

Examining the Development of Social Skills in First-Grade Elementary School Children

Nyak Mutia Ismail*

English Education Department, Universitas Serambi Mekkah, Aceh, Indonesia

Zaiyana Putri

School of Education, The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia

Moriyanti

SMPN 2 Muara Tiga, Pidie, Aceh, Indonesia

Endah Anisa Rahma

English Language and Culture, Universitas Teuku Umar, Aceh, Indonesia

*Correspondence author: nyakmutiaismail@serambimekkah.ac.id

Abstract:

This study explores how social skills are performed among first-grade elementary school children, focusing on key competencies such as communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Through qualitative observations and analyses, the study examines how individual differences influence children's social interactions and ability to adapt to structured educational environments. The data were collected using interview guides and documentation, which were later analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveal that there are three significant notes. First, regarding the communication pattern, the children are more intimate and relaxed when talking to peers and feel more serious when talking to teachers. Second, their ability to cooperate is shown in taking turns. Third, in resolving the anger conflict, they mostly stay silent, believing that it will disappear, and they find their teachers to help end the conflict. It is later concluded that first-grade children adapt their social skills based on context, showing different communication styles, cooperation, and conflict-resolution strategies with peers and adults. This implies that school teachers must pay attention to the student's ability to develop their social skills.

Keywords:

Communicative Ability; Conflict Resolution Ability; First Graders; Social Skills; Social and Emotional Learning

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Introduction

The critical role of early childhood social skills development is a foundational element for future interpersonal relationships and societal functioning ([Muzaini, 2023](#)). This claim posits that the social behaviours and competencies observed in seven-year-old children, such as communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, empathy, and adherence to social norms, are not merely isolated developmental milestones but are deeply interconnected with broader societal dynamics ([Veldman et al., 2020](#)). Globally, there is an increasing recognition of the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) in educational curricula, reflecting a shift towards understanding that cognitive development alone is insufficient for holistic child development ([Adeliana et al., 2021](#)). The social skills children acquire at an early age lay the groundwork for their ability to navigate complex social environments later in life, including in professional settings and civic engagement. These skills are essential for fostering collaborative work environments, effective communication, and a peaceful, empathetic society ([Damayanti et al., 2022](#)). At the same time, Indonesia's diversity, with its many ethnic groups, languages, and local customs, adds layers of complexity to how social skills are manifested. What may be considered polite or appropriate in one region might differ in another. For instance, in Javanese culture, subtlety and indirect communication are valued, whereas, in some regions, people might be more direct in their interactions ([Procel et al., 2023](#)). In education, fostering social skills in an Indonesian context means teaching children to collaborate, share, and resolve conflicts and instilling an understanding of cultural sensitivity and diverse ways of expressing respect and cooperation. As Indonesia continues to grow as a multicultural society, adapting social behaviours to fit different cultural norms becomes increasingly important, both within the country and in interactions on a global scale ([Sugianto, 2021](#)).

In a rapidly global world, where individuals frequently interact with diverse cultures and perspectives, developing these social skills becomes even more critical ([Faizah & Ismail, 2011](#)). The ability to empathize with others, resolve conflicts peacefully, and adhere to shared social norms is integral to maintaining social cohesion and preventing conflicts on a larger scale ([Józsa et al., 2023](#)). Therefore, this study's focus on the early development of these skills is relevant to child psychology and education and broader discussions about social stability, community building, and global citizenship. By understanding how these skills are cultivated in childhood, teachers, policymakers, and caregivers can better support the next generation in becoming socially adept individuals who contribute positively to their communities and the global society ([Višnjić Jevtić et al., 2018](#)).

