

The Role Of Teachers In Improving Students' Social Interaction In Class V At SDN 1 Jenggala Through Ipas Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the role of teachers in improving the social interaction of fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Jenggala in the 2025/2026 Academic Year through Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) learning, as well as to identify the inhibiting factors experienced by teachers in the process. The method used in this study is qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Data collection was carried out through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The main subjects in this study were the IPAS teacher, the school principal, and representatives of fifth-grade students. The results showed that the teacher's role is crucial and multifaceted, namely as a facilitator who provides inclusive discussion spaces, as a motivator who arouses a collaborative spirit, and as a mediator who mediates conflicts between students. Through the implementation of collaborative learning strategies and group discussions in IPAS subjects, students' social interactions experienced a significant increase; students became more proactive, able to respect the opinions of their peers, and accustomed to working together. However, the study also found several inhibiting factors, such as limited learning time, lack of media or teaching materials relevant to collaborative methods, heterogeneity in students' abilities and characters, and a lack of internal awareness from a small portion of students about the importance of social interaction. The conclusion of this study confirms that optimizing the role of teachers through innovative and collaborative approaches can form positive student social characters, although it requires strong synergy between teachers, the school, and the support of adequate learning resources.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a key pillar in building the foundation of human character and intellect. Within the scope of formal education, the teaching and learning process focuses not only on the cognitive transfer of knowledge but also places a strong emphasis on the transfer of values. This aligns with the primary goal of national education, which calls for the formation of students who are not only academically intelligent but also possess noble morals and strong social skills (Sagira, 2021). Elementary schools, as early-stage educational institutions, play a crucial role in shaping students' character and social adaptability (Rahmat, 2022). Therefore, the school environment must function

optimally as a miniature model of community life, where students can practice their roles as social beings.

In today's era of digital technology and globalization, the widespread use of gadgets has brought easy access to information but has also degraded the quality of face-to-face social interactions among elementary school-aged children, who are often more engrossed in digital devices than in interacting with peers (Hermawanto, 2022). Left unaddressed, this phenomenon can trigger individualistic, egocentric attitudes and a decline in empathy (Nurjanah, 2021), making it crucial for schools to limit technology use and provide guidance that restores children's instincts as social beings who require two-way communication, cooperation, and tolerance.

Social interaction is key to every aspect of human life. According to Umu Hanik (2021), social interaction is a dynamic relationship that encompasses relationships between individuals, between individuals and groups, and between groups. In elementary school settings, well-established social interactions between students and between students and teachers create a harmonious and enjoyable learning climate and facilitate the development of students' maximum potential (Nurlaili & Rahmawati, 2022). Students who have healthy interaction skills tend to be more adaptable, bold in expressing their opinions, and able to solve problems collaboratively (Fernanda & Sano, 2022). Conversely, a lack of social interaction skills often leads to serious problems such as bullying, the formation of exclusive gangs (toxic relationships), and mutual disrespect that can destroy learning motivation (Pratama, 2023).

Based on initial observations in the fifth grade of SDN 1 Jenggala, social interaction dynamics were identified that require special attention. Although the science teachers have made maximum efforts to educate and teach, the reality on the ground still shows fragmentation in student interactions. Some students still struggle to demonstrate adequate manners, both towards peers and teachers. During the learning process, students are still found to be passive, reluctant to collaborate in groups, and self-centered (Solihah, 2024). There is also a fairly rigid communication gap between teachers and students caused by an undefined hierarchical view. The highly heterogeneous characteristics of students—both in terms of academic ability and family background—often create friction and difficulties in establishing productive communication (Yulianto, 2022).

The Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) subject in the Independent Curriculum presents itself as a highly relevant scientific synthesis to address the aforementioned problems. As explained by Affifah et al. (2023), IPAS not only studies natural phenomena (living and nonliving objects), but also deeply examines human social interactions and their emotional closeness to the surrounding environment. This integration of science and social sciences provides teachers with ample scope to design project-based learning and collaborative methods that require students to interact intensively, negotiate, and collaborate to formulate solutions to problems around them (Susanti, 2024).

In this context, the role of teachers is no longer merely as the sole source of information, but has metamorphosed into a facilitator, motivator, guide, and mediator (Bahril, 2021; Fransiska, 2022). Teachers are required to possess strong pedagogical and social competencies to be able to read classroom situations, diagnose interaction difficulties experienced by students, and design appropriate educational interventions. As stated by Syarifudin (2021), professional teachers must be able to manage classroom dynamics reflectively and adaptively. Therefore, this study aims to describe and analyze in depth the role of fifth-grade teachers at SDN 1 Jenggala in utilizing science as an instrument to improve student social interaction, as well as to identify various inhibiting factors encountered in the field.

