

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT UPT SD NEGERI 7 GRESIK

Tsabita Atiqatuz Zahra¹, and Noer Suci Endah Puspitaningrum²

¹ Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia

² Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik, Indonesia

Corresponding Author:

Tsabita Atiqatuz Zahra,

Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences and Political Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Gresik. Jalan Sumatera No. 101, Gresik Kota Baru (GKB), Kelurahan Gulomantung, Kecamatan Kebomas, Kabupaten Gresik, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

Email: tsabitaatiqatuz@umg.ac.id

Article Info

Received: November 17, 2025

Revised: December 08, 2025

Accepted: December 15, 2026

Online Version: December 18, 2025

Abstract

Emotional intelligence plays a central role in students' social adjustment and academic success, particularly during the elementary school years when children begin developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal competence. Preliminary observations and teacher interviews at UPT SD Negeri 7 Gresik revealed that many students struggled with managing negative emotions, expressing feelings appropriately, and interacting positively with peers. This study aimed to enhance students' emotional intelligence through the structured implementation of Social Skills Training (SST). Using a practice-based intervention approach, the researcher conducted initial assessments through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations, followed by the selection of 30 students with low to moderate emotional-intelligence scores. The intervention consisted of two sessions involving modeling, role-playing, guided reflection, reinforcement, and home practice. Results indicated noticeable improvements in key emotional-intelligence domains, including emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and cooperative behavior. Teachers reported reduced classroom conflicts, increased student confidence, and more harmonious peer interactions. The study concludes that SST is an effective strategy for fostering emotional development among elementary students, particularly those from vulnerable backgrounds. The integration of SST into school programs is recommended to support long-term emotional and social well-being.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, School-Based Intervention, Social Skills Training



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Journal Homepage

<https://ejournal.staialhikmahpariangan.ac.id/Journal/index.php/wp>

How to cite:

Zahra, T. A., & Puspitaningrum, N. S. E. (2025). The Implementation of Social Skills Training to Improve Students' Emotional Intelligence at UPT SD Negeri 7 Gresik. *World Psychology*, 4(3), 527–542. <https://doi.org/10.55849/wp.v4i1.1420>

Published by:

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Hikmah Pariangan Batusangkar

INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence has increasingly been recognized as a fundamental component of children's social and academic development, particularly during the elementary-school years when core emotional and interpersonal competencies begin to mature (Panizo-LLEDOT dkk., 2022). The early stages of schooling mark a critical developmental window in which children learn to identify emotions, regulate impulses, build relationships, and adapt to social norms within peer groups and classroom contexts. Numerous psychological theories, including those of Erikson and contemporary socio-emotional frameworks, affirm that children who develop stronger emotional competencies demonstrate higher levels of self-efficacy, resilience, and cooperative behavior in school environments (Ordu & Ordu, 2025). This developmental significance highlights the need for intentional educational practices that reinforce emotional growth alongside cognitive and behavioral development.

The relevance of emotional intelligence becomes evident when observing common challenges in day-to-day school interactions, such as difficulties with frustration tolerance, impulse control, and peer conflict management. Educators frequently encounter students who react intensely to minor setbacks, struggle to articulate feelings constructively, or withdraw socially in the face of relational challenges (Cheah dkk., 2021). These emotional and social difficulties often disrupt learning, hinder group participation, and diminish classroom harmony. As emotional regulation is strongly associated with academic engagement and positive learning climates, understanding and addressing emotional difficulties among young learners is not only beneficial but essential for holistic educational practice.

The situation at UPT SD Negeri 7 Gresik reflects this broader developmental reality. Observations and teacher interviews reveal that many students experience significant challenges in managing emotions such as anger, disappointment, and fear, and often lack the social strategies needed to engage productively with peers. Behaviors such as crying when losing a game, using harsh words during conflicts, refusing teacher guidance, or displaying impulsive reactions to correction are frequently observed (Philip dkk., 2024). These patterns indicate gaps in foundational emotional competencies and highlight a pressing need for structured socio-emotional interventions capable of supporting students' emotional development within the school setting.