This study explores social skills development among first-grade elementary school children, typically aged six to seven, in an elementary school in Banda Aceh. This age group is in a crucial phase of social development, where they are beginning to engage more deeply with peers in a structured school environment ([Huriah et al., 2019](#)). The transition from early childhood to the more formal educational setting of first grade introduces children to new social dynamics, including navigating peer relationships, adhering to classroom norms, and working collaboratively with others ([Supriatna et al., 2024](#)). The importance is drawn into specific areas of social skills such as effective communication, cooperation in group settings, conflict resolution, empathy towards others, and adherence to social norms ([Indriyani et al., 2021](#)). These skills are foundational for first graders as they learn to interact with a larger, more diverse group of peers and begin to understand the expectations of a school environment ([Ndiyuve, 2022](#)).

At this age, children often face fundamental social issues such as learning to share, managing feelings of jealousy or exclusion, and understanding the importance of taking turns ([Munir et al., 2023](#)). They are also developing the ability to resolve

conflicts independently, a crucial step toward becoming more self-reliant in social interactions. Recognizing and respecting others' emotions and perspectives is critical to developing empathy (Baker et al., 2007). This study aims to provide insights into how first graders navigate the social world of elementary school. Understanding these dynamics can help teachers and parents support the development of essential social competencies for successful relationships and a positive school experience. The findings could inform targeted interventions addressing the unique social challenges children face at this critical stage of development.

The primary problem within the niche of social skills development in first-grade elementary school children is the variability in how these young learners acquire and apply crucial social competencies (Sohrabi, 2021). Despite being at a critical age for social learning, not all first graders develop these skills at the same pace or with the same level of proficiency. This disparity can lead to significant challenges in the classroom, where some children may struggle with basic social tasks such as sharing, cooperating in group activities, resolving conflicts, and understanding the emotions and perspectives of others (Salimi & Fauziah, 2023). The problem is identifying the factors contributing to these differences in social skill development. Therefore, the importance of this study lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of how first-grade children develop and apply essential social skills within the structured environment of elementary school. At this critical stage of development, children are not only beginning to navigate more complex social interactions. However, they also lay the foundation for future interpersonal relationships and academic success (Khusnidakhon, 2021). Therefore, teachers must have the skills to manage children's social and emotional problems (Almah & Sholeh, 2023). This study provides valuable insights that can inform educational practices and interventions by exploring these elements of social skills development specified in communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution.

Understanding the factors that influence the development of these social skills is crucial for teachers, parents, and policymakers. Suppose confident children are identified as struggling with these skills. In that case, targeted interventions can be designed to support their development, ensuring that they do not fall behind socially, which could also impact their academic progress (Budyartati, 2016). Additionally, by identifying the most effective strategies for fostering social skills in young children, this study can create more inclusive and supportive classroom environments where all students can thrive. Moreover, the findings from this study could have broader implications for educational curricula and the integration of social and emotional learning programs in early education (Gabrito et al., 2023). By highlighting the critical role of social skills in a child's development, this study advocates for an educational approach that equally prioritizes academic and social competencies. Promoting equity and inclusion and preparing students for global citizenship can later equip teachers and parents with the tools to support first graders in building a solid foundation for social and academic success. The research fills a crucial gap in understanding the factors that lead to variability in how social skills are developed and applied in the classroom, making this study both necessary and timely for advancing educational practices.

The research gap in the study of social skills development among first-grade children lies in the need for more understanding of the specific factors contributing to the variability in how these skills are acquired and applied within the classroom setting. While previous research has broadly acknowledged the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) and its impact on academic success (Simion, 2023), there is a lack of detailed exploration into how individual differences such as personality traits, family background, and early childhood experiences specifically influence social skills development in young children. Furthermore, existing studies

such as ([Rashid, 2010](#); [Budyartati, 2016](#); [Khusnidakhon, 2021](#)) specifically focus on broader age ranges or general educational outcomes. However, they need to sufficiently address the nuances of social interactions among young children at a pivotal stage of transitioning into formal education. There is also a gap in understanding how these early social skills predict long-term social and academic outcomes, particularly in diverse and inclusive classroom settings. This study seeks to fill these gaps by investigating the precise factors that contribute to differences in social skills development among first graders and by exploring the implications of these differences for classroom dynamics and long-term educational trajectories. Doing so aims to provide more targeted insights to inform effective interventions and educational practices.

