

Children's Emotional Development and Its Impact on the Teaching and Learning Process

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Abstract: This study investigates children's emotional development and its impact on the teaching and learning process at SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan. Employing a qualitative approach with descriptive methods, data were collected through observation, teacher interviews, and documentation from students and class teachers at the school. The findings reveal a varied landscape of emotional development among students. Those with well-managed emotions demonstrating anger control, acceptance of reprimands, and collaborative skills exhibited higher activity, confidence, focus, and motivation in class. Conversely, students struggling with emotional management showed poor concentration, irritability, low self-confidence, and difficulty comprehending material. A key finding highlights the teacher's pivotal role in fostering emotional growth through empathetic approaches, motivation, and a supportive classroom environment. The novelty of this study lies in its contextualized, qualitative insights into the specific interplay between emotional maturity and classroom dynamics within this Indonesian primary school setting. Practically, it underscores the need for teacher training focused on socio-emotional support strategies to enhance learning effectiveness. This study contributes to the field by reinforcing that emotional development is not separate from academic success but is a foundational component of an effective primary education.

Keywords: Elementary School, Emotional Development, Learning Motivation

A. Introduction

Education is a fundamental process in developing the quality of human resources (Sumual et al., 2024). The success of the educational process is not only determined by cognitive aspects but also greatly influenced by affective aspects, particularly children's emotional development. In the context of modern education, understanding emotional development is becoming increasingly important because emotions play a central role in shaping a child's motivation, attention, concentration, social interaction, and readiness to learn (Aghaziarati & Nejatifar, 2023; Thümmler et al., 2022). School-age children are in a highly dynamic phase of development, both physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Emotional development during this period is characterized by the ability to recognize, express, and manage feelings such

as anger, joy, fear, anxiety, and pride. When emotional development occurs optimally, children will be able to adapt to the school environment, build positive relationships with teachers and peers, and demonstrate active involvement in the learning process (Garcia-Peinado, 2023; Martinez & Gomez, 2024). Conversely, obstacles in emotional development can lead to aggressive behavior, withdrawal, lack of self-confidence, excessive anxiety, and low motivation to learn.

Theoretically, children's emotional development has been widely discussed by developmental psychologists. According to Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, elementary school-age children are in the industry versus inferiority stage (Jones & Waite-Stupiansky, 2022; Muhammad, 2024). At this stage, children strive to demonstrate their competence and abilities. Success in this stage will result in self-confidence and productivity, while failure will lead to failure. can lead to feelings of inferiority. Emotions play a crucial role in determining whether a child feels capable or fails in their learning activities (Thümmeler et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Furthermore, Piaget's cognitive development theory explains that elementary school-aged children are in the concrete operational stage, where they begin to think logically about tangible objects (Brunetti et al., 2021). However, this thinking process is inseparable from emotional states. Children experiencing emotional stress tend to struggle to focus and process information optimally. Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in child development (Rahman, 2024). From this perspective, emotions play a mediator role in the social interaction process that supports learning. A warm, supportive, and emotionally responsive environment will help children reach their zone of proximal development more effectively. The concept of emotional intelligence also provides a strong foundation that individual success is determined not only by intellectual intelligence (IQ) but also by the ability to manage emotions (EQ) (Fareed et al., 2021). Chung et al. (2023) also stated that the ability to recognize one's own emotions, manage them, motivate oneself, recognize the emotions of others (empathy), and foster social relationships are important factors in academic and social success. Children who have good emotional regulation tend to be better able to cope with academic pressure, overcome failure, and maintain motivation to learn (Ragusa et al., 2023; Sharabi & Roth, 2025).