In examining social interaction, the sociology of education perspective highlights that schools are not merely places for the transmission of exact knowledge, but rather 'workshops' of civilization

where national character is cultivated. According to Soekanto (in Firmansyah, 2022), social interaction is an absolute requirement for social activity, encompassing two main requirements: social contact and communication. In the fifth-grade ecosystem, social contact between students does not always run smoothly; various distortions arise, ranging from language barriers and intergroup stereotypes to a lack of self-confidence. This is where the presence of collaborative educational instruments becomes crucial.

Teacher competence, as mandated by Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, requires the integration of four fundamental competencies: pedagogical, personality, social, and professional. This social competence serves as the foundation for teachers to interact effectively with students, fellow educators, education personnel, parents/guardians, and the surrounding community (Bahril, 2021). Teachers with superior social competence are not only adept at transferring teaching materials but also able to radiate positive energy (positive vibes) that stimulate students to develop empathy, tolerance, and cooperation. In essence, teachers function as role models or ideal prototypes of socially mature adults, who are consciously imitated by their students.

Furthermore, the characteristics of science and natural science learning in the Independent Curriculum are specifically designed to bridge the gap between theoretical phenomena and everyday empirical reality. Science and natural sciences encourage students to observe problems in their environment, such as environmental pollution or natural resource management. During their observations, students are required to discuss, design problem-solving projects, and present their ideas (Susanti, 2024). These dialectical processes essentially simulate social life. As students formulate solutions to environmental problems, they simultaneously practice social negotiation, peaceful conflict resolution, and job role allocation. Therefore, the role of the science and natural sciences teacher is essential in orchestrating this learning scenario so that each student receives a fair share of opportunities to develop their social skills.

Therefore, teacher interventions should not be merely reactive—that is, acting only when conflict occurs—but should be preventive and formative. Strategies such as rotating roles in discussion groups, providing consistent positive reinforcement, and creating classroom regulations based on collective agreement are concrete manifestations of this educational role. All of these theoretical studies emphasize the urgency of this research to not only capture the existing phenomenon but also formulate effective social support patterns that can be replicated in other elementary education institutions (Kusuma, 2025). It is important to note that this study differs from prior research in several respects. Earlier studies, such as those by Nurjanah (2021) and Fransiska (2022), examined the teacher's role in social interaction broadly, across general classroom activities, without anchoring it to a specific subject or instructional design. In contrast, this study specifically positions the Natural and Social Sciences (IPAS) subject as the primary instrument through which the teacher's facilitator, motivator, and mediator roles are enacted, examining how the integrated science-social character of IPAS itself, rather than the classroom setting in general, is deliberately leveraged to design collaborative and project-based tasks that simulate social negotiation. Additionally, while previous studies have often addressed social interaction and technological distraction as separate issues, this study examines their intersection directly, describing how teachers at SDN 1 Jenggala respond concretely to gadget-influenced communication habits within the specific pedagogical structure of IPAS learning, an intersection that remains underexplored in the existing literature on elementary social interaction.

2.METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological approach. According to Santoso (2021), a qualitative approach is highly relevant for understanding social phenomena in a natural, in-depth, and comprehensive manner, with an emphasis on the process, meaning, and interpretation of the research subjects. The choice of phenomenology is based on the research objective of uncovering and describing the essence of participants' experiences (teachers and students) related to the dynamics of social interactions in the classroom (Sugiyono, 2022).

This research was conducted at SDN 1 Jenggala, located in Tanaksong Timuk Hamlet, Jenggala Village, Tanjung District, North Lombok Regency. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that in the school, a unique phenomenon was found related to the transition of social interactions of fifth-grade students in adapting collaborative learning methods in science subjects. This research was conducted in the even semester of the 2025/2026 Academic Year. The subjects in this study were determined through a purposive sampling technique, consisting of the fifth-grade science subject teacher (Mrs. Yuliati, S. Pd.SD), the principal (Mr. Bambang Hartoyo, S. Pd.SD), and four fifth-grade students selected to represent varying social interaction profiles within the class: Salsa Bila (a socially active student who frequently leads group discussions), together with three classmates representing a previously withdrawn/passive student, a student with an average level of social engagement, and a student who had previously experienced peer conflict. This combination was intended to capture a range of student perspectives on the teacher's role, rather than relying on a single, uniformly high-performing viewpoint.

The data collection techniques applied include: (1) Participatory Observation, where researchers directly observe teaching and learning activities in grade V, record verbal and non-verbal interactions between students, as well as teacher actions in facilitating learning; (2) In-depth Interviews, conducted in a structured and semi-structured manner with teachers, principals, and students to explore perspectives, strategies, and obstacles experienced directly; (3) Documentation Study, by analyzing supporting documents such as the Science Teaching Module, syllabus, list of attitude values, and school regulations (Moleong, 2021).