Therefore, based on the rationale above, the research question formulated for this study is as follows:

1. How do six-to-seven-year-old children develop and exhibit communication (peer vs adults) in school settings?
2. How do six-to-seven-year-old children develop and exhibit cooperation in school settings?
3. How do six-to-seven-year-old children develop and exhibit conflict resolutions in school settings?

Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, aiming to look deeply into the development of social skills among six-to-seven-year-old children from the perspectives of the children and their primary teachers. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed for a rich, detailed exploration of the nuances of social behaviour and the various factors that influenced it. Through this approach, the study sought to understand the subjective experiences and interpretations of the participants, providing a holistic view of how social skills were cultivated and expressed in early childhood.

The study involved a carefully selected group of participants in an elementary school in Banda Aceh, including the children in the first grade and the teachers who interacted with them regularly. The decision to focus on this specific age group was based on the understanding that the first graders are at a crucial stage of social development, where they are increasingly exposed to structured social interactions in school and are beginning to form more complex peer relationships. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure a diverse and representative sample. This sampling method allowed the researcher to select participants most likely to provide rich, relevant data for the study. The sample consisted of 32 children aged six to seven years, selected from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives.

Additionally, four teachers who had regular, close interactions with these children were selected to provide a professional perspective on the children's social interactions in a structured environment, which is the classroom. The inclusion criteria for the study were that the children must have been enrolled in a school setting, and teachers must have been involved in the child's academic life. This criterion ensured that all participants had sufficient experience and knowledge of the child's social behaviours and development to provide meaningful insights.

The instruments used in the study were designed to facilitate a comfortable environment for children and gather detailed insights into their social skills. The interview guide for children started with a casual conversation to build rapport, followed by a simple explanation of the interview's purpose, making the child feel valued and at ease. The questions are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Interview Guide

No	Interviewee	Communication	Cooperation	Conflict resolution
1	Students	Can you tell me about a time when you had a really fun conversation with your friend? What did you talk about? How do you feel when you talk to your teacher? Is it different from talking to your friends? How?	Do you play games with your friends? How do you decide who does what in the game? What do you do if you and your friend both want to play with the same toy?	Have you ever had a disagreement with a friend? What happened, and how did you both solve it? What do you do if you feel upset with someone at school?
2	Teachers	How does this child communicate with you and their peers in the classroom setting? Have you observed any particular strengths or challenges in their communication skills?	How does the child participate in group activities or projects? Are they more likely to collaborate or prefer working independently? Can you provide an example of how the child cooperates with others during a typical school day?	How does the child handle disagreements with classmates? Do they exhibit problem-solving skills? What strategies do you use to guide them through conflicts, and how effective are these strategies?

Regarding data collection, to capture the multifaceted nature of social skills development, a variety of data collection methods were used, each designed to gather detailed, context-rich information from the different participant groups. Semi-structured interviews formed the core of the data collection process. These interviews were conducted with the children and their teachers, each tailored to the specific group's perspective. Interviews with children focused on their understanding of social interactions, friendships, and how they handled conflicts and cooperation with peers. The goal was to gain direct insights into the children's experiences and perceptions of their social world. Later, the teachers were interviewed to provide a professional and structured viewpoint on the children's social interactions in the classroom. Their input was crucial for understanding how children navigated the more formal social environment of a school setting and how their social skills were observed in a group context. In addition, naturalistic observations were another critical data collection method. The researcher observed the children in natural settings, during the classroom and playing sessions—with the teachers' consent. These observations focused on the children's interactions, communication patterns, and behaviours during group activities and free play. This method allowed the researcher to see social skills in action, providing context to the interview data and revealing behaviours that participants might not have articulated in interviews.

