

The Role of The Teacher in Managing The Social-Emotional Abilities of Early Childhood

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Abstract

Early childhood education, particularly during the 'golden age' of 5-6 years, often lacks balance. Emphasis is placed on academic aspects such as recognizing numbers and letters, while crucial social-emotional development, essential for shaping personality and life skills, is neglected. Consequently, children struggle to comprehend lessons when emotions are unmanaged and are prone to social issues like conflicts or isolation. This study aims to analyze how teachers manage social-emotional skills in 5-6-year-olds and provide practical guidelines for integrating social-emotional education into daily learning. Employing a qualitative descriptive method at TK Aisyiah 3 Jogorogo, with two teachers as subjects, data were collected via direct observations of child behavior and in-depth interviews over one month. Data were then evaluated using thematic analysis to identify key themes, such as patterns of child interaction and teachers' roles as role models. Findings reveal teachers understand child development through daily observations, such as during peer interactions or challenges. They address this by fostering a safe classroom environment, modeling emotional regulation, designing collaborative activities like team games to build empathy and emotional control, and collaborating with parents for consistency between home and school. In conclusion, teachers play a central role in shaping children's emotional intelligence through holistic approaches, including balanced digital education integration and teaching skills like breathing techniques for self-calming. Thus, children develop into stable, empathetic individuals ready for life's challenges, ensuring education encompasses not only academics but also vital social-emotional aspects.

Keywords: social-emotional development, role of the teacher, early childhood

Introduction Section

A child is an individual within the age range of 0 to 6 years, according to Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system. Meanwhile, according to UNESCO, a child is an individual aged between 0 and 8 years. Early childhood is defined as children aged 0–6 years who possess specific and distinct characteristics. Early childhood are children within a certain age limit, with unique characteristics, and are undergoing a rapid and fundamental development process essential for their future life (Syahrul & Nurhafizah, 2021). This stage of early childhood is a crucial period known as the 'Golden Age,' where a child's growth and development occur rapidly. In this phase, children begin to understand themselves, their environment, and their surroundings as supporting factors for their growth and development.

Child development encompasses not only physical aspects but also others such as religious and moral values, motor skills, cognitive development, language, and social and emotional aspects. One of the aspects that can be developed in early childhood is social-emotional development. Social-emotional are two interconnected and inseparable words because they complement each other (Firmansyah, 2021). Social development includes the ability to interact with others and the environment, manage emotions, and express feelings both verbally and non-verbally (Khaironi, 2020).

Social-emotional development is very important for an individual because it relates to a child's ability to establish interactions with others. Especially when at school, children will engage in many direct interactions with teachers and friends, which stimulates their social-emotional development (Nurdin & Anhusadar, 2020). Social-emotional development involves the process by which children learn to recognize, understand, and manage emotions, as well as interact with others. This process includes skills in emotion management, empathy, building friendships, and self-development.

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At the age of 5 to 6 years, the social-emotional aspect becomes extremely important in early childhood education. At this age, children are in a phase of interacting with peers and the social environment. This phase provides them with preparation for future communication. Children aged 5-6 years begin to learn about feelings toward themselves and others, as well as understanding the concepts of sharing, empathy, collaboration, and playing together with friends. Despite learning these things, children still have difficulty controlling emotions such as sadness, disappointment, fear, and anger. In the process of emotion management, children face new challenges because they have to manage these emotions. The ability to manage emotions is an individual skill that must be taught to children, as they cannot do it on their own.