The data analysis in this study refers to the interactive analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2021), which consists of three main streams of activities that occur simultaneously: data reduction (selecting, simplifying, and abstracting raw data from field notes), data presentation (organizing information narratively to facilitate understanding), and conclusion drawing/verification (reviewing the analysis results to ensure accuracy of meaning). To ensure data validity, the researcher used source triangulation and method triangulation techniques. Data obtained from interviews with teachers were cross-referenced with classroom observations and confirmed through interviews with students and the principal, resulting in credible and objective findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. The Role of Science Teachers in Improving Students' Social Interaction

Based on in-depth observations and interviews conducted at SDN 1 Jenggala, it was revealed that the role of fifth-grade science teachers extends beyond academic instructional tasks but also heavily focuses on character building and social competence. Teachers recognize that science has unique characteristics that integrate an understanding of the natural environment with the dynamics of community life. This provides an opportune moment to improve the quality of students' social interactions.

The Teacher's Role as a Facilitator and Learning Innovator. Mrs. Yulianti, the fifth-grade science teacher, proactively implements collaborative learning methods. In each Teaching Module, she always includes scenarios for group discussions and joint project completion. For example, in the material on ecosystems and the role of humans in the environment, students are divided into small (heterogeneous) groups of 4-5 people. This is where the teacher's role as a facilitator is very visible; the teacher does not dictate the course of the discussion, but rather provides a framework for thinking, provides problem triggers, and allows students to explore (Kusuma, 2025). This practice closely mirrors the scaffolding concept within Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory (as cited in Firmansyah, 2022): by providing a thinking framework and problem trigger rather than a ready-made answer, the teacher offers just enough structural support for students to operate within their Zone of Proximal Development, the gap between what a student can achieve alone and what they can achieve with guided assistance, gradually transferring responsibility for discussion and negotiation to the students themselves as they gain confidence. In this activity, previously passive students are forced to interact, negotiate the division of tasks (for example, making a simple poster), and listen to the opinions of their groupmates, actions that, from a Vygotskian perspective, represent the social speech and joint problem-solving through which higher mental functions such as empathy and communication are internalized. Interview results confirmed that this strategy successfully broke down the walls of exclusivity between cliques in the classroom.

The Teacher's Role as a Motivator. A lack of positive social interaction often stems from low self-confidence or boredom with classroom routines (Syarifudin, 2021). To address this, the science teachers at SDN 1 Jenggala routinely conduct icebreakers before lessons begin. This step aims to build a fluid and enjoyable classroom atmosphere (a positive climate). Teachers consistently provide appreciation, either in the form of verbal praise or applause, to groups or individuals who bravely present their discussion results. This sentiment was reinforced by Salsa Bila, a fifth-grade student, who stated that she no longer feels embarrassed to express her opinion because the learning environment feels safer and her teachers consistently model polite and respectful speech.

The Teacher's Role as Mediator and Evaluator. Managing a group of students with diverse backgrounds and egos is inherently conflict-ridden. When disagreements or disrespectful behavior arise within the group, the teacher immediately assumes the role of wise mediator (Fransiska, 2022). The teacher mediates without judgment, listens to both sides, and guides students to find shared solutions based on value-based consensus. Furthermore, as an evaluator, the teacher not only assesses the cognitive aspects of science assignments but also disciplines them in completing the social attitudes assessment rubric. Students who violate classroom etiquette rules are encouraged to engage in private dialogue to acknowledge their mistakes without feeling publicly humiliated. This humanistic approach has proven effective in fostering self-awareness in students.

Beyond the facilitator role discussed above, the teacher's motivator and mediator functions can likewise be read through a social-constructivist lens: the icebreakers and verbal appreciation described earlier lower the affective barriers that would otherwise keep a struggling student from engaging within their Zone of Proximal Development at all, while the teacher's mediation of conflict models the negotiated, value-based consensus that Vygotsky considered central to how social communication is internalized. Support from the Principal, Mr. Bambang Hartoyo, also catalyzed this success. He regularly supervised and encouraged teachers to continuously innovate in managing classroom social dynamics, emphasizing that academic intelligence must go hand in hand with moral and emotional intelligence.

B. Factors Inhibiting the Role of Teachers in Improving Social Interaction

Despite the maximum efforts made to empower teachers, implementation in the field has not been without challenges. This research identified several inhibiting factors, categorized as internal and external.