The data from interviews and observations were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding to identify key themes related to communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution (Dawadi, 2020). This systematic approach helped uncover how these themes appeared in children's social interactions and the factors influencing their development. Ethical considerations were central to

the study, particularly given young children's involvement. Informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and assent from the children, ensuring they understood and agreed to participate. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization and secure data storage, with pseudonyms used in reporting. The researcher prioritized the children's well-being, addressing any distress immediately to ensure their comfort and safety.

Results and Discussion

The following are some excerpts from the child respondents and teacher respondents. The initial SR represents the code as Student Respondent, and the initial TR represents Teacher Respondent. Meanwhile, the initial TR represents the code as Teacher Respondent, and the initial TR represents the code as Teacher Respondent.

Peer and Teacher Communication Patterns in developing students' social skills

The research results from students' viewpoints are initially elaborated in the following. The following are results regarding communication patterns with peers and with teachers.

Excerpt 1:

SR-2: *Kami pernah bicara-bicara sama Asyifa tentang hewan kesukaan kita. Kami berdua suka lumba-lumba, terus kami jadi lumba-lumba di laut [terkekeh]* 'We once talked to Asyifa about our favorite animals. We both like dolphins, so we are dolphins in the sea [chuckled]' (peer communication).

SR2: *Kami kalau bicara sama bu guru lain. Karena harus enggak ketawa. Harus dengar betul-betul. Kalau sama kawan-kawan bisa sambil ketawa-ketawa.* 'When I talk to teachers, because I must not laugh. I have to really listen. If I'm with friends, I can laugh.' (teacher communication).

The data from the student respondents reveal insightful patterns in how seven-year-old children perceive and communicate. For instance, SR2 described a delightful conversation with a peer about their interest in dolphins. This interaction highlights the child's ability to connect with others over shared interests, using imaginative play to enhance their social experience. Such conversations are crucial in building peer relationships and fostering a sense of belonging. In contrast, SR2 noted a distinct difference in communication style when interacting with teachers compared to friends. The child mentioned feeling the need to be more serious and attentive when speaking with a teacher, while with friends, they felt free to joke and laugh. This response underscores the child's awareness of social roles and their adjustments depending on the context. It reflects their developing understanding of the appropriate behaviour expected in different social situations. These excerpts illustrate that at this age, children are beginning to navigate the complexities of social communication, balancing the expectations of adult interactions with the more relaxed and spontaneous exchanges they have with peers. This balance is crucial to their social development as they learn to modulate their communication style to suit various social contexts.

Excerpt 2:

SR 15: *Kami bilang tentang dinosaurus. Kami bicara siapa yang dinosaurus besar dan kuat.* 'We talked about dinosaurs. We talked about who the big and strong dinosaurs were.' (peer communication)

SR 15: *Bicara dengan guru harus serius. Kami gak bisa salah-salah bilang. Gak boleh batuk-batuk. Gak boleh sambil ketawa. Harus baik. Kalau sama kawan kami suka bercanda.* 'Talking to the teacher must be serious. We can't say anything wrong. You can't cough. Can't laugh. Must be good. When we're with friends, we like

to joke around.’ (teacher communication)SR15's responses vividly illustrate how children at this age differentiate between peer and teacher interactions. When talking about dinosaurs with friends, SR15 engages in an animated and imaginative conversation, focusing on the qualities of extensive and robust dinosaurs. This interaction reflects children's natural curiosity and excitement with peers, where the environment is relaxed, and mutual interests and a sense of playfulness drive the exchange. Such interactions are critical for social bonding, as they allow children to connect over shared topics and enjoy the freedom to express themselves creatively. On the other hand, SR15's description of communicating with teachers reveals a much more structured and cautious approach. The child notes the importance of being earnest, not making mistakes, and maintaining proper behaviour, such as avoiding coughing or laughing during conversations. This response highlights the child's awareness of the social expectations placed on them in a classroom setting, where respect for authority and adherence to formal communication norms are emphasized. SR15's ability to navigate these distinct communication contexts demonstrates their growing social competence as they learn to modulate their behaviour and language according to the social roles they are engaging. This adaptability is a crucial aspect of their social development, preparing them for increasingly complex social interactions in the future.