The development of character and actions aligned with social direction is the goal of social-emotional progress in children, which is driven by social interaction. Social-emotional development encompasses various aspects, such as a sense of responsibility, affection, caring, empathy, the ability to understand emotions, anger control, independence, adaptability, perseverance in doing something, a sense of togetherness, good and polite behavior, and respect (Susilowati, 2021)

With the advancement of time and increasingly sophisticated technology, children often find it difficult to manage emotions due to using technology without supervision from parents or adults. Children aged 5-6 years need to adapt to their environment to meet school expectations, such as recognizing numbers and letters. One consequence that may arise if a child cannot regulate their emotions is difficulty understanding the material delivered by the teacher. Emotion regulation is a fundamental skill that affects many aspects of a child's development, including social relationships, learning ability, and psychological well-being (Ramadhan, n.d.). Children who can regulate their emotions well tend to adapt more easily in various situations, have positive relationships with peers, and show better concentration levels while learning (Ariyanti et al. 2024). The inability to regulate emotions often leads to behavioral problems such as emotional outbursts, aggression, or even social withdrawal. This emotion management can be applied when a child is angry, by a teacher providing space for the child to resolve their emotions.

A teacher is a professional educator who must perform their duties well and with quality (Khaira & Cholimah, 2023). Teachers also help students reach their potential, boost self-confidence, and assist them in building relationships and connecting with others. Therefore, it can be said that the role of the teacher in early childhood education is very important for the growth and development process of students and their future (Ariani, 2021).

The important role of the early childhood teacher is seen in the process of interacting with students, nurturing the child, providing facilities, managing stress, planning, guiding and caring, as well as providing enrichment and learning development (Palintan, 2020). Furthermore, the teacher also serves as a role model for children in emotion management. By applying positive and healthy ways to deal with personal feelings, the teacher provides an example that normal emotions can be handled well. For instance, when a teacher remains calm in the face of a difficult situation, children can learn not to rush in handling their own feelings.

In reality, education today tends to emphasize academic development. Meanwhile, development in the affective and psychomotor aspects is often neglected, which impacts the teacher's attention being more focused on academic-oriented learning success. Therefore, teachers should incorporate emotional education into planned learning to teach emotional intelligence skills. Emotional intelligence can include activities such as breathing exercises to help calm down and positive communication techniques with friends and others. In addition, by using a supportive emotional approach, teachers can create a learning atmosphere where children feel accepted and listened to well. This will build a strong foundation for social-emotional development because children feel safe and valued, enabling them to manage their emotions more effectively. If teachers can manage the child's social-emotional aspects well, they will better understand the children, so that learning can be adjusted to their development. Despite the profound and widespread significance of social-emotional development, current literature is inadequate in providing a detailed and specific depiction of how Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers at TK Aisyiah 3 Jogorogo practically implement emotion management strategies to mitigate challenges arising from an intense academic focus and the adverse effects of technology on children's emotion regulation. Consequently, this research is designed to explore the teacher's role in addressing the social-emotional skills of children aged 5-6 years, concurrently offering practical guidelines for educators to enhance children's social-emotional competence.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method, which is a type of research in the field of education where the researcher relies on the views of participants or informants. Qualitative research itself is educational research that relies on participant views, where the researcher conducts interviews, asks general questions, and the collected data are mostly in the form of words or text from informants or participants. The researcher develops and analyzes them into a comprehensible writing (Safarudin et al., 2023). Furthermore, there is descriptive research, often called taxonomic, whose goal is the exploration or clarification of symptoms, phenomena, or social realities. It focuses on describing the variables related to the problem and the unit studied, without discussing the relationship between variables or seeking their causes (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023).

This study was conducted at TK Aisyiah 3 Jogorogo, involving two teachers as subjects, focusing on the teacher's role in developing the social-emotional abilities of early childhood. The qualitative data collection techniques have three principles that researchers must apply: observation, interviews, and documents (Ultavia et al., 2023).

Qualitative data begins with collecting information through observation, in-depth interviews, documentation, or a combination of these three methods, where the researcher seeks ways to obtain more varied and extensive data from the subjects studied. Next, data reduction is a thinking process that requires sharpness and broad understanding, meaning that the abundant field data are recorded carefully and in detail, then analyzed by summarizing, selecting main elements, focusing on important points, and looking for patterns and emerging themes. The qualitative data presentation process is carried out in various forms such as summaries, diagrams, relationships between categories, workflows, and other forms. Finally, the drawing of initial conclusions is temporary and can change if not supported by strong evidence, while the verification process continues (Safarudin et al., 2023). This research was conducted for 1 month with 2 teacher subjects at Tk Aisyah 3 Jogorogo.