In the context of education, learning is not simply a process of transferring knowledge but rather an interaction process that intensively involves emotional aspects (Huang & Lajoie, 2023). Positive emotions such as curiosity, joy, and pride can increase learning engagement, while negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, and anger can hinder concentration and absorption of material. The control-value theory explains that academic emotions (such as test anxiety, boredom, and pride) directly influence student motivation, learning strategies, and learning outcomes (Pekrun, 2024). Research shows a significant relationship between emotional development and children's academic achievement. Study on emotional intelligence found that the ability to understand and manage emotions contributes to students' academic and

social success (Estrada et al., 2021; Halimi et al., 2021; Zhoc et al., 2020). Other research also shows that children with good emotional regulation have more effective problem-solving skills and lower levels of academic stress (Teixeira et al., 2022; Vestad & Tharaldsen, 2022). Research conducted by Vasilopoulos & Ellefson (2021) showed that self-regulation skills, including emotional regulation, at an early age are associated with higher academic achievement later in school. These findings indicate that the ability to control emotions not only has short-term effects but also influences long-term academic success.

On the other hand, various problems that occur in schools, such as low motivation to learn, aggressive behavior, difficulty concentrating, and conflict between peers, are often rooted in suboptimal emotional development in children. Children who are unable to manage anger or disappointment tend to exhibit disruptive behavior in class. This condition certainly disrupts the learning process, both for themselves and their classmates. In the context of education in Indonesia, attention to the emotional aspect of learning is still suboptimal. Learning often places too much emphasis on cognitive achievement and academic grades alone. However, the national education curriculum also emphasizes the importance of character building, which includes emotional management and the development of social attitudes. Therefore, a more in-depth study is needed on how children's emotional development influences the learning process, allowing for the formulation of more holistic learning strategies.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that children's emotional development plays a crucial role in supporting successful learning. Healthy emotional development encourages children to be more confident, motivated, cooperative, and able to face academic challenges with a positive attitude. Conversely, obstacles in emotional development can be a risk factor for learning difficulties and behavioral problems at school. Therefore, research on children's emotional development and its impact on the learning process is highly relevant. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of educational science and developmental psychology, as well as practical contributions for teachers, parents, and educational policymakers in designing learning strategies that are more responsive to children's emotional needs.

B. Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Research with a descriptive qualitative approach is research used to examine the conditions of natural objects (natural settings), where the researcher is the key instrument, data collection techniques are carried out through triangulation (combined), data analysis is inductive/qualitative, and the results of the study emphasize meaning rather than generalization (Moleong, 2021). The purpose of this study is to describe children's emotional development and its impact on the teaching and learning process. The study was conducted with teachers who teach at SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan and

students as subjects. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were used to observe the emotional development of school-age children in the context of the teaching and learning process in the classroom, while documentation in the form of notes was used to see the impact of children's emotional development on engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in the teaching and learning process and the factors that influence children's emotional development and how it affects the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process. Data analysis was carried out descriptively and qualitatively through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation of sources and techniques was used by comparing the results of observations, interviews, and documentation.

C. Results and Discussion

Children's emotional development and its impact on the teaching and learning process at SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan. Elementary school-aged children (approximately 7-12 years old) are in Erik Erikson's psychosocial development stage of industry versus inferiority (Pollard et al., 2020). At this stage, children begin to strive to demonstrate their abilities and achievements. With support, they will develop into self-confident individuals. However, if they frequently experience failure or excessive criticism, children can develop feelings of inferiority. At SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan, children's emotional development can be seen through their ability to control their emotions (not easily getting angry or crying when experiencing learning difficulties), their confidence when answering teacher questions, their ability to work collaboratively on group assignments, and their response to teacher reprimands or evaluations.

Children's Emotional Development at School Age in the Context of the Teaching and Learning Process in the Classroom

Interviews with class teachers revealed that the emotional development of elementary school-aged children varies widely and directly impacts the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Teachers reported that at elementary school age (7-12 years old), children begin to demonstrate better emotional management skills than at previous ages but still require guidance. This is in line with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, which states that children are at the stage of industry vs. inferiority, where they want to demonstrate their abilities and gain recognition (Rorije et al., 2023). Forms of emotional development seen in class can be seen through the ability to control anger or disappointment when experiencing learning difficulties, the courage to ask or answer teacher questions, responses to criticism or corrections from teachers, and the ability to work together in groups. The teacher explained that some students were able to accept reprimands well and tried to correct mistakes. However, there were still students who were easily offended, cried when reprimanded, or showed reluctance to follow lessons when they felt incapable.