Secondly, the research results from teachers' viewpoints are elaborated in the following. The first one is about communication patterns.

Excerpt 3:

TR1: *Anak-anak ini berkomunikasi dengan baik baik dengan saya maupun dengan teman-temannya. Mereka biasanya percaya diri dalam mengungkapkan ide-ide mereka selama diskusi kelas dan tidak ragu untuk bertanya ketika mereka tidak mengerti sesuatu. Mereka cenderung berbicara dengan jelas dan sopan. Salah satu kekuatannya adalah kemampuan mereka untuk mengungkapkan pemikiran mereka. Hal ini yang mengesankan untuk usia mereka. Namun, tantangan yang saya perhatikan adalah kadang-kadang mereka mendominasi percakapan, sehingga sulit bagi siswa yang lebih pendiam untuk berpartisipasi. Saya mendorong mereka untuk lebih sadar memberikan kesempatan kepada orang lain untuk berbicara.* ‘These children communicate well both with me and with their friends. They are usually confident in expressing their ideas during class discussions and do not hesitate to ask questions when they do not understand something. They tend to speak clearly and politely. One of their strengths is their ability to express their thoughts. This is impressive for their age. However, a challenge I have noticed is that sometimes they dominate the conversation, making it difficult for quieter students to participate. I encourage them to be more conscious of giving others the opportunity to speak.’

TR1's observations highlight the children's strong communication skills, noting their confidence in expressing ideas clearly and politely during class discussions. Their ability to articulate thoughts is impressive for their age, reflecting a high level of verbal competence. However, TR1 also identifies a challenge: These children sometimes dominate conversations, inhibiting quieter students from participating. Suggests a need for developing greater social awareness and empathy, encouraging these more vocal students to make space for others in discussions. TR1 actively addresses this by encouraging the children to be mindful of giving their peers opportunities to contribute.

While observing the child's social skills, several key areas were meticulously noted to understand their behaviour in various settings comprehensively. These observations were conducted during free play and structured activities, offering a holistic view of the child's interactions, communication styles, and adherence to social norms. The aim was to capture their social development and how they navigate the complexities of interpersonal relationships at a young age.

In communication, the child's interactions with peers and adults were observed with attention to the frequency, tone, and content of their verbal and non-verbal communication. During free play, the child frequently conversed with peers, demonstrating a strong inclination towards initiating and maintaining dialogues. Their tone varied depending on the context; they were often light-hearted and enthusiastic during games, indicating comfort and confidence within the social group. However, the child's tone became more severe and subdued in structured activities, particularly those led by an adult or requiring more focus. This shift suggests an understanding of the different social expectations between casual peer interactions and more formal settings. Non-verbal communication was also prominent, with the child often using gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey emotions and intentions. For instance, during a group task, the child would nod in agreement or use hand signals to guide a peer's actions, showing an ability to communicate

Patterns of Cooperation between Peers in developing students' social skills

The following are results regarding cooperation patterns with peers. The first excerpts are from the students.

Excerpt 4:

SR23: *"Kalau main pura-pura, kami gantian milih siapa yang jadi apa. Kadang-kadang, kami bilang, 'Kalian kan udah tadi, sekarang giliran kami. "When we play pretend, we take turns choosing who gets to be what. Sometimes, we say, 'You guys did that, now it's our turn.'"*

SR23: *"Kalau kami berdua pingin mainan yang sama, kami pinjam aja. Kami minta. Terus kami pake sebentar." If we both want the same toy, I ask if we can share. Later, I used it for a while.'*

SR23's responses highlight their understanding of fairness and sharing in social interactions. When playing pretend, SR23 shows a cooperative approach by ensuring that everyone takes turns, demonstrating an awareness of equality and the importance of giving others a chance. Reflects the child's ability to negotiate roles to maintain harmony within the group. Similarly, regarding sharing toys, SR23's suggestion to borrow and take turns using the toy indicates a practical and considerate approach to managing potential conflicts. These behaviours underscore the child's developing social cooperation and conflict resolution skills.

