

The Contribution of the Learning Environment to the Social and Emotional Intelligence of Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

The social and emotional development of children in primary school is very important as it influences their ability to interact with others, manage emotions, and form a healthy mindset. One of the main factors affecting this development is the learning environment. A supportive environment, both physically, socially, and psychologically, can have a significant impact on children's development. This research aims to examine the influence of the learning environment on the social and emotional aspects of children in primary school. The method used is a quantitative approach through surveys, observations, and interviews involving students, teachers, and parents regarding the conditions of the learning environment at school and at home. The research results show that factors such as a positive relationship between teachers and students, adequate learning facilities, and emotional support from family have a significant relationship with the development of students' social and emotional skills. These findings emphasize the importance of creating an inclusive and safe environment to support children's overall development. Based on these results, it is recommended that educators and parents pay more attention to environmental elements that can influence children's social and emotional development in elementary schools.

Keywords: Child Development, Learning Environment, Social Development, Emotional Development, Elementary School Children.

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INTRODUCTION

The social and emotional development of children in primary education serves as a foundational pillar in shaping their capacity to form relationships, regulate emotions, and succeed academically. At this developmental stage, children are navigating increasingly complex social landscapes, making the cultivation of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills a critical concern for educators and parents alike. Social-emotional learning (SEL) fosters not only classroom harmony but also prepares students for life beyond the school gates. When children are guided through emotional challenges and provided with opportunities to collaborate, empathize, and resolve conflicts, they develop a resilient psychological framework that supports long-term well-being and academic engagement. In this regard, earlier works such as those by Durlak et al. (2011) and Elias (2015) underscored the centrality of SEL in educational outcomes and personal growth. However, the urgency of this issue remains undiminished, particularly in today's educational climate that increasingly acknowledges emotional wellness as a prerequisite to holistic learning.

The learning environment itself encompassing physical safety, emotional support, and social inclusion plays a pivotal role in nurturing or hindering a child's socio-emotional development. A classroom culture built on mutual respect, secure student-teacher relationships, and inclusive practices provides children with a psychosocial safety net essential for growth. On the contrary, environments marked by stress, exclusion, or authoritarian control tend to inhibit emotional regulation and can exacerbate social maladjustments such as isolation or aggression. Contemporary studies reinforce this understanding. For instance, Taylor et al. (2020) emphasized the role of emotionally safe school climates in mitigating behavioral issues and promoting social integration. Similarly, Cappella and Kim (2022) demonstrated that students exposed to empathetic teaching practices and classroom emotional safety report higher levels of peer connection and emotional security.

Crucially, the teacher's role extends beyond instruction to that of an emotional anchor within the learning space. A teacher who cultivates authentic, supportive relationships with students not only models positive emotional expression but also shapes how students manage conflict and stress. Pianta's (2017) research remains influential, highlighting how consistent, warm teacher engagement curbs disruptive behaviors and fosters emotional resilience. More recent findings have built upon this, with Blom and Farrell (2021) illustrating that sustained teacher-student connectedness enhances both academic persistence and peer relationships. Equally important is the synergy between home and school. Parental involvement, particularly when emotionally attuned and communicative, reinforces the socio-emotional lessons taught at school. Hughes et al. (2020) and Miller et al. (2019) found that children whose parents actively participate in their emotional worlds tend to demonstrate better stress management, emotional vocabulary, and conflict resolution abilities.

Despite a growing consensus around the value of SEL and emotionally supportive environments, many schools continue to fall short in systematically embedding these principles into daily practice. The challenge often lies in structural limitations, overcrowded

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classrooms, lack of SEL training for educators, or fragmented collaboration with families. Yet, inaction poses significant risks to students' emotional development and, by extension, their academic and social success. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the dynamics between school and home learning environments and their influence on primary students' socio-emotional development, with a particular focus on teacher-student rapport, parental involvement, and classroom climate. Such an inquiry aligns with recent scholarship, including Berríos et al. (2021), which calls for integrated educational strategies that position emotional development not as peripheral, but as central to effective pedagogy.

To address these multidimensional factors, the objective of this research is to systematically investigate how both school-based and home-based learning environments contribute to the development of social and emotional competencies among primary school children. This study specifically aims to explore the roles of teacher-student relationships, classroom climate, and parental emotional support in shaping children's ability to manage emotions, build interpersonal relationships, and adapt to social contexts. By identifying key environmental determinants, the research seeks to provide evidence-based insights that can inform more holistic educational practices and policies focused on students' emotional and social well-being.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a quantitative methodology with a descriptive survey design to examine the extent to which the learning environment influences children's social and emotional development in primary schools. Emphasis was placed on exploring the multiple dimensions of this relationship by gathering data from students, teachers, and parents. Such triangulation allowed for a comprehensive perspective that reflects the interplay between classroom dynamics, home environments, and broader community influences. By investigating how these environments affect students' interpersonal interactions and emotional wellbeing, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on school-based developmental psychology.