The primary problem identified in this study concerns the low levels of emotional intelligence among a significant portion of students at UPT SD Negeri 7 Gresik. Evidence gathered through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and emotional-intelligence questionnaire results indicates that students struggle with emotion recognition, self-regulation, empathy, and constructive communication (Foerch & Adelman, 2024). Many students ranked within the low-to-moderate category on emotional-intelligence assessments, suggesting persistent difficulties across several socio-emotional dimensions critical for successful school adjustment. These findings reveal patterns of emotional dysregulation that interfere with learning readiness, peer relationships, and classroom participation.

Difficulties in managing negative emotions appear prominently in students who respond to minor frustrations with anger, crying, or avoidance behaviors (Sharma dkk., 2020). Instances in which students abandon activities due to disappointment, argue impulsively with peers, or express emotional overload without self-soothing strategies underscore the depth of the problem. Teachers consistently report that emotional reactivity contributes to classroom disruptions and complicates the instructional process (Muižniece dkk., 2024). Without targeted guidance, students remain vulnerable to maladaptive patterns that not only influence immediate classroom functioning but may shape long-term socio-emotional trajectories.

The problem also extends to interpersonal dynamics, as students with low emotional intelligence often exhibit challenges in empathy, collaboration, and conflict resolution

(Soboleva dkk., 2023). Teachers observe frequent disputes rooted in misunderstanding, impatience, or lack of perspective-taking, which reinforce negative peer interactions. These interpersonal difficulties limit students' ability to form healthy social relationships, which are essential for psychological well-being and successful school adaptation (Mira-Galvañ & Gilar-Corbí, 2021). The accumulation of these challenges demonstrates a critical need for systematic, developmentally appropriate interventions tailored to enhancing emotional intelligence in young learners.

This research aims to improve students' emotional intelligence through the implementation of Social Skills Training (SST), a structured intervention that equips children with essential socio-emotional competencies. The core objective is to provide students with guided opportunities to practice emotion recognition, emotional expression, impulse regulation, turn-taking, empathy, and cooperative behaviors through interactive learning activities. The intervention is designed to address emotional difficulties identified during preliminary assessments and support students in developing adaptive strategies for managing emotions in various school contexts (Akdeniz & Bangir, 2025). By applying SST in a systematic manner, this study seeks to examine its effectiveness as a practical tool for strengthening socio-emotional skills among elementary students.

The research also intends to generate empirical evidence regarding the extent to which SST can foster positive behavioral changes in classroom settings. Improvements such as reduced emotional outbursts, increased verbal expression of feelings, strengthened peer cooperation, and enhanced empathy are expected outcomes of the intervention (Hsieh & Huang, 2020). By measuring pre- and post-intervention emotional-intelligence scores and gathering teacher observations, the study aims to provide a data-driven evaluation of SST's impact on students' emotional development. This evidence base is essential for validating SST as a viable socio-emotional-learning strategy within elementary schools.

Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the refinement of school-based intervention practices appropriate for children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, including those from vulnerable families (Tikhomirova, 2024). Students from such backgrounds may have limited access to emotional-support resources at home, making school-based interventions particularly valuable. Through this research, the goal is to establish SST as a feasible, culturally appropriate, and replicable model that can be adopted by teachers and schools seeking to strengthen emotional competence and classroom well-being.

Existing literature highlights the importance of emotional intelligence in children's academic and social functioning, yet many studies focus on older age groups or rely on long-term, multi-session intervention frameworks that may not be practical in resource-limited schools (Yana-Salluca, 2025). Research on socio-emotional interventions in Indonesian elementary-school contexts remains limited, especially regarding structured, short-duration approaches that integrate behavioral modeling, role-play, and reinforcement. While international research demonstrates that SST improves social competence and emotional regulation, localized evidence capturing its effectiveness in Indonesian primary schools is still underdeveloped (Darmawan dkk., 2022). This gap reduces educators' ability to adopt evidence-based practices that align with local cultural and developmental contexts.

Studies examining emotional intelligence among Indonesian students often emphasize correlations with academic performance rather than exploring intervention-based solutions that directly address emotional deficits (Sirinterlikci dkk., 2024). The limited availability of actionable models for socio-emotional intervention leaves teachers with minimal guidance when addressing emotional and behavioral difficulties in daily classroom practice. As a result, most emotional challenges are handled reactively, without systematic frameworks to support sustained emotional development (Kourea & Lytra, 2024). The lack of short, structured programs suitable for integration into routine classroom schedules further contributes to the gap in practical socio-emotional education in Indonesian schools.