Results and Discussion

To obtain data regarding the Teacher's Role in managing the Social-Emotional development of early childhood, the researcher conducted interviews with the 2 teachers at Tk Aisyah 3 Jogorogo as the main resource persons. This interview aimed to explore information about the teacher's role in managing children's social-emotional development. The interview was conducted to explore the strategies used by the teachers, the challenges faced, and the collaboration between parents and teachers in optimizing all aspects of development, but primarily social-emotional development. To provide a clear and structured depiction, the interview results and data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis, which identified three key themes related to teachers' roles: 1) Teachers as role models, 2) Implementation of collaborative activities, and 3) Taught regulation skills. The data have been presented in the following table, which includes question points, respondents, and key points from the interviews.

Table 1. Teacher Interview Guidelines Grid

No.	Question	Answer Subject 1	Subject 2	Respondent
1.	How do teachers recognize and understand the individual social-emotions of children?	By observing children directly during learning when solving problems given by the teacher.	We can recognize and understand children's social-emotional state by observing every development of the students (observation). We can design activities that encourage children to cooperate with their friends, perform activities that require patience, and thus we can know their social-emotional state. This strategy is observable in outdoor activities, such as the "relay game," where children take turns queuing to place blocks. When a child exhibits frustration while waiting, the teacher intervenes by approaching and guiding the child to patiently wait and singing instead of reacting with anger, thereby promoting self-awareness and regulation skills.	Teacher
2.	How do teachers apply social-emotional aspects into daily learning?	By creating a safe, comfortable, creative, supportive classroom so that children feel happy and joyful at school	We can apply social-emotional aspects into learning by being a good example or role model for the children, practicing and teaching children about politeness, and educating them on how to respect others. And also creating a safe and comfortable atmosphere so that children can manage emotions well. For instance, when teachers are confronted with a difficult situation or when a child is screaming, they respond by maintaining composure,	Teacher

			demonstrating the method of deep breathing before speaking, and using polite language. This action serves as a direct example (role modeling) for the children on how to manage complex emotions effectively	
3.	What are the challenges in children's social-emotional development?	Problems interacting with classmates; if they cannot control their emotions, fighting will occur. To resolve disputes, the teacher asks the children to recount the event, then guides them to rehearse apologizing and settling the issue appropriately.	The challenge of children's social-emotional development is when we encounter children who have difficulty adapting to their friends. Such children tend to like to be alone, do not want to be left by their parents, especially if the child has been influenced by a negative environment, then they will be very difficult to control their emotions.	Teacher
4.	How do teachers assess children's social-emotional development individually?	By directly observing the child and writing a daily anecdote according to the child's schedule.	We assess children individually by conducting observation, observing every development and unique behavior, then recording it in an anecdote book..	Teacher
5.	How effective is the collaboration between parents and teachers in children's social-emotional development?	Just as effective. Parents are very effective as the first educator, while the teacher is very effective in the school environment.	In the social-emotional development of children, we really need to collaborate with parents, asking and answering questions about the child's development, what their surrounding environment is like, because parents are the first and primary educators for children at home. With good cooperation between parents and teachers, it will be able to optimally support the child's development.	Teacher
6.	In the context of a diverse class, how do you adjust your approach to managing the emotions of students from different backgrounds?	By going around and checking each class about the child's background	We can adjust the approach to managing students' emotions with different backgrounds by creating a safe and comfortable classroom, we must also be able to recognize and understand the social-emotional state of each child through the observations we make on every development.	Teacher
7.	Does the current advancement of technology affect children's social-emotional state?	Yes, it is very influential because technological advancements will have positive and negative impacts.	Technological advancement greatly affects children's social-emotional state. Children who are addicted to gadgets with various shows and games that can trigger their emotions will have difficulty controlling their emotions.	Teacher
8.	What is the teacher's role in managing social-emotions?	Very important because social-emotional serves as a role model who teaches skills in the daily learning environment.	The teacher's role in managing children's social-emotional state is that we must be able to be a good role model for students, behave wisely, teach children so that they can control their emotions, be polite and confident, and instill a caring attitude towards others.	Teacher

