify patterns and trends within the observed variables (Fitri, A., Rahim, R., dkk, 2023). The findings were presented in the form of frequency distribution tables and descriptive summaries to provide a comprehensive overview of students' social-emotional development.

The results of the analysis were then used to answer the research objectives and to formulate recommendations for educators and schools regarding the development of learning environments that support students' social-emotional growth and well-being.

RESULT

Self-Awareness and Emotional Security of Sixth-Grade Students During Learning Interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Self-Awareness and Emotional Security Among Sixth-Grade Students During Learning Interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Self-Awareness and Emotional Security	51	11,65	1,78	12,00	9–16

The findings regarding the self-awareness and emotional security of sixth-grade students during learning interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka are presented in Table 1. Based on the analysis of 51 respondents, the mean score was 11.65 with a standard deviation of 1.78. The median score of 12.00 indicates that most students' scores were concentrated around the central value of the distribution. The minimum score obtained was 9, while the maximum score reached 16.

According to the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (13–16), moderate (9–12), and poor (4–8), the results indicate that the overall level of self-awareness and emotional security among sixth-grade students falls within the moderate category. These findings suggest

that most students have developed basic abilities to recognize themselves and experience emotional security during learning interactions. However, these competencies have not yet reached an optimal level and still require further development through supportive learning environments and positive classroom interactions.

Emotional Regulation Skills of Sixth-Grade Students During Classroom Learning Activities

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Emotional Regulation Skills Among Sixth-Grade Students During Classroom Learning Activities

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Sixth-Grade Students' Emotional Regulation Skills	51	11,22	1,826	11,00	8–15

The findings regarding the emotional regulation skills of sixth-grade students during classroom learning activities are presented in Table 2. Based on data collected from 51 respondents, the mean score was 11.22 with a standard deviation of 1.83. The median score of 11.00 indicates that most students' emotional regulation scores were concentrated around the central value of the distribution. The minimum score obtained was 8, while the maximum score reached 15.

According to the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (13–16), moderate (9–12), and poor (4–8), the results indicate that the overall emotional regulation skills of sixth-grade students fall within the moderate category. These findings suggest that students have developed basic abilities to control and express their emotions appropriately during classroom learning activities. However, these competencies have not yet reached an optimal level and require further enhancement through supportive learning environments, positive teacher guidance, and opportunities for social-emotional learning experiences.

Social Support and Attachment Needs of Sixth-Grade Students in the School Learning Environment

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Social Support and Attachment Needs Among Sixth-Grade Students in the School Learning Environment

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Social Support and Attachment Needs	51	12,98	1,871	13,00	8–16

The findings regarding the social support and attachment needs of sixth-grade students within the school learning environment are presented in Table 3. Based on data collected from 51 respondents, the mean score was 12.98 with a standard deviation of 1.871. The median score of 13.00 indicates that most students achieved scores at the lower boundary of the good category. The minimum score obtained was 8, while the maximum score reached 16.

According to the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (13–16), moderate (9–12), and poor (4–8), the results indicate that the overall level of social support and attachment needs among sixth-grade students falls within the good category. These findings suggest that most students perceive adequate social support and experience positive attachment relationships within the school environment. Such conditions may contribute to students' sense of belonging, emotional security, and engagement in learning activities, thereby supporting their overall social-emotional development.

Empathy and Social Concern Toward Peers During Learning Activities

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Empathy and Social Concern Toward Peers Among Sixth-Grade Students During Learning Activities

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Empathy and Social Concern	51	12.24	1.607	12.00	6–16

The findings regarding the level of empathy and social concern of sixth-grade students toward their peers during learning activities are presented in Table 4. Based on data collected from 51 respondents, the mean score was 12.24 with a standard deviation of 1.607. The median score of 12.00 indicates that most students' empathy and social concern scores were concentrated around the central value of the distribution. The minimum score obtained was 6, while the maximum score reached 16.

According to the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (13–16), moderate (9–12), and poor (4–8), the results indicate that the overall level of empathy and social concern among sixth-grade students falls within the moderate category, with a tendency toward the good category. These findings suggest that most students demonstrate positive attitudes toward understanding, respecting, and supporting their peers during classroom learning activities, although there remains room for further improvement.