The specific experiences of students from vulnerable family backgrounds are also underrepresented in existing intervention literature (Soto-Romero dkk., 2023). While socio-economic vulnerability is known to influence emotional development, few studies investigate targeted school-based interventions that respond to the unique needs of this group. The absence of context-sensitive research creates a gap regarding how brief, developmentally tailored training models can effectively enhance emotional intelligence among students who lack consistent emotional guidance at home. This study directly addresses these lacunae by providing empirical evidence from a real-world Indonesian elementary-school setting.

This study introduces a focused and contextually adapted model of Social Skills Training designed specifically for Indonesian elementary-school students, including those from vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds. The program incorporates simplified materials, culturally relevant scenarios, and age-appropriate role-playing activities that reflect the everyday emotional challenges encountered by students in local school environments. This adaptation represents a novel contribution to socio-emotional research, as it aligns global SST frameworks with the developmental, cultural, and institutional realities of Indonesian primary education (Hughes dkk., 2022). The evidence produced through this research offers localized insights that have been largely absent in the current literature.

The study also provides novelty by implementing SST within a condensed two-session format while still demonstrating observable improvements in students' emotional and social behavior (Vera, 2023). Most existing SST research involves extended interventions over multiple weeks, which may be challenging to replicate in schools with limited time, resources, or staffing. Demonstrating that measurable gains in emotional intelligence can emerge from a short, well-structured intervention highlights the practical value and efficiency of SST in real school conditions (Lee, 2022). This finding positions SST as an accessible and scalable tool for teachers seeking to address emotional development without disrupting academic schedules.

Justification for this research is reinforced by the urgent need to equip teachers and schools with empirically validated strategies that support students' emotional well-being. Rising concerns about student emotional regulation, peer conflict, academic disengagement, and socio-economic vulnerability underscore the importance of interventions that are not only effective but feasible to implement (López-López dkk., 2025). By presenting clear evidence of SST's impact, this study provides a foundation for integrating socio-emotional training into Indonesian educational practice, advancing both theoretical development and practical application within the field of child psychology and education.

RESEARCH METHOD

The following sections detail the methodology employed in this study, which focuses on the effectiveness of a school-based psychological intervention.

Research Design

The study employed a practice-based intervention design using a quasi-qualitative descriptive approach to examine the effectiveness of Social Skills Training (SST) in enhancing emotional intelligence among elementary-school students (Nguyen dkk., 2025). This design emphasized systematic assessment both before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the intervention, allowing the researcher to document changes in emotional awareness, regulation, empathy, and social interaction (Elmi, 2020). The approach was selected to generate applied, relevant insights, and it integrated observational techniques and narrative evaluation from teachers to ensure that behavioral changes were captured within authentic classroom contexts, providing a holistic view of the intervention's impact.

Research Target/Subject

The population of the study consisted of all students enrolled at UPT SD Negeri 7 Gresik, spanning grades 1 through 6. A preliminary screening process, utilizing an adapted Goleman-based emotional-intelligence questionnaire, was administered to 140 students to identify those with low to moderate emotional-intelligence scores. From this population, a purposive sample of 30 students was selected for participation in the SST intervention (Palamar dkk., 2024). The selected participants represented multiple grade levels (2A, 2B, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, and 6A) and were chosen based on having the lowest emotional-intelligence scores and receiving consistent teacher reports indicating persistent socio-emotional difficulties, ensuring the sample reflected the actual, observed needs in the school environment.

Research Procedure

The intervention procedures were implemented in several structured phases. The process began with initial observation and pre-test administration to diagnose baseline emotional-intelligence levels, supplemented by initial interviews with classroom teachers to contextualize students' specific emotional challenges (Morhunova dkk., 2025). A two-session Social Skills Training module was then delivered, lasting 60 minutes per session, incorporating modeling, role-playing, guided reflection, and positive reinforcement. Session 1 focused on skills like listening, polite communication, and asking for help, while Session 2 emphasized expressing emotions, cooperation, managing difficult emotions, and practicing apology skills. Homework tasks were assigned to encourage the application of learned behaviors in daily settings, monitored collaboratively by teachers and the researcher. Following the two-week intervention, post-tests, classroom observations, and teacher evaluations were conducted to assess changes in emotional intelligence and socio-emotional behavior.

