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Dynamics of Social Interaction: The Influence of School Environment on Elementary School Student Behavior

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Abstract

Objective: This study investigates the dynamics of social interaction at SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon, Cirebon, emphasizing the influence of school conditions on students' social engagement and behavior. Social interaction is essential for character formation and social skill development, with the school environment—encompassing policies, relationships, and facilities—playing a pivotal role. **Novelty:** This research highlights the specific impact of inclusive policies, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions in fostering positive social development, providing new insights into how school leadership influences social interactions among students. **Methods:** Using a case study approach, this research examines how inclusive policies, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions foster positive social development. **Results:** The findings, grounded in Social Learning Theory, reveal that students acquire social behaviors through observation, reinforcement, and interaction. School initiatives such as collaborative learning, mentoring programs, and structured reward systems create a supportive environment, with school leadership playing a crucial role in sustaining these interactions. **Conclusion:** The study underscores the importance of continuously enhancing strategies to promote inclusivity and positive social engagement, though it is limited to the internal school environment and does not account for external social influences.

Keywords: Social Interaction, School Environment, Social Learning Theory, Student Behavior, Teacher-Student Relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's character and social conduct (Karimah, Sulthoni, and Atok 2023). At school, children not only learn academic subjects but also undergo a process of socialization with their surroundings (Gecas 2001; Митрова and Коцева 2024). Social interactions in the educational environment play a crucial role in shaping attitudes, norms, and social values that will form students' personalities in the future, where a study found that education contributes to the formation of national identity (Idris et al. 2012; Perić Romić 2020). Therefore, a deep understanding of the dynamics of social interactions in the school environment becomes very relevant to understanding how that environment can influence students' social behavior (Rahmania 2024). Additionally, parental involvement is an important pathway to support student achievement (Kovács, Oláh, and Pusztai 2024). A positive relationship between parents and teachers is important in this process, which can enhance the quality of education. And the quality of education is closely related to morality and professionalism (Wachid, Hidayat, and Satar 2024).

SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency was chosen as a case study in this article because, as an elementary school, the educational environment at SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency is considered the initial foundation for students to develop their social skills. A conducive, friendly school environment that supports students' social growth can have a positive impact on shaping good character and personality in the future. However, in some cases, the school environment can also become a battleground for the emergence of conflicts and social challenges. Differences in cultural backgrounds, personal characteristics, and social group dynamics within the school can influence how students interact and adapt to their surrounding environment. Therefore, the study on the influence of the school environment on the social behavior of students at SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency, becomes important to help identify factors that can enhance the quality of social interactions and address potential conflicts.

This article aims to analyze the dynamics of social interactions occurring in the environment of SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency, and how the school environment can influence students' social behavior. This research will explore the factors that influence social interactions at school, as well as their impact on students' learning motivation, academic achievement, and the development of social skills. With a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social interaction at SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency, it is hoped that it can provide input for the school, parents, and government in improving an inclusive, supportive, and positively impactful educational environment for the future social development of students.

In this article, the Social Learning Theory (Bandura and Walters 1977) is used, which is part of the Social Learning Theory that states that individual behavior is influenced by the surrounding social environment, including interactions with others, observation, and social experiences, and emphasizes the important role of modeling behavior and reinforcement in the formation of social behavior. According to this theory, individuals learn through the process of observing and imitating the behavior of others around them, especially those considered as models or role models. Furthermore, the reinforcement or punishment received by an individual for certain behaviors will also influence the likelihood of similar behaviors occurring in the future. However, in this writing, the school does not implement punishment, but rather emphasizes the dynamism of social interactions through positive and supportive relationships between teachers and students, which significantly impacts the social, emotional, and academic development of students (Pianta and Walsh 1996), particularly in the environment of SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency.

Previous research where social interactions built in schools result in social actions in certain situations, and the emergence of a student's social concern can be formed by various

factors, possibly due to external or internal factors, meaning a person's actions can continuously adapt to various social situations; this occurs in accordance with Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field (Power 1999), where the habitus values all activities in school and the field is the frequency of the school environment (Yunita, Ahmad Taufik, and Nurlila Kamsi 2023). Social interactions can also be formed through the learning process (Fahri and Qusyairi 2019), and the environment can shape students' character (Nurlailah and Ardiansyah 2022).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. In this qualitative research method, the individuals being studied are placed as research subjects and efforts are made to understand these subjects, both individuals and institutions, in their entirety (Bogdan and Taylor 1975). The research was conducted in June 2023, at Sekolah Dasar Negeri 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency. Primary data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with several students and educators as informants. In-depth interviews were conducted by first preparing an interview guide containing questions developed by the researcher during fieldwork. Secondary data sources were obtained through document studies of related cases, including information gathered from both the mass media and observers who have conducted similar case studies previously, journals, and books on social interaction theory. The data obtained is analyzed using three activity flows, namely data reduction, data testing, and then drawing conclusions. The three processes are carried out continuously and are conducted before, during, and after the field research process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social interaction plays a fundamental role in shaping students' behavior and social skills. The school environment, encompassing policies, interpersonal relationships, and supporting facilities, acts as a catalyst for positive social interactions and significantly contributes to students' social development. A case study at SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency, demonstrates that an inclusive school environment, supportive policies, and strong teacher-student relationships foster the development of healthy social behavior. Therefore, educational institutions must continue to develop strategies to strengthen social interactions, such as implementing collaborative learning methods, mentoring programs, and promoting an inclusive school culture. These efforts will help shape students with positive social attitudes and the ability to adapt well to society.