The Impact of Children's Emotional Development on Engagement, Motivation, and Learning Outcomes in the Teaching and Learning Process

Based on interviews with classroom teachers, it was found that children's emotional development has a very significant impact on student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes in the teaching and learning process. These impacts include: 1) Impact on Student Engagement (Participation). Teachers reported that students with good emotional development tend to be more active and engaged in learning. They are more willing to ask questions, answer questions, and participate in group discussions. These students also demonstrate self-confidence and are not afraid to make mistakes. 2) Impact on Learning Motivation: A stable emotional state makes students more driven to learn. Students who are able to manage their emotions tend not to give up easily when faced with difficulties. They persist in completing tasks despite obstacles. Conversely, students who are easily frustrated or anxious often lose their enthusiasm for learning. When they receive low grades or are reprimanded, they can feel hopeless and unmotivated to improve. Emotional development also directly impacts student learning outcomes. Students with stable emotions tend to be more focused, able to concentrate longer, and understand the material better. They are also better prepared to face evaluations or exams without excessive anxiety. Conversely, students experiencing emotional disturbances often have difficulty concentrating and are easily distracted. This results in poor understanding of the material and suboptimal learning outcomes. Teachers added that a positive classroom atmosphere and good relationships between teachers and students help create an emotional environment that supports academic achievement.

Factors Influencing Children's Emotional Development and How It Affects the Effectiveness of the Teaching and Learning Process

Based on interviews with class teachers, it was found that children's emotional development is influenced by several factors, namely: 1) Family factors. Family conditions significantly influence students' emotional stability. Children who receive attention, affection, and support from their parents tend to be more confident, calm, and easily guided during learning. Conversely, children who receive less attention or frequently face conflict at home tend to exhibit irritability, moodiness, or difficulty concentrating in class. 2) School and teacher environmental factors: Teacher attitudes and approaches significantly influence children's emotional development. Teachers who are patient, empathetic, and motivating can create a comfortable classroom atmosphere. Conversely, an overly harsh approach can make students feel afraid, anxious, and less willing to participate. 3) Peer factors and the child's individual characteristics. Interactions with peers significantly influence children's emotional development. Harmonious friendships can increase self-confidence and enhance learning comfort. However, conflict between peers can trigger negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or anxiety. 4) Individual character factors: Children have different characters and levels of emotional maturity. Some children adapt easily and are able

to control their emotions, while others still cry easily, become irritated, or frustrated when faced with difficulties. These factors impact a child's emotional development and directly influence the effectiveness of the classroom learning process.

The findings from SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan offer a compelling, real-world illustration of the critical interplay between children's emotional development and the educational process. This discussion will synthesize these results with established developmental theories, particularly the work of Erik Erikson, to explore the multifaceted impact of emotions on learning and to consider the implications for educators and the broader school environment.

The observation that children at SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan display a wide range of emotional capabilities from managing frustration to responding to criticism directly aligns with Erikson's psychosocial stage of Industry versus Inferiority, typical for children aged approximately 6 to 12 years. At this stage, the primary developmental task is to develop a sense of competence and mastery. The classroom becomes a central "theater" for this psychosocial drama. The teachers' reports of students demonstrating confidence, persistence, and a willingness to collaborate are hallmark signs of developing "industry." These children are successfully navigating the social and academic demands of their environment. They are learning that by applying themselves, they can produce results solve a math problem, contribute to a group project, or answer a question correctly which builds their self-concept as capable individuals. Conversely, the behaviors described by teachers and students who are easily offended, cry when reprimanded, or become reluctant to participate when they feel incapable are symptomatic of the emerging "inferiority" pole of this stage. When children perceive themselves as failing to meet the expectations of teachers or peers, or when they are met with harsh criticism rather than constructive feedback, they can internalize a sense of inadequacy. A student who shuts down after a reprimand is not merely being "difficult"; they may be protecting a fragile sense of self from the threat of failure. This demonstrates that emotional responses in the classroom are not separate from learning; they are a direct expression of a child's progress through a crucial developmental phase. The ability to "control their emotions," as noted by the teachers, is therefore not just a matter of temperament, but a learned skill that develops as children successfully resolve the crisis of this stage with the support of the adults around them.

