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Improving Social Skills of Elementary Students Through Interactive Learning Methods at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi

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Abstract. This community service program aimed to enhance the social skills of students at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi, Sidenreng Rappang Regency, focusing on expressing gratitude, asking for help, apologizing, and forgiving. The activity was conducted on November 21, 2024, involving 25 students, the Principal, and teachers. A combination of lecture and role-playing methods was used to deliver the material interactively. The program was implemented in three main stages: preparation, implementation, and reflection. During the preparation stage, the team coordinated with school authorities and developed appropriate learning materials. In the implementation stage, students engaged in interactive lectures and role-playing scenarios that simulated real-life social situations, allowing them to practice and internalize the skills effectively. The reflection stage encouraged students to share their experiences and discuss the benefits of maintaining positive social relationships. Feedback from students and teachers indicated significant improvements in students' confidence and ability to manage social interactions. However, the limited duration and number of participants were recognized as potential limitations of the program. Future recommendations include extending the program duration, involving more participants, and conducting follow-up studies to assess the long-term impact of the training. The overall results suggest that integrating interactive learning methods with reflective practices can significantly enhance students' social skills.

Keywords: Social Skills; Elementary Students; Interactive Learning; Role-Playing; Character Development; Community Service

1. Introduction

Social skills are one of the essential aspects of a child's development, especially during elementary school years. At this age, children begin to develop the ability to interact with their peers, teachers, and a broader social environment (Barros Blanco et al., 2022). Therefore, teaching social skills from an early age is crucial to equip children with the ability to adapt well to various social situations (Davies et al., 2021; Healy et al., 2024; Hu et al., 2025; Söngüt & Gözübüyük, 2025; Zhang et al., 2024). Skills such as expressing gratitude, asking for help, apologizing, and forgiving are fundamental to healthy social relationships, which, if mastered well, will influence the quality of children's relationships in the future (Lee, 2014). These skills not only support children in interacting positively

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with others but also serve as a foundation for building strong, empathetic character and wise emotional management.

Social skills are defined as the abilities that encompass interpersonal behavior, self-behavior, academic skills, assertiveness, peer acceptance, and communication skills (Intansari, 2023; Schüller & Demetriou, 2018). Social skills consist of both intrapersonal and interpersonal abilities that support an individual in establishing social relationships with their environment (Mahmudah *et al.*, 2022). The ability to interact and behave in a way that is accepted by the social environment is essential in human life and society. Social skills refer to a set of abilities that enable individuals to interact, communicate, and collaborate effectively with others in various social situations. Social skills involve awareness of social norms, the ability to adapt to changing social contexts, and the ability to form healthy interpersonal relationships (Musfirah *et al.*, 2024; Sovia Ikhwan Putri, 2024; Susanti *et al.*, 2024). These social interaction skills can be trained by developing social skills from an early age, especially at the elementary school level (Suprio *et al.*, 2020). Social skills are the abilities to interact with others in a social context in ways that are accepted by society. These abilities are important to develop early, especially in elementary school, so that children can build healthy relationships and adapt well in various social situations.

Teaching children to express gratitude is the first step in developing social skills. When children learn to say thank you, they not only develop good manners but also learn to appreciate the help and kindness given by others. Appreciation for others strengthens mutual respect, strengthens relationships, and creates a more harmonious atmosphere in various social interactions. Similarly, the skill of asking for help teaches children to recognize their limitations and seek assistance when needed. The ability to ask for help politely will strengthen a sense of togetherness and cooperation, both in the classroom and in social interactions outside of school.

Furthermore, the ability to apologize and forgive is also essential in forming healthy relationships. When children are taught to apologize sincerely, they learn to take responsibility for their actions and understand the impact they have on others. The ability to forgive, on the other hand, teaches children to release negative feelings and keep relationships peaceful. This skill is crucial in reducing conflicts, strengthening friendships, and maintaining harmony among friends. By teaching children to forgive, they also learn not to hold on to prolonged anger and how to handle conflicts wisely.

The importance of teaching these social skills from an early age, especially in elementary school, is closely related to the fact that children are in a stage of character development that is very significant. They begin to build patterns of social interaction that will influence how they relate to others throughout their lives. Although they may not fully understand the complexity of social relationships, this simple social skills learning provides a strong foundation for children to interact better in the future. Good social skills at an early age will help children face more complex social dynamics as they grow older. Children with strong social skills tend to be better equipped to handle challenges in interacting with their environment, reduce the risk of interpersonal conflicts, and avoid aggressive behavior (Davies *et al.*, 2021; Mardiana *et al.*, 2023; Zhou *et al.*, 2025). A lack of social skills can lead to potential problems, whereas possessing good social skills can help students achieve success in school and society, as stated by Brigman, *et al.* (2001) in (Saripah & Mulyani, 2015).