The study population consisted of fourth and fifth-grade students attending rural primary schools, a demographic often underrepresented in contemporary educational research. Through purposive sampling, the researchers selected 35 students, 15 teachers, and 20 parents, strategically chosen to reflect a diverse spectrum of emotional, social, and academic backgrounds. This sampling strategy was grounded in the belief that nuanced insight into socio-emotional development requires data from individuals who represent contrasting environmental and relational conditions (Patton, 2015). Despite the relatively small sample size, such an approach enhances depth and relevance, allowing researchers to uncover subtle patterns in social functioning within both structured school contexts and familial settings (Kumar et al., 2020).

To measure the constructs under investigation, the research relied on two established instruments: the Learning Environment Quality Scale (LEQS) and the Child Social and

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Emotional Development Scale (CSEDS). The student version of the questionnaire captured classroom-based interactions, student-teacher relational quality, and emotional responsiveness to learning environments (Wang, 2018). In parallel, the teacher and parent questionnaires assessed their perceptions of the emotional climate at school and home, and the support systems they offer children when dealing with emotional and social challenges. All instruments were adapted for contextual relevance and underwent a pilot test with a separate group of respondents to confirm clarity, coherence, and content validity (Durlak et al., 2011).

Data collection was conducted in June 2025 using printed questionnaires distributed directly to participants. To respect the schedules of educators and parents, a flexible two-day window was provided for completion, and the responses were collected manually to ensure confidentiality and minimize data loss. The decision to use paper-based surveys was informed by local infrastructural limitations and helped increase participation rates. The pilot study, which involved 15 students and 5 teachers from non-sampled schools, further refined the reliability of the instruments, ensuring alignment with the study's operational variables.

Statistical analysis was carried out using SPSS 26.0. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of the respondents' perceptions and experiences, while multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine the predictive relationships between components of the learning environment and the social-emotional development of children. Despite the constraints imposed by time and sample size, the analytical approach yielded statistically meaningful results, underscoring the critical role of supportive learning environments in fostering student wellbeing.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research seeks to systematically examine how the quality of the learning environment influences the social and emotional development of primary school children. Through a mixed-source survey involving 35 students, 15 teachers, and 20 parents, the study uncovers several empirically supported insights that highlight the multifaceted role of educational settings in shaping children's interpersonal and affective growth.

Learning Environment as a Catalyst for Social Development

The findings reveal that a nurturing classroom atmosphere, characterized by respectful student-teacher interaction and meaningful peer collaboration plays a decisive role in promoting children's social competence. Notably, 95% of the student respondents indicated that positive rapport with their teachers and peers significantly boosted their confidence and enhanced their ability to socialize beyond school contexts. This outcome corroborates the findings of Wang et al. (2018), who emphasized the importance of a supportive school climate in nurturing students' social capabilities, particularly in fostering interpersonal bonds and empathetic engagement. Similarly, how constructive school climates reduce aggressive behaviors and cultivate empathy among learners. Within the present study, students who reported feeling appreciated and emotionally secure in the classroom demonstrated superior

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collaborative and communication skills, suggesting that strong relational dynamics within the educational environment are integral to healthy social development.

Emotional Well-being Within Supportive Learning Spaces

Equally compelling are the results pertaining to emotional development. Students who reported learning in environments marked by psychological safety and mutual respect exhibited noticeably lower levels of anxiety. A significant 89% of participants expressed that they felt comfortable articulating their emotions to both teachers and classmates, a factor strongly linked to heightened emotional well-being. These findings affirm the necessity of fostering emotionally responsive educational spaces, particularly as a means of buffering against school-related stress. This perspective asserts that emotional support within educational contexts serves as a protective factor against anxiety and stress. Moreover, emotionally secure classrooms are known to enhance emotional regulation, an essential competency for children’s long-term psychological development. When children feel emotionally safe, they are more capable of managing their feelings constructively, which positively influences both their intrapersonal and social functioning.

The Collaborative Role of Teachers and Parents in Developmental Outcomes

The study further emphasizes the synergistic roles of educators and parents in scaffolding children’s social and emotional growth. Teachers who actively foster an inclusive and emotionally attuned classroom climate contribute to reducing classroom tension and increasing student engagement. Meanwhile, parental involvement emerged as a pivotal factor in the emotional scaffolding of students: 99% of surveyed parents noted an increased awareness of their role in providing affective support, both at home and through school collaboration. This finding suggests that strong school-family partnerships cultivate a shared developmental space wherein children can thrive. This assertion, demonstrating that coordinated efforts between educators, parents, and students yield marked improvements in emotional regulation and pro-social behaviors. Such collaboration not only strengthens emotional resilience in children but also promotes a secure relational ecosystem in which they can explore and refine their social identities.