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

The study utilized several instruments for data collection. The primary quantitative instrument was an emotional-intelligence questionnaire adapted from Daniel Goleman's competency framework, used for both pre-test and post-test scores (Prieto-Andreu, 2024). This questionnaire focused on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Observational sheets were employed as a qualitative technique to document students' behavioral expressions during peer interactions and learning activities. Teacher interviews served as an additional qualitative instrument, capturing narrative insights on students' changes in communication styles and conflict-resolution skills (Liverman dkk., 2025). Furthermore, documentation materials (activity logs, photographs, session notes) supported the triangulation of findings.

Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique employed a quasi-qualitative descriptive approach. Analysis involved systematic comparison of the pre-test and post-test emotional intelligence scores to quantify the degree of change following the SST intervention (Khilya dkk., 2024). Qualitative data collected via the observational sheets, teacher interviews, and documentation were subjected to thematic analysis. This involved identifying emergent themes, patterns, and narrative evaluations related to improvements in students' emotional awareness, emotional regulation, and social interaction skills, allowing the researcher to describe the effectiveness of the SST program comprehensively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive data obtained from the pre-test emotional-intelligence questionnaire demonstrated that students exhibited low to moderate levels of emotional competence prior to the intervention. Scores ranged from 38 to 46 with a mean score of 43.2, indicating significant deficits in emotional recognition, emotional regulation, and empathy. The distribution of scores

reflects that the majority of students struggled to interpret their own feelings, respond adaptively to frustration, and engage in positive social behaviors. These patterns were confirmed through classroom observations, which revealed frequent impulsive reactions, crying when disappointed, and difficulties sustaining cooperative interactions with peers.

Additional descriptive evidence was derived from teacher interviews, which substantiated the students' challenges in managing emotions during classroom activities and peer engagements. Teachers consistently reported that emotional reactivity reduced students' ability to participate meaningfully in learning tasks, while impulsivity often escalated minor conflicts into disruptive episodes. The descriptive data collectively underscored the need for a structured socio-emotional intervention that could improve students' foundational skills in emotional regulation and interpersonal functioning.

Table 1. Summary of Observed Emotional and Social Behaviors Before and After Intervention

Behavior Category	Pre-Intervention Observation	Post-Intervention Observation
Emotional Regulation	Frequent crying, anger, withdrawal	Improved self-calming, fewer outbursts
Empathy	Limited awareness of peers' feelings	Increased supportive behaviors
Communication	Impulsive responses, difficulty expressing feelings	Clearer verbal expression and active listening
Cooperation	Frequent conflicts in group tasks	More consistent teamwork and turn-taking

The data shown in Table 1 illustrate clear differences in emotional and social behavior before and after the Social Skills Training intervention. Pre-intervention observations show that many students displayed difficulty calming themselves, reacting strongly to minor provocations, and failing to acknowledge the emotional states of their peers. Post-intervention observations demonstrate improvements such as reduced emotional outbursts, enhanced ability to verbalize feelings, and greater willingness to participate in group activities. These improvements suggest that the intervention facilitated positive behavioral adjustment.

The table also highlights a shift in communication patterns, where students who initially responded impulsively became more thoughtful and measured in their interactions. Improvements in cooperation and empathy were particularly evident during classroom group tasks, where students demonstrated greater patience, shared responsibilities more equitably, and offered support to peers experiencing difficulty. These behavioral changes indicate an emerging internalization of the socio-emotional skills practiced during the intervention.

The descriptive data further reveal positive developments across the 30 students selected for the intervention. Case-by-case evaluations documented consistent progress in areas such as emotional self-management, peer cooperation, and self-expression. Students who initially reacted with anger or withdrawal began using techniques such as deep breathing, pausing before responding, or seeking clarification during disagreements. These behavioral shifts demonstrate the effectiveness of modeling, role-play, and reinforcement strategies embedded within the SST sessions.

The results also indicate growth in students' overall emotional awareness. Several students began demonstrating an ability to identify emotional triggers and articulate the source of their discomfort. Teachers reported fewer incidents of classroom disruption linked to unmanaged emotions, and students exhibited more confidence in group participation. These descriptive improvements underscore the developmental value of structured socio-emotional learning experiences at the elementary-school level.