The findings powerfully illustrate that emotional development is not a soft skill separate from academics but is, in fact, the bedrock upon which effective learning is built. The impact on student engagement, motivation, and outcomes can be understood through the lens of modern educational psychology, which posits that cognition and emotion are deeply intertwined. 1) Engagement and Participation: A student who is emotionally secure and confident (developing "industry") has the cognitive and emotional bandwidth to engage with the learning material. They are not preoccupied with fears of humiliation or failure. This allows them to take intellectual

risks asking a “silly” question, venturing an answer, or debating a point in a group discussion. As the teachers noted, these students are active participants. In contrast, a student grappling with feelings of inferiority or anxiety is in a state of emotional dysregulation. Their brain’s primary focus is on threat detection and self-protection, not on absorbing new information. This explains why students who are easily frustrated or anxious disengage; participation feels like a threat to their already fragile self-esteem; 2) Motivation and Persistence: The link between emotional stability and motivation is central to the concept of a “growth mindset”. Students with healthy emotional development are more likely to possess an implicit growth mindset. They view challenges and setbacks like a difficult task or a low grade as opportunities to learn and grow, rather than as verdicts on their innate ability. The teacher’s observation that emotionally stable students “persist in completing tasks despite obstacles” is a classic description of this resilient, mastery-oriented approach. Conversely, students who are easily frustrated or lose enthusiasm after a reprimand may exhibit a “fixed mindset.” They interpret difficulty as a sign that they are “not smart enough,” leading to helplessness and a sharp decline in motivation. This emotional reaction directly sabotages their will to learn; and 3) Learning Outcomes and Academic Performance: The pathway from emotion to academic outcome is clear. Emotional stability facilitates the cognitive functions essential for learning, particularly executive functions like focused attention, working memory, and cognitive flexibility. A calm, regulated student can concentrate on the teacher’s explanation, hold key concepts in their mind while working on a problem, and adapt their strategies when an initial approach fails. This directly leads to better comprehension and, ultimately, higher achievement. The findings from SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan confirm this, showing that students with stable emotions achieve better learning outcomes. On the other hand, anxiety and emotional distress are known to consume working memory capacity, leaving fewer cognitive resources for processing the academic task at hand. This explains why students experiencing emotional disturbances “have difficulty concentrating” and consequently show “poor understanding of the material.”

The teachers’ insights into the factors influencing children’s emotions underscore that a child’s emotional life is shaped by a complex ecosystem, with significant implications for teaching effectiveness. 1) Family Factors as the Foundation: The home environment is the primary training ground for emotional development. Secure attachment and supportive parenting provide children with a “secure base” from which to explore the world, including the social world of school. Children from such backgrounds, as the teachers noted, are more confident and calmer. Conversely, children from homes marked by conflict or neglect often come to school with heightened emotional vulnerability. They may be hyper-vigilant to criticism (seeing it as a threat) or lack the self-regulation skills to manage frustration, making it harder for them to benefit from instruction; 2) The Teacher’s Role as an Emotional Architect: This finding is perhaps the most empowering. It highlights that while teachers cannot control a child’s home life, they have immense power to shape the emotional climate

of the classroom. A teacher who is “patient, empathetic, and motivating” acts as a co-regulator for their students. By providing a calm, predictable, and supportive environment, the teacher helps students manage their own emotions. This aligns with Vygotsky’s concept of the Zone of Proximal Development, but applied to emotions. The teacher scaffolds not just cognitive skills, but emotional skills. They model how to handle a mistake with grace, how to offer constructive feedback, and how to manage disappointment. Conversely, an “overly harsh approach” confirms the fears of a child already prone to inferiority, pushing them further into a state of anxiety and disengagement. The teacher’s approach directly influences whether the classroom becomes a place that fosters industry or exacerbates feelings of inferiority; and 3) Peer Relationships as a Mirror: Peer interactions provide a crucial context for social comparison, a dominant feature of the industry vs. inferiority stage. Harmonious friendships offer validation and support, reinforcing a child’s sense of self-worth. However, peer conflict can be deeply wounding, triggering intense negative emotions that spill over into the learning process. A child upset about a playground disagreement will find it nearly impossible to focus on a math lesson.