The Importance of Social Interaction in Education

Social interaction in schools is essential for students' overall growth. Through interactions with peers and teachers, students learn to communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, collaborate in group settings, and develop emotional intelligence. Vygotsky's Social Development Theory emphasizes that social interaction is crucial in cognitive development, where students learn and internalize new knowledge through social engagement. Schools serve as the primary social space where students practice and refine their social skills, which will be critical for their future professional and personal lives.

A positive school environment enhances students' social engagement by providing opportunities for collaboration, discussions, and group learning. When students are encouraged to interact and express their thoughts, they develop confidence in communication, problem-solving abilities, and a sense of belonging. Conversely, a restrictive or hostile school environment can lead to social anxiety, lack of engagement, and decreased academic performance.

The Role of Social Learning Theory in Student Development

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides valuable insights into how students develop social skills through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. According to this theory, learning occurs in a social context where individuals acquire new behaviors by watching others and modeling their actions. In a school environment, students learn by observing their teachers, peers, and even school leaders.

1. **Observational Learning.** Students often imitate behaviors they see in their surroundings. If a school promotes a culture of respect, cooperation, and inclusivity, students are likely to adopt these behaviors. Conversely, if students witness hostility or exclusion, they may internalize negative social behaviors. Teachers, as role models, play a crucial role in demonstrating positive interaction patterns.
2. **Reinforcement and Punishment.** Positive reinforcement, such as praise and rewards, encourages students to continue desirable behaviors, whereas disciplinary actions help deter negative conduct. Schools can implement structured reward systems to reinforce positive social interactions among students.
3. **Reciprocal Determinism.** Bandura emphasized that behavior, personal factors, and the environment continuously influence each other. A student's behavior affects the school environment, just as the school environment influences student behavior. Schools must create conditions that promote positive interactions, ensuring a reinforcing cycle of constructive social engagement.

At SDN 2 Danamulya, the principles of Social Learning Theory are actively applied in everyday school life. Several real-world practices observed at the school align with Bandura's framework:

1. **Observational Learning in the Classroom:**
 - a. Teachers at SDN 2 Danamulya serve as role models by consistently demonstrating respectful communication, patience, and inclusivity in interactions with students. This approach encourages students to replicate these positive behaviors in their interactions with peers.
 - b. During group activities, students observe how teachers facilitate discussions and mediate conflicts, teaching them constructive ways to engage with others.
2. **Reinforcement and Reward Systems:**
 - a. The school has implemented a structured reward system where students who exhibit positive social behaviors, such as helping peers or showing respect to teachers, receive praise and tangible rewards like certificates and small gifts. This motivates students to maintain good behavior.
 - b. Verbal reinforcement is frequently used, with teachers giving affirmations such as, "Good job," "Well done," and "I appreciate your effort." These simple words

significantly boost students' confidence and encourage them to continue positive social interactions.

3. **Teacher-Student Interactions and Reciprocal Influence:**
 - a. Teachers take an active role in listening to students' concerns and providing guidance. The open-door policy adopted by the school encourages students to approach teachers for advice, reinforcing a culture of trust and mutual respect.
 - b. Teachers avoid favoritism and ensure that all students are treated equally, regardless of academic ability. They provide additional support to struggling students while also acknowledging the achievements of high-performing students.
 - c. One specific case observed at SDN 2 Danamulya involved a student who initially struggled with social interactions due to shyness. Through consistent encouragement from teachers and structured group work, the student gradually became more engaged and confident in participating in class discussions.
4. **Peer Influence and Social Modeling:**
 - a. The school encourages peer mentoring, where older students help younger ones adapt to the school environment. This initiative helps create a sense of community and provides younger students with positive role models.
 - b. Group projects and extracurricular activities are designed to enhance collaboration and teamwork, fostering stronger peer relationships.
 - c. Teachers closely monitor student interactions to prevent negative behaviors such as bullying, ensuring that the school remains a safe and inclusive space for all students.
5. **School Climate and Inclusivity Initiatives:**
 - a. The school actively promotes inclusivity through cultural awareness programs, conflict resolution workshops, and community-building activities. These programs help students appreciate diversity and develop empathy towards others.
 - b. Monthly school assemblies feature discussions on kindness, cooperation, and leadership, reinforcing the importance of positive social interactions.

Key Factors Influencing Social Interaction in Schools

Several factors within the school environment influence students' social interactions and the development of their social skills:

1. School Policies and Leadership

School policies play a critical role in shaping student behavior and social interactions. Policies that promote inclusivity, respect, and cooperation help create a harmonious environment where students feel safe and supported. Rules regarding bullying prevention, peer mediation programs, and conflict resolution strategies can prevent negative social behaviors and encourage positive interactions.