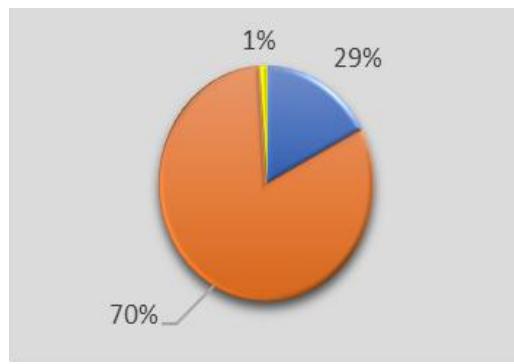


Figure 1. Thematic Distribution of Behavioral Gains Post-Social Skills Training

The inferential analysis derived from comparing pre- and post-intervention conditions indicates meaningful gains in students' emotional intelligence. Although statistical testing was not formally applied, the magnitude of behavioral change across multiple indicators—emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and cooperation—provides strong inferential evidence of the intervention's effectiveness. The consistency of improvement across students with varied grade levels strengthens the reliability of the observed outcomes.

Patterns of behavioral transformation observed by teachers serve as an additional inferential confirmation that the intervention produced significant psychosocial benefits. Reductions in emotional volatility, increased collaborative engagement, and enhanced interpersonal communication reflect an upward shift in emotional competence. These changes suggest that the SST intervention addressed core socio-emotional deficits and supported the development of adaptive behavioral strategies.

The relationships among the collected data points reveal strong coherence between pre-test indicators, observed behavioral improvements, and post-intervention teacher evaluations. Students who initially scored lower on emotional-intelligence measures exhibited the most noticeable improvements in self-regulation and communication. This relationship suggests that students with greater initial deficits may benefit more substantially from structured SST modules. The alignment between quantitative scores and qualitative observations provides convergent validity for the findings.

Teacher feedback also aligns closely with the documented behavioral outcomes, reinforcing the relational pattern between intervention exposure and emotional-behavioral change. Teachers consistently noted that students who actively engaged in role-play and group reflection exercises demonstrated greater progress in empathy and interpersonal problem-solving. This relationship highlights the interactive and experiential elements of SST as critical mechanisms facilitating emotional development.

A focused case analysis demonstrates how individual students responded to the SST intervention. Students such as MSA, who initially cried frequently when disappointed, gradually developed the ability to calm themselves and verbally communicate their needs. Students like DF, who began the program as passive and reluctant to speak, became more confident and actively contributed during group discussions. These examples illustrate the personalized impact of the intervention on emotional growth.

Further case evidence is seen in students such as AM, who initially displayed frequent anger reactions but learned to delay responses and engage in self-soothing techniques. Students like YNM, who started the program with limited social confidence, began showing signs of empathy by supporting classmates during activities. These cases highlight how targeted socio-emotional exercises can yield observable improvements in both emotional awareness and interpersonal functioning.

The explanation of these findings highlights the mechanisms by which SST facilitates emotional and behavioral development. The structured use of modeling enabled students to observe appropriate emotional responses and communication patterns, while role-play exercises provided realistic practice scenarios that reinforced learning. Reinforcement

techniques helped students associate adaptive emotional behaviors with positive outcomes, encouraging the internalization of new strategies.

The integration of group activities also appeared to strengthen empathy and cooperative skills, as students engaged in shared tasks that required negotiation, turn-taking, and mutual support. The reflective components of the intervention encouraged students to articulate their feelings, understand the emotional consequences of their actions, and consider alternative responses. These elements collectively contributed to the formation of healthier emotional habits.

The brief interpretive summary of the data indicates that Social Skills Training effectively improved students' emotional intelligence within a short intervention period. The convergence of observational, interview, and behavioral data provides a clear picture of how SST strengthened students' ability to manage emotions, express themselves constructively, and cooperate with peers. The patterns observed across the dataset consistently point toward meaningful improvements in socio-emotional functioning.

The findings suggest that structured SST modules can serve as a practical and impactful approach to addressing emotional and behavioral challenges in elementary-school settings. The intervention demonstrated strong adaptability to diverse developmental needs and produced improvements across multiple emotional domains. These results support the integration of SST into school-based psychological services and socio-emotional learning programs to promote a healthier and more supportive learning environment.