To help children develop social skills, one effective method is through an interactive approach and role-playing. The interactive approach allows children to actively participate in the learning process, such as through group discussions, sharing experiences, and exercises that involve direct interaction. This method encourages children to engage more deeply in learning, think critically, and feel more confident in applying their social skills. With this approach, learning is not limited to theory alone but also provides an opportunity for children to practice in a fun and pressure-free environment.

One method that is particularly useful in teaching social skills is role-playing. The role-playing technique, as suggested by Piaget, can develop children's speaking and listening skills through the development of imagination and empathy (Listiyani et al., 2025). In role-playing, children are given the opportunity to act out various social scenarios that require them to express gratitude, ask for help, apologize, or forgive. Through this activity, children not only learn the right words to say but also experience real-life situations that help them understand how these social skills are applied in daily life. Additionally, role-playing gives children the chance to respond to various social situations with greater creativity and empathy.

Both the interactive and role-playing methods have many benefits. One of the key advantages is helping children feel more confident when interacting with others. Additionally, these methods can help reduce feelings of awkwardness or fear in social situations, allowing children to feel more comfortable expressing opinions or asking for help when needed. In the context of elementary schools, activities that involve active interaction and simulation of social situations will help children better prepare for the social challenges they may face.

Overall, this community service activity aimed at enhancing social skills in elementary school children is very important. The activity was carried out at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi, with the goal of providing fun and applicable learning for the students. Children are expected to master social skills that will be useful in their everyday lives. Through the interactive and role-playing approach, they not only gain theoretical knowledge of social skills but also experience first-hand how to apply them. Strong social skills will support the creation of a more inclusive, harmonious, and respectful school environment, and help children become more empathetic and responsible individuals in their interactions with others.

2. Methods

The community service activity aimed to improve the social skills of elementary school students at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi, focusing on expressing gratitude, asking for help, apologizing, and forgiving. This program was conducted on November 20, 2024, from 08:00 to 12:00 WITA, involving the school principal, teachers, and 25 students. The activity was designed based on the Service Learning (SL) approach, which integrates academic learning with community service to provide mutual benefits for students and the community. By combining classroom knowledge with practical experiences, this approach helped students develop essential social skills in a meaningful context. The activity was divided into three stages: preparation, implementation, and reflection.

In the preparation stage, the team collaborated with the school principal and teachers to identify the key social skills that needed improvement. This involved discussions to align the program's goals with the school's needs and to design relevant learning



materials. Preparation also included organizing the venue and creating instructional resources, such as PowerPoint presentations and role-playing scenarios that illustrated real-life social situations. The focus was to ensure that the materials were both informative and engaging for elementary students.

The implementation stage emphasized interactive learning through role-playing exercises. Facilitators began by explaining the importance of social skills for building positive relationships. Students then participated in role-playing activities where they practiced expressing gratitude, asking for help politely, apologizing sincerely, and forgiving others. Facilitators provided constructive feedback to help students understand and refine their responses. The combination of theory and practice made the learning process more relatable and effective. In the reflection stage, students were encouraged to discuss what they had learned and how they could apply these social skills in their everyday lives. This stage reinforced the lessons and encouraged students to continue practicing these skills outside the classroom. Overall, the Service Learning approach proved effective in enhancing students' social skills by linking theoretical knowledge with practical applications.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Improved Understanding of Social Skills

The community service activity at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi significantly improved students' understanding of essential social skills, including expressing gratitude, asking for help, apologizing, and forgiving. These skills are fundamental in building positive relationships and maintaining harmonious interactions within the school environment. The activity employed the lecture method to deliver the material effectively, emphasizing the importance of each skill in daily life. Facilitators explained how expressing gratitude could enhance relationships by making others feel appreciated and how asking for help appropriately could build cooperation and mutual respect. Similarly, the significance of apologizing sincerely and forgiving others was highlighted as a way to resolve conflicts peacefully. This structured introduction helped students grasp the relevance of social skills in a relatable context.