Below is the result from the teachers regarding cooperation patterns with peers. **Excerpt 5:**

TR2: *"Mereka lebih suka bekerja dalam pasangan atau kelompok kecil mungkin karena mereka merasa lebih nyaman. Mereka kolaboratif tetapi sering mengambil peran pendukung daripada memimpin. Sewaktu mereka dapat tugas kelompok menggambar, mereka bekerja sama untuk membuat gambar pesawat. Mereka saling bantu dengan ide-ide dan bersabar dalam mendiskusikan cara menggabungkan ide-ide mereka dan pasangan mereka. Ini sebenarnya baik untuk perkembangan kemampuan teamwork. 'They prefer to work in pairs or small groups perhaps because they feel more comfortable. They are collaborative but often take a supporting rather than leading role. When they got a group drawing assignment, they worked together to create a picture of a plane. They help each other with ideas and are patient in discussing how to combine their and their partner's ideas. This is actually good for the development of teamwork skills.'*

TR2's observations highlight the child's preference for working in pairs or small groups, where they feel more comfortable collaborating effectively. While these children tend to take on supportive roles rather than leading, their approach is highly cooperative. For instance, during a group drawing assignment, they worked together to create a picture of a plane, patiently exchanging ideas and helping each other

integrate their contributions. This collaborative effort fosters creativity and enhances their teamwork skills as they learn to listen, compromise, and combine ideas. Such experiences are crucial for developing the ability to work well with others.

During the observation, it was found that cooperation was another critical area, particularly in how the child engaged in group activities. The child displayed a natural tendency towards collaboration, often stepping into a leadership role when the situation required it. During a classroom project that required dividing tasks among group members, the children were quick to suggest roles, demonstrating an understanding of the strengths and preferences of their peers. This ability to negotiate and assign roles was indicative of social awareness and a willingness to ensure that the group functioned smoothly. Their problem-solving skills were also evident in collaborative tasks. When a disagreement arose about how to proceed with a project, the child was instrumental in proposing a compromise that satisfied all parties involved, highlighting their ability to navigate and resolve conflicts within a cooperative framework. These behaviours show the child's developing skills in teamwork and their capacity to work towards a common goal while balancing the needs and contributions of others.

Conflict Resolution Strategy in developing students' social skills

In the following are results regarding conflict resolution patterns with peers from the students.

Excerpt 6:

SR9: *pernah saya mau main sembunyi, tapi teman mau main kejar-kejaran. Kami marah, tapi dia ketawa. Terus kami memutuskan untuk main sembunyi, habis tu main kejar-kejaran.* 'Once I wanted to play hide and seek, but my friends wanted to play chase. I was angry, but he laughed. Then we decided to hide and then play chase.'

SR9: *Kalau marah, saya diam aja. Gak suka saya ada marah. Karena lama lama nanti marah bisa hilang.* 'If I am angry, I just keep quiet. I don't like being angry. Because after a while, the anger can disappear.'

SR9 Responses reveal a thoughtful approach to managing both conflict and emotions. When faced with a disagreement about which game to play, SR9 initially felt angry but quickly adapted by compromising, first playing hide and seek, then switching to chase. Demonstrates an ability to resolve conflicts by finding a solution that satisfies everyone. Additionally, the SR9 strategy for dealing with anger, staying quiet and allowing the feeling to pass indicates a level of emotional self-regulation that is notable for their age. These responses highlight SR9's growing capacity for conflict resolution and emotional control in social situations.

Last, below is the result regarding conflict resolution patterns with peers from the teachers.