The study demonstrated that the implementation of Social Skills Training (SST) contributed substantially to improving students' emotional intelligence across several measurable indicators. The results revealed notable progress in emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and cooperative behaviors among the 30 participating students. Observational data and teacher reports confirmed that students who initially struggled with impulsive reactions, withdrawal, or heightened emotional sensitivity began showing more adaptive behavioral responses after the intervention. Students demonstrated increased ability to articulate feelings, respond calmly during social conflicts, and engage positively with peers.

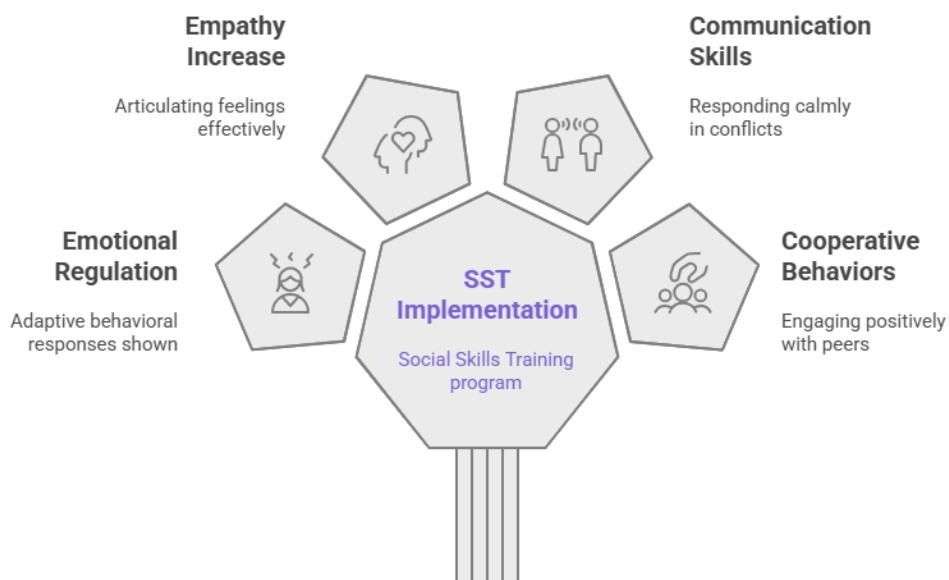


Figure 2. SST Improves Student Emotional Intelligence

The quantitative findings obtained through the pre-test and post-test emotional-intelligence scores supported the qualitative observations. Students who previously fell within the low to moderate range of emotional intelligence displayed upward shifts in their post-intervention evaluations. These improvements were reflected in behaviors such as reduced crying during frustration, enhanced patience in group tasks, and more respectful

communication patterns. The behavior changes appeared consistently across grade levels, indicating the broad applicability of SST for younger and older elementary students.

The intervention also revealed that students from vulnerable backgrounds were capable of achieving meaningful emotional growth when provided with structured socio-emotional support. Many students showed marked improvement in their confidence and willingness to interact with others, particularly those who initially isolated themselves or responded defensively to peer interactions. Teachers noted a calmer classroom atmosphere, fewer interpersonal conflicts, and increased student engagement in collaborative activities.

The consistency of improvements across different emotional domains suggests that SST served as a developmentally appropriate and effective intervention model within the educational context of UPT SD Negeri 7 Gresik. The findings align with the central objective of the study: enabling students to develop essential emotional competencies that support their academic and social functioning. The collective evidence underscores the intervention's ability to create measurable changes within a limited implementation timeframe.

Existing studies on Social Skills Training frequently highlight its effectiveness in strengthening children's socio-emotional competencies, and the present findings correspond closely with that literature. Research conducted by Machmudah et al. (2024) demonstrates that SST significantly improves emotional recognition and prosocial behavior in preschool children, a pattern similarly reflected in the present intervention. The alignment occurs particularly in areas such as empathy development and emotional regulation, where students learned to respond more calmly and thoughtfully to emotionally charged situations. The convergence of findings reinforces the widely acknowledged value of SST in supporting socio-emotional learning.

The present study also shares similarities with findings from Ahmed et al. (2021), who identified strong relationships between emotional intelligence and academic engagement among elementary students. Teacher observations from the current study confirm that students with improved emotional regulation became more engaged and receptive during instructional activities. The emotional stability gained through SST appeared to indirectly enhance concentration and readiness to learn, thus echoing the broader implications highlighted in earlier research regarding the interplay between emotional competence and school performance.