- 1) Limited Resources and Learning Media. One of the main complaints from science teachers is the difficulty in finding and designing innovative learning media that are relevant to collaborative and contextual methods. Limited time due to administrative burdens often forces teachers to revert to conventional lecture methods when the material feels too dense (Hidayat, 2021). Even though schools have provided basic facilities such as projectors, finding appropriate educational multimedia materials requires extra time.
- 2) Heterogeneity of Student Character and Focus Level. Internal student factors pose a highly dynamic challenge. Some fifth-grade students still have low learning interest or are susceptible to distraction. During group discussions, it is not uncommon to find some students engrossed in off-topic conversations, interrupting their peers, or passively handing over assignments to more intelligent students (the free-rider effect) (Suryani, 2023). This leads to unbalanced interactions and hinders the achievement of inclusive collaboration goals.
- 3) The Influence of the Environment and Technology Outside of School. Student characteristics formed from habits at home are also carried over to school. Students accustomed to instant and individualistic communication styles due to gadget addiction often struggle to understand the etiquette of face-to-face communication, such as the importance of eye contact, polite intonation, and patient listening (Hermawanto, 2022). Lack of parental supervision of children's social interactions and media consumption creates an additional burden for teachers to "reset" students' social understanding in the classroom.

To address these obstacles, teachers at SDN 1 Jenggala implemented compensatory strategies, such as adjusting group work duration, simplifying assignment instructions, and strengthening communication (parenting education) with parents (Yulianto, 2022). The teachers' commitment to not giving in to technical obstacles and remaining committed to the goal of developing social character is commendable as a demonstration of educator professionalism (Syarifudin, 2021).

C. Extensive Discussion on the Long-Term Impact of Social Interaction

Looking beyond the mere accomplishments of daily classroom interactions, the role of science teachers in fostering social skills has tremendous long-term implications. Fifth-grade elementary school children are at a critical developmental stage, a phase in which they begin to shift their social orientation from family to peer groups. Erikson's developmental psychology theory calls this phase 'Industry vs. Inferiority,' where children who fail to establish meaningful social interactions and master academic-social skills will suffer from feelings of inferiority. With the presence of teachers as science facilitators who continually encourage teamwork, previously isolated students are given a platform to contribute. This active involvement not only saves them from feelings of social marginalization but also instills the seeds of self-efficacy that are fundamental to their subsequent educational endeavors.

Furthermore, the dynamics of science learning, which emphasize collaboration and investigation, provide valuable opportunities for students to manage conflict (conflict resolution). When disparities of opinion arise in completing a project assignment—for example, differing ideas about how to construct an ecosystem concept map—students are confronted with the reality that coexistence demands compromise and wisdom. The fifth-grade teacher, as observed by the

researcher, carefully utilized these moments of friction as a platform for social simulation. Rather than silencing dissenting opinions, the teacher guided students through a consensus-building mechanism. They were trained to use non-confrontational diction, listen to their peers' arguments without interrupting, and ultimately reach a consensus. This process, if consistently incubated, will produce a generation of future leaders who uphold the values of democracy, tolerance, and multicultural harmony.

The challenge for SDN 1 Jenggala and the education system in general is how to maintain this positive momentum. Teachers cannot work in isolation. Principals are required to implement strategic policies, such as allocating a budget for more interactive educational aids and conducting regular in-house training (IHT) to upgrade teachers' pedagogical competencies in designing collaborative learning scenarios. Furthermore, parental involvement is a crucial factor. Parental associations must be actively involved so that the social values instilled by teachers at school—such as courtesy, empathy, and cooperation—are amplified and applied in students' domestic lives. Only through this tripartite synergy between teachers, schools, and families (the three centers of education) can the grand idea of revolutionizing the social character of the nation's children through the educational curriculum be fully realized.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussions outlined above, it can be concluded that the role of the fifth-grade science teachers at SDN 1 Jenggala in enhancing students' social interactions has been implemented optimally and has had a significant positive impact. Teachers have transformed from mere presenters of material into proactive facilitators, motivators, mediators, and evaluators. Through the implementation of collaborative learning methods—such as group discussions and project completion—students are trained to work together, respect differences of opinion, build assertive communication, and reduce personal egos. This approach has successfully created an interactive, inclusive, and harmonious learning environment.

However, these efforts still face several inhibiting factors. These factors include technical constraints such as limited time to design ideal collaborative learning media, as well as student-driven obstacles such as lack of interest in learning, short attention spans, sharp character differences, and the impact of parenting styles and gadget addiction at home. To address these challenges, stronger synergy is needed between schools, teachers, and parents. Continued support from the principal in providing adequate infrastructure and psychosocial guidance programs for students is highly recommended to ensure the holistic and sustainable development of students' social character.

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