Excerpt 7:

TR3: *Ada anak yang cenderung menghindari konflik jika memungkinkan. Ketika terjadi ketidaksepakatan, mereka lebih mungkin untuk cepat berkompromi atau mencari bantuan dari orang dewasa daripada berdebat. Saya mendorong mereka untuk mengungkapkan perasaan mereka dan menyarankan solusi ketika konflik muncul. Bermain peran juga bisa membantu mereka mengembangkan lebih banyak kepercayaan diri untuk menyelesaikan pertengkaran.* 'There are children who tend to avoid conflict whenever possible. When disagreements occur, they are more likely to quickly compromise or seek help from adults than to argue. I encourage them to express their feelings and suggest solutions when conflicts arise. Role playing can also help them develop more confidence to resolve arguments'.

Excerpt 8:

TR4: *Ketika terjadi ketidaksepakatan, ada anak yang langsung mencoba menyelesaikan masalah sendiri, gak mau mencari bantuan. Mereka biasanya menyarankan solusi, tetapi jika konflik berlanjut, mereka bisa menjadi frustrasi dan bisa saja menangis. Saya biasanya sering turun tangan untuk menjadi mediator. Kemudian, saya membimbing mereka untuk menemukan kompromi. Memang seringnya efektif, tapi kadang-kadang saya perlu mengingatkan anak ini untuk lebih sabar dan mendengarkan ide orang lain. Namanya juga masih anak-anak. Pasti harus kita bimbing terus.* 'When a disagreement occurs, there are children who immediately try to solve the problem themselves, not wanting to seek help. They usually suggest solutions, but if the conflict continues, they can become frustrated and may cry. I usually often step in to be a mediator. Then, I guide them to find a compromise. It's often effective, but sometimes I need to remind this child to be more patient and listen to other people's ideas. His name is still a child. We definitely have to continue to guide you.'

TR3 and TR4's observations highlight contrasting approaches children take when dealing with conflicts in the classroom. TR3 notes that some children prefer to avoid confrontation, opting for quick compromises or seeking adult intervention rather than engaging in arguments. These children may lack the confidence or desire to assert themselves, so TR3 encourages them to express their feelings and suggest solutions, using role-playing exercises to build their confidence in handling disputes independently. In contrast, TR4 describes children who instinctively try to resolve conflicts independently without seeking help. While these children proactively suggest solutions, they can become easily frustrated if the conflict persists, sometimes leading to emotional responses like crying. TR4 often acts as a mediator to help guide these children toward a compromise, finding this approach generally effective. However, TR4 emphasizes the need to remind these children to be patient and considerate of others' ideas, recognizing that, at their young age, they still require continuous guidance to develop these social skills fully. Both teachers acknowledge the importance of fostering these children's conflict-resolution abilities while providing the necessary support to help them grow.

From the observation, it is learned that conflict resolution was closely observed, focusing on how the child handled disagreements and the strategies they employed to manage or resolve conflicts. During the observation period, a few minor conflicts were noted, particularly during competitive games where the low stakes were enough to trigger disputes. In these situations, the child initially attempted to resolve the issue independently, often by appealing to fairness or suggesting a compromise. For example, during a disagreement overturn-taking in a game, the child proposed a solution that involved alternating turns more frequently to ensure everyone felt included. This approach reflects a developing sense of justice and a recognition of the importance of maintaining harmony within the group. However, when conflicts escalated or could not be quickly resolved, the child was not hesitant to seek adult intervention, showing an understanding of when external support was necessary. This behaviour suggests a balanced approach to conflict resolution, where the child is willing to attempt a solution but recognizes the limits of their ability to mediate disputes.