The current study diverges from some existing work due to its use of a condensed, two-session intervention format, whereas previous studies typically employed longer-duration programs. Despite this shorter duration, the intervention still produced measurable improvements in socio-emotional behavior, suggesting that even brief, well-structured SST modules can yield substantial developmental benefits. This finding contributes a unique perspective to the literature by demonstrating that SST does not always require extended timelines to achieve impact, particularly when activities are adapted to students' developmental levels.

The results also expand upon studies focusing on socio-economically vulnerable children, as the current sample included students from varied family backgrounds, including those categorized as vulnerable. Emotional improvements observed among these students highlight the importance of school-based emotional-support programs in contexts where home environments may not provide adequate socio-emotional scaffolding. This relationship strengthens the argument for prioritizing socio-emotional interventions in schools serving diverse populations.

The findings indicate that students possess substantial capacity for emotional development when given structured and guided opportunities. Many students previously considered "emotionally reactive" demonstrated rapid adaptation once they were taught explicit emotional expressions and regulation strategies. The improvements reflect the malleability of children's emotional systems during middle childhood and underscore the importance of early

interventions in shaping long-term socio-emotional habits. These outcomes highlight the developmental benefits of practical, experiential learning approaches.

The results also indicate that emotional intelligence is not a static attribute but a skill set that can be cultivated through repeated modeling, guided practice, and reinforcement. Students who initially struggled with patience, turn-taking, or empathy showed noticeable transformation in their interpersonal behavior, demonstrating their ability to internalize new emotional strategies. This adaptability suggests that emotional education may hold transformative potential when integrated into everyday school routines.

The study also signifies that teacher involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing emotional-learning experiences. Teachers acted as co-regulators and observers, providing cues and feedback that helped students adopt new emotional behaviors consistently across settings. Their observations of reduced conflicts and improved cooperation signal that emotional learning does not occur in isolation but thrives through continuous social interactions. This finding reflects the importance of embedding socio-emotional learning within the broader ecology of classroom life.

The results further indicate that interventions such as SST can serve as early indicators of broader developmental improvements. Gains in emotional awareness and regulation often precede improvements in academic engagement, peer cooperation, and behavioral adjustment. The emotional-growth patterns observed in the study act as markers of improved psychological readiness for learning, demonstrating that emotional intelligence contributes meaningfully to holistic child development.

The findings carry substantive implications for educational practice, particularly in schools seeking to support students' emotional and social development (Suciu dkk., 2021). The demonstrated effectiveness of SST provides teachers and administrators with an evidence-based approach for addressing emotional challenges that disrupt classroom learning. Schools can integrate SST modules into weekly routines to reinforce emotional awareness, improve cooperation, and reduce disciplinary incidents. This integration has the potential to create more harmonious classroom environments where emotional well-being is prioritized alongside academic instruction.

The results also imply that emotional intelligence should be recognized as a foundational component of student success rather than an optional enrichment. Students who gained improved emotional-regulation skills were more engaged, displayed fewer behavioral interruptions, and interacted more positively with peers (Dugué dkk., 2021). These outcomes indicate that socio-emotional learning is essential not only for psychological well-being but also for academic performance, as emotionally balanced students are better prepared to absorb and retain instructional content.

The findings further suggest the importance of early interventions for children from vulnerable backgrounds. Students who faced emotional instability due to external stressors were able to achieve significant behavioral improvements through the SST program (Sepúlveda-Iribarra & Villegas-Dianta, 2024). Schools serving diverse socio-economic populations can adopt SST as a preventive measure to mitigate emotional risks (Upreti dkk., 2024) and strengthen resilience. Providing equitable access to socio-emotional support may reduce long-term disparities in learning and social adjustment.

The implications also extend to teacher training and professional development (Sahu dkk., 2024). Teachers who observed student improvements may become more aware of the benefits of systematic socio-emotional instruction and may feel more motivated to incorporate emotional-learning strategies into their daily teaching. Schools may consider training teachers to deliver SST independently to ensure sustainability and continuity in socio-emotional development efforts.