The leadership style of school administrators also affects social dynamics. A school principal who fosters open communication and collaboration among staff and students can create an environment where students feel valued and heard. In the case of SDN 2 Danamulya, the new leadership implemented initiatives aimed at strengthening the school's social culture, including structured mentoring programs and increased teacher-student engagement.

Like field findings indicate that all educators and educational staff at the school are very intense in interacting with students, not only in the context of learning but also in a harmonious manner in supporting *the development of competencies and skills to enhance students' self-confidence in social interactions as social beings. The way to give rewards for recognizing students' achievements in various forms, including:*

a. Praise.

Praise can increase students' interest in learning and academic achievement. Usually done with words like: yes, good, cool, etc.

b. Gift.

Gifts must be given precisely at the right time and in the right manner because it is necessary. For example, during the distribution of report cards by the teacher.

2. Teacher-Student Relationships

Teachers serve as role models in shaping students' social behaviors. Positive teacher-student relationships foster trust, mutual respect, and emotional security, making students more willing to participate in class discussions and social activities. Effective teachers use encouraging language, active listening, and empathetic communication to build meaningful connections with students. In SDN 2 Danamulya, teachers actively engage with students beyond academic instruction by providing emotional support, listening to students' concerns, and promoting cooperative learning. This approach has led to improved student confidence, better peer relationships, and enhanced learning experiences.

3. Peer Influence and Social Groups

Peers significantly impact students' social behaviors. Positive peer relationships provide emotional support, motivation, and a sense of belonging, while negative peer influences may lead to behavioral problems such as bullying, social exclusion, and academic disengagement. Schools can facilitate healthy peer interactions by creating structured group activities, encouraging teamwork, and providing guidance on conflict resolution. At SDN 2 Danamulya, students are encouraged to participate in cooperative projects and extracurricular activities that foster teamwork. By involving students in group tasks and peer discussions, the school cultivates an environment where students develop interpersonal skills and learn to appreciate diversity.

4. School Climate and Inclusivity

A supportive school climate fosters a sense of community and encourages social participation. Schools that prioritize inclusivity by addressing the needs of diverse students, including those from different cultural backgrounds, students with disabilities, and socially marginalized groups, create an environment where all students feel accepted and valued. An inclusive school culture at SDN 2 Danamulya is reflected in policies that ensure equal opportunities for all students, encouraging active participation in school activities regardless of academic ability or background. By creating an atmosphere of acceptance and mutual respect, students develop empathy and social awareness.

Strategies for Enhancing Social Interaction in Schools

To maximize the benefits of social interaction, educational institutions should implement various strategies to create an engaging and supportive learning environment.

A. Collaborative Learning Approaches

Collaborative learning methods, such as group discussions, project-based learning, and peer tutoring, encourage students to work together, communicate effectively, and develop teamwork skills. These approaches promote active engagement, allowing students to learn from each other and develop problem-solving abilities.

2. Mentorship and Peer Support Programs

Mentorship programs, where older students guide younger ones, help foster positive peer relationships and a sense of responsibility. Peer support groups can also provide students with emotional and academic assistance, enhancing their confidence in social interactions.

3. Extracurricular Activities and Community Engagement

Extracurricular activities such as sports teams, drama clubs, debate societies, and volunteer programs provide students with opportunities to interact outside the classroom. These activities help students develop leadership skills, build friendships, and learn to navigate social challenges.

4. Professional Development for Teachers

Teachers should receive ongoing training on fostering social interactions in classrooms, managing student behavior, and creating an inclusive environment. Training in conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and effective communication can equip teachers with the skills needed to promote positive social development among students.

Implications for Educational Institutions

The findings from SDN 2 Danamulya highlight the importance of school environments in shaping students' social skills. Schools should continuously assess their social policies, teaching methods, and student engagement strategies to ensure that they promote positive social interactions. Educational leaders should:

1. **Implement School-Wide Programs.** Introduce social-emotional learning curricula that focus on self-awareness, relationship-building, and conflict resolution.
2. **Encourage Student Participation in Decision-Making.** Allowing students to have a voice in school policies and activities fosters a sense of ownership and belonging.
3. **Create Safe Spaces for Social Interaction.** Establish areas where students can engage in informal socialization, such as student lounges, collaborative workspaces, and outdoor activity zones.
4. **Promote Parental Involvement.** Encouraging parents to participate in school activities and engage with their children's education enhances students' overall social development.



Figure 1. Interaction With Students
Source: Documentation of SDN 2 Danamulya

CONCLUSION

Social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping students' behavior and social skills. The school environment, which includes policies, interpersonal relationships, and supporting facilities, acts as a catalyst for positive social interactions and significantly contributes to students' social development. A case study at SDN 2 Danamulya, Plumbon District, Cirebon Regency, demonstrates that an inclusive school environment, supportive policies, and strong teacher-student relationships foster the development of healthy social behavior.

Therefore, educational institutions must continue to develop strategies to strengthen social interactions, such as implementing collaborative learning methods, mentoring programs, and promoting an inclusive school culture. These efforts will help shape students with positive social attitudes and the ability to adapt well to society.

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