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| 9. | How to regulate children's social-emotional development? | Parents must be a good and positive example and create an environment that helps the child recognize their emotional nature. | By approaching the child, inviting the child to play with their peers, helping them in recognizing and managing their emotions, instilling an attitude of respecting the feelings of others, and creating an environment full of affection. Teachers can explicitly teach the skill of breathing techniques for self-calming. For example, when a child is angry, the teacher should guide the child to a designated corner and instruct them to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth. This strategy effectively assists the child in self-regulation before their behavior escalates to aggression. | Teacher |
| 10. | What strategies can support the teacher in social-emotional development? | Creating a safe, comfortable, creative, innovative, and fun environment, so that children always miss school. | Teaching children how they can control their emotions and build children's social skills in interacting with others | Teacher |

Development is a process where abilities or skills increase in structure and function of the body, becoming more complex, following an orderly and predictable pattern, resulting from experience and natural maturation. This also includes the child's motor, cognitive, social, and emotional abilities. One important component in a child's growth is the social and emotional aspect, which is often considered a major challenge in their development process. This social and emotional development occurs through a series of processes resulting from the maturation of body organs plus the learning process.

Starting from the initial phase, ages 0-1 year, children usually show a sense of security in the family environment if their needs are met by the people around them. Infants begin to explore the world through touch, taste, and other experiences. From this exploration, they learn and feel secure, so their development can proceed smoothly. However, if the baby feels uncomfortable at home, they will spend energy adjusting, which makes them lose the opportunity to explore themselves. As a result, if there is no chance to explore, children cannot learn and will feel unsafe, so their development is less than optimal.

The growth period from infancy to primary school is like a strong learning foundation for children, so that their social-emotional abilities become healthier, and they are ready to face the next, more difficult developmental stages. This crucial phase is the right time to build the foundations of children's social-emotional abilities. Parents and teachers need to have knowledge and skills about child growth and development, especially in the social and emotional aspects, so that the child's development can be maximized.

Social development is essentially the child's effort to get to know the surrounding environment and understand the reciprocal interaction between individuals, or individuals and groups, including behavior, the process of adapting to societal rules, thus forming a personality that is in line with the family, culture, and nation. Because social development is the result of learning, not just maturation. Thus, it can be concluded that social-emotional development is the development of a child's behavior in adapting to their environment. This becomes an important aspect in shaping a child's personality. In the social-emotional development of early childhood, it is very related to all aspects of their development. Each child has diversity in this process, especially when expressing themselves.

Emotional development is a combination of various feelings, both pleasant and unpleasant, with high enough intensity to cause inner turmoil. Emotional development is complex, can be a conscious feeling expressed through facial expressions or actions, whose function is as an internal adjustment to the environment to achieve personal well-being and safety. Emotion plays a super important role in a child's development, both in preschool age and subsequent stages, because of its influence on the child's behavior. These emotions are acquired from the family, surrounding, and school environment. The importance of emotion regulation can also be observed in the context of social relationships. Children who can manage their emotions are usually more accepted by their friends because they are able to show empathy, share, and cooperate well (Ramadan, 2024). For example, when a friend takes a toy, a child with the ability to regulate emotions will usually seek help from the teacher or talk calmly to resolve the problem compared to reacting aggressively (Rahma et al., 2024).