The interactive nature of the lectures played a crucial role in enhancing students' comprehension. Instead of merely delivering information, facilitators encouraged students to participate actively by asking questions and sharing their experiences. For example, when discussing gratitude, students were invited to recount moments when they had thanked someone or been thanked themselves. This approach made the material more relatable and allowed students to reflect on their own behaviors. The use of real-life examples and simple language further facilitated students' understanding, ensuring that even the younger participants could follow the discussion. As a result, students not only learned what these social skills are but also why they matter in their everyday interactions.

Moreover, the observations made during the sessions indicated that students were attentive and eager to learn. Many students showed genuine curiosity by raising their hands to ask questions or clarify doubts about appropriate responses in social situations. For instance, when discussing apologies, some students sought advice on how to apologize sincerely without feeling embarrassed. This level of engagement suggests that students were not just passively receiving information but were actively processing and internalizing the material. Facilitators noted that students appeared more aware of their



own behavior and were making efforts to adjust their actions based on what they had learned.

Feedback from teachers further reinforced these observations. After the activity, several teachers reported noticing a positive shift in students' interactions within the classroom. For example, students seemed more inclined to say "thank you" when borrowing items or "sorry" when making mistakes. Teachers highlighted that even typically shy students began to show more willingness to speak up and interact politely with their peers. This behavioral change suggests that the lecture method was effective in not only increasing students' understanding of social skills but also motivating them to practice these skills in real-life situations.



Figure 1 Providing a Lesson on Social Skills

In addition to improved understanding, the activity helped students articulate the value of positive social interactions more clearly. During the post-lecture discussions, many students expressed that they had not previously considered how small actions, like saying "please" or "thank you," could significantly impact their relationships with friends and teachers. This newfound awareness encouraged students to be more mindful of their words and actions. Facilitators noted that students' responses during these discussions indicated a deeper appreciation for the role of respect and empathy in social interactions. By helping students verbalize these realizations, the activity made it more likely that they would retain and apply these lessons in the long term.

The community service activity successfully enhanced students' understanding of social skills through a combination of informative lectures and interactive discussions. The improvements observed in students' awareness, participation, and willingness to practice these skills suggest that the lecture method was an effective approach. The positive feedback from teachers and the behavioral changes noted in students' daily interactions indicate that the impact of this activity extended beyond the classroom, contributing to a more respectful and cooperative school environment.

3.2. Practical Application Through Role-Playing

Role-playing has long been recognized as an effective educational tool, especially in developing social skills among students. By simulating real-life scenarios, role-playing



allows students to practice and internalize appropriate social behaviors in a controlled environment. This method provides a safe space for students to experiment with different responses, receive immediate feedback, and refine their interactions. At SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi, role-playing was utilized to help students practice expressing gratitude, politely requesting assistance, offering sincere apologies, and forgiving others. This experiential learning approach aligns with educational research findings that highlight the benefits of role-playing in enhancing students' social competencies.

During the role-play sessions, students were presented with various scenarios they might encounter in their daily lives. For instance, they practiced thanking a friend for help, asking a teacher for clarification on an assignment, apologizing for accidentally upsetting a classmate, and forgiving someone who made a mistake. Engaging in these activities allowed students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical situations, reinforcing their understanding and ability to navigate social interactions effectively. According to Zamiri and Esmaili (2024), role-playing provides students with opportunities to learn and practice their social skills, making it an effective strategy for social skills training.

Facilitators observed significant improvements in students' confidence and expressiveness as they participated in the role-playing exercises. Initially, some students appeared hesitant; however, as the sessions progressed, they became more engaged and willing to participate. This increase in confidence is consistent with a study published in the *Journal of Primary Education* (Britton et al., 2023), which reported that role-playing is more effective in developing social-emotional character. The safe and supportive environment during the role-playing sessions encouraged students to step out of their comfort zones and practice new behaviors without fear of judgment.

The role-playing exercises also provided students with the opportunity to experiment with different ways of responding to social situations, helping them internalize the appropriate language and actions. For example, when practicing how to ask for help, students explored various ways to phrase their requests and observed the responses they received. This trial-and-error process enabled them to discover effective communication strategies and understand the nuances of social interactions. Mwinsa and Dagada (2025) also emphasizes that role-playing is a key strategy in developing social skills, offering a versatile and engaging method of instruction that benefits children of all learning abilities.

Teachers reported that following the role-playing activities, students seemed more comfortable and natural in their social interactions. They observed that students were more likely to initiate conversations, collaborate with peers, and resolve conflicts amicably. This behavioral change suggests that the skills practiced during the role-playing sessions transferred to real-life situations, leading to a more positive and cohesive classroom environment. The findings support the effectiveness of role-playing in social skills training, as highlighted in the *Journal of Primary Education* (Gasper & Gasper, 2020).