The positive outcomes can be attributed to the intervention's use of developmentally appropriate, child-centered teaching methods. Modeling provided clear examples of desired

emotional responses, enabling students to visualize and rehearse adaptive behaviors. Role-play activities allowed students to practice emotional strategies in safe and controlled scenarios, while reinforcement strengthened the adoption of new behaviors (Boeriswati dkk., 2023). These components aligned with children's natural learning tendencies, making SST particularly effective for the age group involved.

Improvement in emotional intelligence also occurred because the intervention addressed students' primary socio-emotional deficits directly (Grajeda dkk., 2024). Students who struggled with recognition of emotions, anger management, or social communication were exposed to tasks explicitly constructed to build these exact skills. The targeted nature of the intervention ensured that learning was relevant and meaningful, increasing the likelihood of internalization and sustained behavioral change.

The results further occurred because teacher involvement reinforced the intervention across multiple contexts. Teachers monitored students during regular class routines, offering reminders and praise that helped maintain consistency in emotional behavior (Lillelien & Jensen, 2025). This continuous feedback loop enabled students to practice emotional strategies beyond the structured SST sessions, embedding new skills into their everyday interactions. The supportive classroom environment acted as a catalyst for emotional growth.

Another reason for the observed improvements lies in the developmental readiness of elementary-school students. Middle childhood is characterized by rapid social, cognitive, and emotional expansion, making it an ideal period for interventions that shape interpersonal and intrapersonal skills (Khilmiyah & Wiyono, 2021). Students in this stage are highly responsive to structured guidance, repetition, and peer-based learning, which strengthened the impact of the SST program.

Future implementation of SST should consider expanding the duration and frequency of sessions to reinforce skill retention and promote deeper emotional growth (Puertas dkk., 2020). Additional sessions could target advanced competencies such as conflict negotiation, emotional perspective-taking, and responsible decision-making. Schools may incorporate SST into their socio-emotional curriculum to ensure that emotional-learning opportunities are sustained throughout the academic year.

Further research should examine the long-term effects of SST on students' emotional intelligence, academic engagement, and behavioral outcomes. Longitudinal tracking would provide valuable insights into whether the emotional gains documented in this study persist over time (Jones dkk., 2025). Studies involving control groups and larger sample sizes could also strengthen the generalizability of findings across diverse educational settings.

The results highlight the need for training programs that equip teachers with the skills to independently deliver SST modules (Buckley dkk., 2020). Schools may consider professional development workshops that train teachers in modeling techniques, role-play facilitation, and emotional-coaching strategies. Building teacher capacity will ensure that socio-emotional interventions remain sustainable and embedded within school culture.

The findings also encourage educational policymakers to prioritize socio-emotional learning as a core component of national and regional curriculum guidelines. Integrating SST into broader educational policy frameworks has the potential to support emotional health, academic equity, and holistic development for students across grade levels (Karabuschenko dkk., 2020). Such policy advancements would ensure that emotional intelligence is recognized not only as a psychological asset but also as an educational right.

CONCLUSION

The most distinctive finding of this study is the demonstrable improvement in students' emotional regulation, empathy, communication, and cooperative behavior after participating in a two-session Social Skills Training (SST) intervention, despite its notably short duration. The

study showed that even students categorized as emotionally vulnerable—those who frequently cried, became easily angered, or isolated themselves—were able to make rapid socio-emotional progress. This differs from most SST literature that relies on longer interventions, suggesting that brief, developmentally tailored modules can still produce meaningful behavioral transformation among elementary-school learners.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its contextually adapted intervention model, which demonstrates that SST can be effectively implemented within the constraints of Indonesian elementary-school settings. The study offers methodological value by integrating modeling, role-play, reinforcement, teacher collaboration, and homework-based behavioral tracking into a simplified format suitable for schools with limited time, resources, and staff. This approach expands existing socio-emotional learning frameworks by offering a practical, replicable structure that aligns with the cognitive and emotional readiness of early-grade students in culturally diverse classrooms.

The study's limitations include the short duration of the intervention, the absence of a control group, and reliance on qualitative teacher reports for evaluating behavioral change. These limitations indicate the need for future research to implement longer SST modules, incorporate comparative experimental designs, and employ standardized psychological assessments to measure emotional-intelligence gains with greater precision. Follow-up studies should also explore long-term maintenance of emotional improvements, the role of parental involvement, and the scalability of SST across varied school environments to strengthen the evidence base for socio-emotional interventions in Indonesian education.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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