Emotional intelligence plays a central role in shaping a person's social competence, where the ability to manage emotions effectively encourages social activities and interaction skills, such as motivation, empathy, and conflict resolution. Children with good self-control, empathy, and affection will find it easier to socialize, thus being able to achieve their developmental tasks and possess social-emotional maturity that is an important provision for life. Conversely,

difficulty managing emotions often manifests as aggressive behavior or withdrawal. Therefore, emotion management needs to be done systematically in the educational environment, starting from the family, which functions as an educator, guide, and provider of a positive role model, especially in expressing feelings, because a child's understanding of emotions is rooted in the experiences gained at home. From an early age, children need to be taught appropriate emotional behavior control, given that the spontaneous and intense expression of emotions (such as tantrums) is natural in children, but requires guidance so that it does not continue into adulthood.

As teachers, we can recognize and understand children's social-emotional abilities by conducting routine observations of their daily development. Through this observation, we can design activities that encourage children to cooperate with their friends, such as group projects or team games, as well as activities that require patience, for example, waiting for a turn or completing long-term tasks. With this approach, we can more accurately identify children's social-emotional strengths and weaknesses, thus helping them develop into more empathetic individuals capable of managing emotions well.

In addition, we can apply social-emotional aspects into learning by being a good role model for children, such as showing polite behavior in daily interactions, teaching how to respect others through concrete examples, and creating a safe and comfortable classroom atmosphere so that children feel free to express emotions without fear of judgment. This not only builds their self-confidence but also teaches important skills such as emotion regulation and empathy, which are crucial in early childhood.

However, challenges in children's social-emotional development often arise when we face children who have difficulty adapting to their friends, such as those who tend to be alone or refuse to be left by their parents. If the child is influenced by a non-supportive environment, such as negative exposure from media or family, then they will find it increasingly difficult to control emotions, which can lead to impulsive behavior or social isolation. To overcome this, we need to assess the child individually through in-depth observation, observing every aspect of their development and unique behavior, then recording it in an anecdote book to track progress over time. This approach allows us to provide targeted interventions, such as additional support or special activities tailored to the needs of each child.

In this context, collaboration with parents becomes very important, because they are the first and primary educators for children at home. We can conduct routine question-and-answer sessions about the child's development, such as how they interact at home or in the surrounding environment, to get a complete picture and design joint strategies. Good cooperation between teachers and parents will optimally support the child's development, ensuring consistency between the school and home environments. Furthermore, we must adjust the approach to managing the emotions of students with different backgrounds, such as creating an inclusive and comfortable classroom, and conducting periodic observations to understand the social-emotional state of each child. This helps us respond to their cultural, economic, or personal experience variations with empathy and flexibility.

With the advancement of technology, it poses a big challenge to children's social-emotional development, especially when they are addicted to gadgets with content such as shows or games that trigger negative emotions. Children who are overexposed to this technology often find it difficult to control emotions, due to the lack of direct social interaction that should build empathy and regulation skills. Therefore, as teachers, we need to integrate balanced digital education, such as teaching how to use technology positively, while encouraging offline activities that strengthen social bonds. With this holistic approach, we can help children develop strong social-emotional abilities, preparing them to face an increasingly complex world.

Teachers have a central role in character building and social-emotional development of children. The educator's role in developing children's emotional intelligence as an example in the establishment of norms and rules applied to children. The core of the educator's role as a role model is the attitude that must be paid attention to, starting from basic behavior, way of speaking, daily habits, interaction with others, mindset, health status, welcoming the child's arrival with a smile, the habit of praying, and speaking politely. The teacher's role in shaping children's emotional intelligence as a model, motivator, and evaluator can be done verbally in the form of words or complimentary sentences and non-verbally in the form of touch, and approach to students.

The teaching competency of teachers in improving children's social-emotional aspects shows that teachers can be considered to have good teaching ability. This is because they have understood various learning theories and can apply the principle of learning through play, which is seen from social-emotional development through play activities. In terms of teaching competence, the teacher is able to design learning activities, implement classroom learning, and have carried out assessments of children in accordance with the desired developmental indicators. A teacher who understands the emotional needs of children can create a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment. Therefore, the teacher is a learning resource who has a very important role in dealing with various educational problems well and correctly. A professional teacher not only masters the subject matter but also knows how to convey it to students effectively. With a deep understanding of the subject taught, the teacher can function as a reliable learning resource for their students. This allows students to not only understand the concepts taught but also develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Thus, the teacher's role as a learning resource is key in creating a productive learning environment that supports students' academic development.