The implementation of role-playing as a method for teaching social skills at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi proved to be highly effective. By providing students with hands-on experience in navigating social situations, role-playing facilitated the development of essential interpersonal skills. The observed improvements in students' confidence, expressiveness, and naturalness in social interactions underscore the value of this experiential learning approach. These findings align with existing educational research, further validating the efficacy of role-playing in social skills training.

3.3. Positive Feedback and Reflection



The reflection stage of the community service activity at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi played a crucial role in helping students internalize the social skills they had practiced, such as expressing gratitude, apologizing, and forgiving. This phase included guided discussions where students shared their experiences, challenges, and feelings about the skills they learned. According to Ho and Lau (2025), reflective practice is essential for enhancing learning and self-awareness, allowing students to critically assess their behaviors and understand their impact on others. This aligns with the idea that reflection can significantly boost social-emotional skills and overall well-being (Brenner, 2022).

During the reflection sessions, students were able to connect the skills they practiced to real-life situations. For example, some students recounted how they managed to apologize sincerely or express gratitude in their daily interactions. This ability to relate learned skills to actual experiences indicates a deeper understanding and internalization of positive social behaviors. Chen et al. (2022) emphasizes that experiential learning, combined with reflective observation, is effective in ensuring that learners can apply knowledge in practical contexts. This supports the notion that reflective sessions can enhance the retention and application of social skills.

Facilitators played an essential role by guiding students to think critically about the benefits of maintaining positive social relationships. By encouraging them to reflect on the outcomes of their actions, facilitators helped students develop a sense of empathy and responsibility. Redmond (2014) argued that reflective thinking transforms experience into meaningful learning, promoting a deeper comprehension of social dynamics. The positive responses from students, who reported enjoying the activities and recognizing their usefulness, further validate the effectiveness of incorporating reflection into social skills training.

Feedback from students indicated that the activities were not only enjoyable but also beneficial in boosting their confidence in handling social situations. Many students expressed a better understanding of the importance of empathy, forgiveness, and positive communication. According to Chan and Lee (2021), reflection helps in making sense of experiences and is a powerful tool for personal and social development. The students' ability to articulate the value of the skills learned suggests that the reflection stage was successful in reinforcing the lessons imparted.

Teachers also observed significant improvements in students' attitudes and behaviors following the reflection sessions. They reported that students were more empathetic, showed better conflict-resolution skills, and interacted more positively with their peers. This observation is in line with Virginia Koutroubas and Michael Galanakis (2022) social learning theory, which suggests that reflective practice helps in the retention and reproduction of learned behaviors. The teachers' feedback supports the idea that structured reflection can effectively bridge the gap between learning and real-life application, leading to more cohesive and respectful classroom interactions.

4. Conclusions

The findings from this community service activity at SD Negeri 1 Lawawoi demonstrate a significant improvement in students' understanding and application of essential social skills, such as expressing gratitude, apologizing, asking for help, and forgiving. The use of interactive lectures and role-playing methods effectively engaged students, making the learning process enjoyable and practical. Observations and feedback



from both students and teachers indicated that the activities successfully enhanced students' confidence and competence in handling social interactions. The reflection stage, in particular, played a vital role in reinforcing these skills by allowing students to critically assess their experiences and understand the importance of positive social behaviors in their everyday lives.

The discussion of these findings suggests that combining interactive teaching methods with reflective practices can significantly boost the effectiveness of social skills training. The use of role-playing not only provided a safe space for students to practice social interactions but also enabled them to experiment with different responses to real-life situations. Facilitators' guidance during reflection helped students internalize these skills, aligning with theories of experiential learning and reflective practice. However, a limitation of this activity was its relatively short duration and the limited number of participants, which might affect the generalizability of the results. The absence of a long-term follow-up also leaves questions about the sustainability of the skills acquired.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the duration of the program and involve a larger and more diverse group of participants to assess the broader applicability of the methods used. Conducting follow-up studies would also be valuable in determining the long-term impact of such social skills training. Additionally, integrating peer feedback and involving parents could provide a more comprehensive approach to enhancing students' social competencies. Further exploration of the impact of specific teaching methods, such as role-playing versus direct instruction, could help refine and optimize strategies for teaching social skills to elementary students.

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