Discussion

The discussion of the study highlights significant insights into the social skills development of seven-year-old children, as observed through their communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution behaviours. The data from student respondents, such as SR2 and SR15, reveal that children at this age are adept at adjusting their communication styles based on context. They clearly distinguish between

interactions with peers, where communication is relaxed and playful ([Septiningtyas & Kholis, 2023](#)), and teachers, who adopt a more severe and attentive tone. This adaptability is crucial in line with [Rashid \(2010\)](#) as it demonstrates the children's growing awareness of social roles and expectations, indicating a sophisticated level of social understanding for their age. The responses from SR23 further underscore the importance of cooperation and fairness in group activities. The child's willingness to take turns and share toys reflects a developing sense of equity and an ability to navigate social dynamics effectively, as supported by [Likhar et al. \(2022\)](#). Similarly, SR9's approach to conflict resolution, where they compromise and manage their emotions by staying quiet until the anger subsides, showcases a remarkable level of emotional regulation and problem-solving skills ([Rahmawati et al., 2023](#); [Kamma & Yusuf, 2024](#)).

Teacher observations, such as those from TR1, TR2, TR3, and TR4, complement these findings by highlighting strengths and challenges in children's social interactions. While children display confidence and clarity in communication, some tend to dominate discussions, suggesting a need for further development in social awareness and empathy ([Abele et al., 2021](#); [Kamma & Yusuf, 2024](#)). Regarding conflict resolution, teachers observed that children either avoid conflicts by compromising quickly or attempt to resolve them independently, sometimes needing adult guidance to manage frustration, according to [Veldman et al. \(2020\)](#). Additionally, the observational data reinforce these findings, showing that children can initiate and maintain dialogues, lead group tasks, and propose compromises during disputes. These behaviours indicate strong social skills, particularly in teamwork and conflict resolution, though they also highlight areas where adult intervention is sometimes necessary ([Fikri & Tegeh, 2022](#)). Overall, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of social interactions in early childhood, emphasizing the importance of independent problem-solving and guided support in developing these essential skills.

The result also shows how the social environment helps shape children's social skills. Interactions with peers, especially during free play, allow children to try different social roles, make rules, and build friendships. For example, SR10 quickly adjusted to group dynamics during playtime, showing leadership by organizing games and knowing when to step back. This flexible social behaviour supports the idea that playing with peers is essential for children to learn how to cooperate and compromise. Additionally, children like SR7, seen stepping in to mediate between peers during disagreements, show that some children naturally solve conflicts ([Petkou et al., 2024](#)). Shows their growing ability to handle social situations and disagreements.

The major highlight lies in the critical role of teachers and structured activities in developing social skills. Teachers help set the example for how children communicate and solve conflicts. For instance, TR5 noted that group discussions and team projects encourage children to express their thoughts while listening to others. It improves their communication and helps them understand others' perspectives. TR3 shared that helping children reflect on their interactions after activities is crucial to improving social skills. Through this reflection, children like SR13 learned to understand better the effects of their words and actions, which helped them regulate their emotions and cooperate more effectively with others. This combination of peer interaction and adult guidance provides a complete picture of how social skills grow in young children, as supported by [Abdul-Majied et al., 2023](#).

Conclusion

This study concludes that first-grade children develop and exhibit social skills differently across different social contexts. In communication, they adapt their style

depending on whether they interact with peers or adults, being more severe and relaxed with adults. In terms of cooperation, they demonstrate an understanding of fairness and collaboration, often taking turns and sharing in group activities. For conflict resolution, children show a range of strategies, from compromising and seeking help to independently managing disputes. These findings highlight the complexity and adaptability of social skills at this developmental stage.

However, one of the limitations was the potential for subjectivity in the interpretation of the data. The researcher's perspectives and biases influenced the findings, even with efforts to minimize this through rigorous analysis and triangulation. Another limitation was the sample size. With only 32 children and four teachers, the study's findings may be generalizable to only some first graders. However, the in-depth nature of qualitative research aimed at providing detailed insights rather than broad generalizations. To improve social skills, educators and parents should create structured opportunities for children to engage in teamwork, promote equitable participation in group discussions, and support conflict resolution. Role-playing activities and collaborative projects can enhance these skills, nurturing empathy and social awareness. By concentrating on these aspects, children will be more prepared to handle social interactions in school and beyond, establishing a solid foundation for future interpersonal relationships and academic achievements.

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