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The concept of Social-Emotional Learning, or what is commonly called SEL, developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), actually emphasizes how crucial it is to build children's social and emotional abilities as the main foundation for them to succeed both academically and in everyday life. The CASEL SEL framework identifies five core competencies that are interconnected and mutually supportive: self-awareness, which helps children understand their own feelings and strengths; self-management, to regulate emotions and impulses so they are not easily carried away by feelings; social awareness, to be empathetic and understand the perspectives of others; relationship skills, to build healthy and harmonious interactions; and finally, responsible decision-making, so they can choose wise actions and consider the consequences. By applying this at school or at home, we can help children grow into more resilient individuals, ready to face challenges, and better able to adapt to the environment/outside world.

Strategies that teachers can use in developing social-emotional abilities include creating an emotionally safe learning environment, which is very important because it allows children to develop Social Emotional Competencies (SEC), where the successful management of emotions, including the ability to communicate well and create a comfortable atmosphere for others, becomes the main indicator of SEC maturity. Healthy social development starts in the family, then is expanded at school and in the community, which in turn creates a positive, supportive, and motivation-inducing learning atmosphere. When children enter the school environment, the main expectation is that they are able to maintain good relationships, be cooperative (such as not fighting, being willing to help, and working together), show obedience, and be accepted in their social group (not being alone). Therefore, a harmonious relationship between children and peers and teachers, rooted in good SEC, is an essential prerequisite for maximizing the learning process.

Conclusions and Suggestions

This research confirms the role of the teacher in managing social-emotional abilities in early childhood, revealing that social-emotional development is an important element in shaping a child's personality. This involves the ability to recognize, manage emotions, and interact with the environment harmoniously. At the age of 5-6 years, this phase is a crucial foundation for future academic and social preparation, where children learn to control impulses, show empathy, and build positive relationships.

The results of interviews with two teachers at TK Aisyiah 3 Jogorogo show that teachers function as primary role models by modeling good behavior, conducting routine observations of children's progress, and integrating social-emotional aspects into daily learning activities, such as creating a safe classroom atmosphere and supporting cooperation

among children. However, there are challenges such as children's difficulty in adapting to peers, the negative impact of technology, and differences in student backgrounds that often hinder this process. Therefore, it is important to conduct individual assessments through anecdotal records and collaborate with parents so that education between home and school can be consistent. Several effective strategies identified include teaching emotion regulation skills, an inclusive approach to student diversity, and implementing balanced digital education to reduce the adverse effects of gadgets. The implication is that teachers who are competent in this field not only help a child's emotional well-being but also support the achievement of developmental indicators in accordance with national education standards.

Overall, this research highlights the importance of continuous training for teachers to improve comprehensive teaching skills, in order to bridge the gap between academic focus and affective aspects. Recommendations for future research include expanding the sample to other schools and evaluating the long-term impact of social-emotional interventions on children's achievement, so that early childhood education can be more optimal in shaping a strong and empathetic generation. Thus, the teacher's role as the main facilitator is very important in achieving balanced and sustainable child development.

Based on the researcher's analysis, several practical suggestions can be applied to increase the effectiveness of child development. Teachers are advised to improve their competence through continuous training on children's social-emotional development and to conduct routine observation and assessment to identify the extent of children's social-emotional development. In addition, teachers also need to create a safe and conducive environment while utilizing existing technology to support children's development. In addition to teachers, parents also need to collaborate with teachers regarding children's social development. Parents, as the primary educators, are advised to actively collaborate with teachers through routine communication to monitor the child's development. For subsequent researchers, it is suggested to expand the research further to obtain more representative and in-depth data. By consistently implementing these suggestions, early childhood education can be more effective in shaping an emotionally resilient generation ready to contribute to the environment and society.

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