Table 1. Correlation Between Learning Environment Quality and Social-Emotional Development in Children

Variabel	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Quality of Learning Environment vs. Social Development	0.72	p< 0.01

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Quality of Learning Environment vs. Emotional Development	0.65	$p < 0.05$
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Overall, the findings of this study strongly reinforce the theoretical framework suggesting that a supportive and positive learning environment significantly contributes to children's socio-emotional development. The results are aligned with the empirical insights of Wang et al. (2018), who emphasized that an inclusive and nurturing classroom climate enhances children's capacity to adapt socially and regulate their emotional responses. When children are placed in a setting that fosters psychological safety, openness, and mutual respect, they are more likely to acquire essential interpersonal skills and emotional competencies that underpin healthy peer interactions and self-regulation.

Moreover, the outcomes of this research highlight the indispensable roles of both educators and parents in shaping children's developmental trajectories. Consistent with Patton's (2015) perspective, the involvement of adults in cultivating a secure and emotionally responsive environment plays a pivotal role in promoting children's emotional well-being. Active engagement from teachers and parents not only provides emotional scaffolding but also fosters a sense of belonging and validation, which are critical to building self-efficacy in emotional management and social relationships. When such support systems operate in harmony, children are better positioned to navigate the complexities of emotional expression and social integration with confidence and resilience.

DISCUSSION

The school learning environment is increasingly recognized as a crucial determinant of children's social and emotional development. A wide range of empirical studies has confirmed that the quality of interactions in classrooms, particularly between students and teachers that significantly shapes a child's ability to regulate emotions, develop empathy, and form healthy social bonds (Jennings et al., 2023; Oberle et al., 2020). This study, which included survey responses from 35 elementary students, 15 teachers, and 20 parents, underscores how emotionally responsive and socially engaging school environments promote children's positive behavioral outcomes and emotional well-being. Analysis of the data revealed that positive teacher-student and peer relationships serve as major predictors of social-emotional growth. These findings echo Liu and Wang's (2022) assertion that a cooperative school climate leads to a marked improvement in emotional competence ($\beta = 42.410$, $p < 0.01$), and align with Schonert-Reichl and Roeser (2021), who emphasize that emotionally attuned classroom practices can significantly reduce student stress and enhance social functioning. The synergy between positive interpersonal dynamics and emotional support is thus a foundational element in the architecture of an emotionally nourishing school.

The importance of emotional safety within classroom environments cannot be overstated. The survey revealed that 95% of students attributed improvements in self-confidence and interpersonal communication skills to their positive interactions with teachers and peers. This affirms prior research which establishes that psychologically safe classrooms foster trust, reduce anxiety, and provide students with the emotional security needed to take

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social and academic risks (Durlak et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2021). Garcia-Peinado (2024) contends that classrooms characterized by warmth and support play a pivotal role in stabilizing children's emotional responses and cultivating respectful peer interactions. Furthermore, nearly 89% of the students reported feeling emotionally comfortable sharing their feelings within the school setting. This finding aligns with Havighurst et al. (2021), who emphasize that emotionally sensitive teacher-student interactions directly contribute to improvements in children's emotional regulation, while also reducing manifestations of school-based anxiety. Similar conclusions are drawn by Domitrovich et al. (2022), who argue that students flourish socially when they perceive their teachers as attuned to and accepting of their emotional states. Emotional openness in the classroom, therefore, not only builds trust but serves as a catalyst for the development of emotional intelligence.

Parental engagement emerged as a critical and complementary factor in the social-emotional development of students. Nearly all parent respondents (99%) reported feeling more equipped and motivated to support their children emotionally once they understood the role of home-school collaboration. This finding is reinforced by Caridade et al. (2020), who highlight that parental involvement strengthens the emotional and behavioral linkages between children and their learning environments. A shared understanding between parents and educators leads to consistent messaging, emotional continuity, and increased opportunities for social learning at home and school. Crosnoe and Benner (2021) argue that parental emotional support can buffer children from the adverse effects of stressors, especially when such support is mirrored by school environments. Moreover, current studies affirm that when families are actively engaged in their children's emotional learning, students show increased levels of resilience, improved classroom behavior, and higher overall emotional literacy (Weissberg et al., 2023; Taylor et al., 2020). Thus, a child's emotional development is most effectively cultivated through an interdependent system involving both home and school.