The results from SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan are not merely descriptive; they are prescriptive. They compel a shift from viewing emotional development as an aside to recognizing it as a core component of effective pedagogy. To optimize the teaching and learning process, the school can consider the following: 1) Foster a Supportive and Safe Classroom Climate: Teachers should be intentional about creating a classroom culture where mistakes are framed as learning opportunities, not failures. Emphasizing effort and improvement over innate ability helps students develop a growth mindset and reduces the fear of failure that fuels inferiority; 2) Integrate Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): Explicitly teaching emotional vocabulary, self-regulation strategies (like deep breathing or taking a break), and conflict-resolution skills can equip all students with tools to manage the challenges of the industry vs. inferiority stage; 3) Adopt an Empathetic and Responsive Teaching Approach: When a student acts out or shuts down, teachers can be trained to look beyond the behavior and ask, “What is this child feeling, and what do they need?” A moment of private, calm conversation can be more effective than a public reprimand in helping a student process a setback and re-engage with learning; 4) Build Bridges with Families: Finding ways to communicate with and support families can help create a more consistent emotional environment for the child. Sharing strategies for encouraging a child’s efforts at home can reinforce the work being done at school; and 5) Promote Positive Peer Interactions: Structuring cooperative learning activities that build teamwork and empathy can help foster positive peer relationships, turning the peer group from a potential source of stress into a source of support.

The experiences of students and teachers at SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan provide a powerful, localized confirmation of universal principles in child development. The journey through Erikson’s stage of industry versus inferiority is not a quiet, internal process; it is loudly and clearly expressed in the classroom through children’s

engagement, motivation, and resilience. These findings demonstrate that attending to a child's emotional world is not an addition to the "real" work of teaching literacy and numeracy. It is the real work. By understanding the emotional drivers behind student behavior and by intentionally creating a nurturing and supportive environment, educators at SD Negeri 11 Selat Penuguan and beyond can effectively guide their students not only toward academic success but also toward the far more valuable goal of developing into confident, capable, and resilient individuals. The most effective teaching, therefore, is that which educates the heart as much as it educates the mind.

D. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, it can be concluded that a child's emotional development is a pivotal determinant of their educational journey. The study establishes a clear and significant link between emotional maturity and three core academic indicators. Specifically, well-regulated emotional development directly enhances student engagement, fostering greater activeness and participation in classroom activities. It simultaneously fuels learning motivation, which manifests as sustained enthusiasm and perseverance when tackling academic tasks. Ultimately, this positive cycle culminates in superior learning outcomes, reflected in higher academic achievement and a deeper understanding of the material. The practical implications of this finding are substantial for educators, parents, and curriculum designers. The teaching and learning process is not merely a cognitive exercise but a holistic experience where emotions play a foundational role. When children possess the emotional skills to manage feelings, build resilience, and collaborate with peers, the educational environment becomes more effective and productive. Conversely, the research confirms that suboptimal emotional development acts as a significant barrier, potentially hindering a student's ability to focus, engage, and achieve their full academic potential. This underscores the necessity of integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) strategies into the standard curriculum, rather than treating it as a peripheral activity. Fostering emotional intelligence should be a core educational priority to create a supportive atmosphere where all students can thrive. To build upon these insights, future research should adopt a longitudinal approach to explore the long-term interplay between emotional development and academic trajectories across different educational stages. Furthermore, investigating the specific types of emotional competencies such as emotional regulation, empathy, or self-awareness that most strongly predict engagement and achievement would allow for more targeted interventions. Finally, comparative studies examining how different pedagogical approaches or classroom environments either support or hinder emotional growth could provide invaluable evidence-based guidance for teacher training and policy development.

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