Independence and Responsibility in Completing Tasks and Complying with Learning Rules

Table 5. Frequency Distribution of Independence and Responsibility Among Sixth-Grade Students in Completing Tasks and Complying with Learning Rules

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Independence and Responsibility	51	12.67	2.085	13.00	5–16

The findings regarding the independence and responsibility of sixth-grade students in completing assignments and complying with classroom rules are presented in Table 5. Based on data collected from 51 respondents, the mean score was 12.67 with a standard deviation of 2.085. The median score of 13.00 indicates that most students achieved scores at the lower boundary of the good category. The minimum score obtained was 5, while the maximum score reached 16.

Based on the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (13–16), moderate (9–12), and poor (4–8), the results indicate that the overall level of independence and responsibility among sixth-grade students falls within the good category. These findings suggest that students generally demonstrate the ability to complete learning tasks independently and comply with

classroom regulations, although variations in performance were observed among individual students.

Student–Teacher Relationships During Learning Interactions

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Student–Teacher Relationships Among Sixth-Grade Students During Learning Interactions

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Student–Teacher Relationships	51	13.80	1.400	14.00	10–16

The findings regarding the relationships between sixth-grade students and teachers as authority figures during learning interactions are presented in Table 6. Based on data collected from 51 respondents, the mean score was 13.80 with a standard deviation of 1.400. The median score of 14.00 indicates that most students achieved high scores in their relationships with teachers. The minimum score obtained was 10, while the maximum score reached 16.

According to the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (13–16), moderate (9–12), and poor (4–8), the results indicate that the overall quality of student–teacher relationships falls within the good category. These findings suggest that most students experience positive interactions with their teachers, characterized by trust, support, effective communication, and emotional security within the learning environment.

Social-Emotional Development of Sixth-Grade Students During Learning Interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka

Table 7. Frequency Distribution of Social-Emotional Development Among Sixth-Grade Students During Learning Interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Median	Min–Max
Social-Emotional Development	51	74.55	6.631	74.00	60–89

The findings regarding the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students during learning interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka are presented in Table 7. Based

on data collected from 51 respondents, the mean score was 74.55 with a standard deviation of 6.631. The median score of 74.00 indicates that most students' social-emotional development scores were concentrated around the central value of the distribution. The minimum score obtained was 60, while the maximum score reached 89.

Based on the predetermined assessment categories, namely good (73–96), moderate (49–72), and poor (24–48), the results indicate that the overall social-emotional development of sixth-grade students falls within the good category. These findings suggest that students generally demonstrate positive social-emotional competencies during learning interactions, including self-awareness, emotional regulation, social connectedness, empathy, responsibility, and positive relationships with teachers. Such competencies are essential for supporting students' academic engagement, social adjustment, and overall well-being within the school environment.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka falls within the good category, with a mean score of 74.55 and a median score of 74.00. These results suggest that most students have developed positive social-emotional competencies within the context of classroom learning interactions. From a developmental perspective, these findings are consistent with the characteristics of children in late elementary school age (10–12 years), a stage marked by increasing self-awareness, improved emotional regulation, and more mature social relationship skills (Ardillani & Wulandari, 2022).

Regarding the dimension of self-awareness and emotional security, the mean score of 11.65 indicates that students generally possess the ability to recognize their own feelings and experience a relatively secure emotional environment within the classroom. Emotional security is considered a fundamental prerequisite for effective learning engagement, as students who feel accepted, valued, and respected are more likely to demonstrate self-confidence and actively participate in classroom activities (Hasan, M. F., dkk, 2025). These findings may explain why most students were able to interact positively throughout the learning process.

The dimension of emotional regulation skills yielded a mean score of 11.22, which falls within the moderate category. This result indicates that students are generally capable of managing their emotions during learning activities, although variations in emotional regulation abilities remain evident among individuals. Emotional regulation is a critical developmental competency during the elementary school years, as it contributes to reducing impulsive behaviors and enhancing concentration and academic engagement (Hardianty Nurul Fadyah et al., 2025). Therefore, the findings reflect an ongoing developmental process that may benefit from further reinforcement through instructional practices that intentionally promote social-emotional learning.