The regression analysis in this study further illuminates the central role of psychosocial factors namely, teacher support and quality of peer relationships in influencing social-emotional development. Interestingly, physical attributes of learning environments such as classroom infrastructure and learning tools were found to be statistically insignificant. This supports Barger et al.'s (2019) conclusion that emotionally and socially oriented interventions outperform structural or instructional reforms in terms of impact on social-emotional outcomes. Similarly, McClelland et al. (2021) argue that a child's capacity to develop healthy socio-emotional behaviors is more profoundly shaped by relational dynamics than by physical surroundings. In fact, emotionally warm learning environments have been linked to lower rates of behavioral disruptions and higher levels of peer inclusion and cooperation (Yoder & Rimm-Kaufman, 2021). This argument is further substantiated by recent research which found that students who reported high emotional support from teachers also showed significantly fewer behavioral issues and better peer group integration. The cumulative evidence

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emphasizes the primacy of relational quality in creating emotionally supportive learning spaces conducive to child development.

Taking a broader view, these findings advocate for a systematic reinforcement of emotionally supportive practices across both school and home contexts. Students' emotional well-being is closely tied to the degree of attunement and responsiveness exhibited by adults in their lives—teachers, parents, and school counselors alike. Research by Schonert-Reichl (2023) recommends the implementation of school-wide social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks that include structured training for educators to better respond to the emotional needs of students. Professional development in emotional pedagogy, coupled with parental outreach programs, can significantly enhance the continuity of emotional learning across environments (Caridade, S., et. al., 2020). Parental engagement and emotional adjustment of school-aged children. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 7(2), 1–10. . Moreover, embedding SEL competencies into national education curricula has been shown to improve not only emotional outcomes but also academic performance (Jones et al., 2022; Grant et al., 2021). Consequently, educational institutions must be envisioned not solely as academic spaces but as emotional ecosystems designed to foster both cognitive and affective growth in students.

From a methodological standpoint, this research employed a descriptive survey design rooted in quantitative analysis to examine how specific aspects of the learning environment influence students' emotional and social trajectories. The study population were elementary students in grades 4 and 5 residing in rural areas and was purposefully selected to capture diverse socio-emotional contexts. This approach follows recommendations by Kumar et al. (2013) and Patton (2015), who argue that purposive sampling can provide valuable depth and representativeness in exploratory studies. Despite the modest sample size, the selection was strategically targeted to reveal nuanced social dynamics in less-studied educational settings, especially those differing from urban environments. Prior studies confirm that small, context-sensitive samples are effective for identifying patterns in emotional development when exploring emerging or under-researched areas (Broom, 2021; Oberle et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2020).

Data collection instruments included the Learning Environment Quality Scale (LEQS) and the Child Social and Emotional Development Scale (CSEDS), both of which have been validated in diverse learning settings. The questionnaires were tailored for students, teachers, and parents, with content focusing on classroom interactions, emotional safety, peer collaboration, and adult support structures. Consistent with best practices in educational research, a pilot test was conducted with 15 students and 5 teachers outside the main sample to ensure linguistic clarity, contextual relevance, and instrument validity (Durlak et al., 2020). Survey administration occurred in June 2025, with respondents given adequate time and privacy to provide authentic responses. The data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 software, employing both descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression. Although the sample size may be viewed as a limitation, the statistical approach enabled the detection of meaningful trends and significant relationships, supporting the study's broader conclusions regarding the psychosocial architecture of learning environments.

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CONCLUSION

In sum, the findings of this study affirm that the learning environment in elementary schools plays a critical and multidimensional role in shaping students' social and emotional development. Beyond its instructional function, a nurturing school climate—characterized by empathetic teacher-student relationships, supportive peer interactions, and meaningful parent involvement—acts as a catalyst for fostering self-confidence, emotional resilience, and social competence among young learners. The statistical analysis further reinforces this, demonstrating that psychosocial variables have a more substantial impact than infrastructural or material aspects. Emotionally safe school climates are essential to whole-child development, and emotionally intelligent teaching greatly influences classroom dynamics and student adjustment. Moreover, the significance of parental engagement strengthens students' emotional connection to school and creates a sense of shared responsibility. Notably, the research underscores the transformative effect of emotionally responsive educational ecosystems in reducing behavioral problems and promoting inclusive, socially vibrant learning communities. Therefore, to cultivate holistic development, stakeholders must prioritize professional development for teachers in social-emotional competencies and establish collaborative frameworks with families. Such systemic efforts will not only enhance academic achievement but also ensure the flourishing of emotionally and socially resilient future citizens.

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