For the dimension of social support and attachment needs, the mean score of 12.98 was categorized as good. This finding suggests that students perceive substantial social support from both teachers and peers within the school environment. Theoretically, social attachment during the elementary school years plays a vital role in fostering emotional security, self-confidence, and a sense of belonging. The present findings are consistent with those reported by (Bates & Anderson-Butcher, 2026), who found that emotional support within the school environment significantly contributes to the development of children's social and emotional competencies.

The empathy and social concern dimension produced a mean score of 12.24, indicating a moderate level with a tendency toward the good category. These results suggest that students have developed basic abilities to understand the feelings of others and demonstrate prosocial behaviors, although these competencies have not yet reached their full potential. Empathy is a key component of social-emotional development and is closely associated with the quality of peer interactions and classroom relationships (Aguilar-Planet et al., 2026). The moderate level observed in this study may reflect the fact that empathy develops progressively through repeated social experiences, guided interactions, and continuous practice.

The findings related to independence and responsibility showed a mean score of 12.67, which falls within the good category. This result indicates that most students are capable of completing academic tasks independently and complying with classroom rules and expectations. Independence and responsibility are important developmental competencies

during the final years of elementary education, as they prepare students for the increased academic and social demands of higher educational levels (Octavia, Y. T., dkk, 2023). These findings are supported by the study conducted by Nur Faizah & Irmawati Liliana, (2025), which highlighted that the cultivation of responsibility through classroom learning activities contributes significantly to students' social-emotional development.

Among all dimensions examined, student–teacher relationships achieved the highest mean score (13.80). This finding indicates that students generally experience highly positive and supportive relationships with their teachers. Positive teacher–student relationships have consistently been identified as a key factor in creating a conducive classroom climate and promoting students' social-emotional well-being (Starreveld et al., 2026). Supportive interactions with teachers help students feel valued, emotionally secure, and motivated to participate actively in learning activities. Such relationships may also explain the overall positive social-emotional outcomes observed among the participants in this study.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that classroom learning interactions play a significant role in supporting the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students. These results reinforce the theoretical framework of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which emphasizes the integration of emotional and social competencies within academic learning processes (Lestari et al., 2024). The study provides empirical evidence that supportive learning environments, positive teacher–student relationships, and meaningful peer interactions contribute substantially to students' social-emotional growth. Therefore, social-emotional development should be regarded as an integral component of elementary education and incorporated systematically into classroom practices to promote students' holistic development.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the social-emotional development of sixth-grade students during learning interactions at State Elementary School 1 Toyareka generally falls within the good category. These findings indicate that most students have developed adequate competencies in self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, independence, and the ability to establish positive relationships with teachers and peers within the classroom learning environment.

More specifically, the dimensions of student–teacher relationships and social support and attachment needs demonstrated the highest scores, suggesting that the learning environment and the role of teachers provide students with emotional security and positive social support. Meanwhile, the dimensions of self-awareness and emotional security, emotional regulation, and empathy and social concern were categorized as moderate, with a tendency toward the good category. This indicates that students have developed fundamental competencies in these

areas; however, further support is needed to promote more optimal and consistent development across all students.

The findings suggest that supportive learning interactions, positive teacher–student relationships, and a conducive classroom climate are important factors in fostering the social-emotional development of elementary school students, particularly those in upper grades. Therefore, social-emotional development should be regarded as an integral component of the learning process rather than merely a complementary aspect of education.

Based on these conclusions, this study recommends that schools and teachers integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) more systematically into daily classroom activities through collaborative learning strategies, empathetic communication, and the reinforcement of positive social behaviors. Furthermore, future research is recommended to explore additional factors influencing students' social-emotional development, such as family background, peer relationships, and the implementation of social-emotional learning programs using longitudinal research designs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' developmental trajectories.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING DISCLOSURE

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

NRNN: conception, data curation, investigation, methodology, formal analysis, validation, visualization, writing original draft, writing review and editing.

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