

Learning Motivation Impact on Social Skills in Elementary Education

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ABSTRACT

Social skills are essential for pupils' academic success and peer relationships, yet few studies have examined the internal factors that nurture these skills in the cooperative setting of elementary Social Studies (IPS). This study investigates the relationship between learning motivation and social skills among 42 fourth-grade students at a public elementary school. Data were collected using validated questionnaires and analyzed through two complementary methods. Simple linear regression (SPSS v29) was used to assess the direct effect of motivation, yielding a standardized coefficient (β) of 0.408 and an R^2 of 0.253, indicating that learning motivation explains 25.3% of the variance in students' social skills, a moderate and meaningful effect. To validate this relationship, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS v4.0.9.9 produced a path coefficient of 0.714 ($p < 0.001$), confirming a strong, statistically significant influence. This study contributes to the growing literature on motivational determinants of student behavior, particularly in Social Studies contexts. The findings offer practical insights for educators, suggesting that integrating student-centered, engaging activities can enhance both motivation and the development of students' interpersonal competencies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social Studies (IPS) learning in elementary schools not only serves as a medium for knowledge transfer but also plays a crucial role in character formation and the development of essential social skills. Education is not merely a teaching process but a value-shaping journey that nurtures students' character and self-awareness. A decline in learning motivation can seriously hinder this process and negatively affect student outcomes (Disriani & Habibi, 2023). In this context, cultivating attitudes, personalities, and skills that align with societal needs is as important as cognitive development.

Learning motivation significantly influences various student abilities, including social skills. According to Deci and Ryan (2012), Self-Determination Theory highlights intrinsic motivation as a key driver of active engagement and prosocial behavior. Motivated students tend to communicate effectively, collaborate well, and show mutual respect in group settings. This is supported by both local studies (Andriani & Rasto, 2020; Hadin et al., 2024) and international findings. For example, Chen and Ma (2023) and Johnson and Smith (2022) found that intrinsic motivation fosters communication, collaboration, and social initiative, essential components of social skills.

Numerous other studies (e.g., Liu & Wang, 2021; Garcia & Lopez, 2022; Zhang & Liu, 2024) confirm that learning motivation supports emotional regulation, peer relationships, and interpersonal competence. Thus, it plays a vital role not only in academic achievement but also in students' social development. Strengthening motivation through instructional strategies may therefore enhance social outcomes in the classroom.

Social skills refer to the ability to interact effectively and harmoniously with others in diverse social contexts (Aranda et al., 2024). At the elementary level, these skills are critical for supporting collaborative learning and character development. Research shows that strong social skills are linked to improved academic performance

and emotional well-being (Kim & Lee, 2023; Fernandez & Torres, 2024). These include communication, cooperation, and respect for others, skills that are central to effective learning in IPS.

Although research has confirmed the correlation between motivation and social skills, field observations suggest that students with high motivation do not always demonstrate strong social competence. This raises important questions, especially in areas such as Cirebon Regency, where difficulties in group discussion and peer interaction remain common.

This study seeks to address that gap by examining the relationship between learning motivation and the social skills of fourth-grade elementary students within Social Studies learning. Using a quantitative approach, the study aims to inform the development of instructional strategies that strengthen motivation as a pathway to improving social skills in primary education.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to examine the relationship between students' learning motivation and their social skills in the context of Social Studies (IPS) learning in elementary school. This design was selected because it enables the researcher to statistically assess the degree to which learning motivation influences students' social skills.

The study was conducted at a public elementary school in Cirebon Regency, West Java. The school was disguised to maintain the confidentiality of the institution's identity. The sample in this study consisted of 42 fourth-grade students, who were selected using a saturated sampling technique because the population size met the minimum requirements for the statistical analysis used and the entire population met the criteria as respondents.

The data were gathered through a questionnaire constructed based on an operational framework outlining indicators of learning motivation and social skills.

1. The Learning Motivation Questionnaire consists of 26 questions that measure six aspects of learning motivation, namely involvement in the learning process, resilience and persistence, self-regulation, self-perceived ability, interest and curiosity, and positive social relationships (Chiappetta-Santana, Jesuino, & Lima-Costa, 2022).

2. The Social Skills Questionnaire consists of 24 items measuring five aspects of social skills: refusing and stopping interactions, giving advice to others, expressing emotions, expressing opinions, and relationships with peers (Aranda et al., 2024).

The investigators coordinated with the school to obtain permission and explain the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was distributed directly to respondents with the assistance of classroom teachers to ensure optimal understanding of the questions. The collected data was then checked for completeness and consistency. The data analysis was conducted using two main approaches:

1. Simple linear regression analysis using SPSS version 29 was employed to test the direct predictive relationship between learning motivation and social skills. This method provides a straightforward and interpretable effect size, which is especially valuable for educators and practitioners seeking clear insights into the impact of motivation on social behaviors.

2. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.9 was applied to further validate the structural relationship between the latent constructs. PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for smaller samples and models involving multiple indicators per construct. It offers additional insights into the reliability, validity, and strength of the overall model, complementing the findings from the regression analysis.

Prior to performing the main analysis, classical assumption tests including normality and linearity assessments were carried out to verify that the data met the necessary conditions for regression analysis.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study investigates the influence of learning motivation on students' social skills within the context of Social Studies (IPS) learning in elementary schools. To ensure a thorough analysis and validate the findings, the data were examined using two methods: simple linear regression via SPSS version 29 and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) employing SmartPLS version 4.0.9.9.

3.1. Validity and Reliability Test

The validity and reliability of the measurement instruments for Learning Motivation and Social Skills were evaluated using SmartPLS version 4.0.9.9. The analysis demonstrated that all constructs achieved Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeding the 0.50 threshold, confirming that each indicator sufficiently represents its respective latent variable and indicating strong convergent validity.

Most indicators showed outer loading values above 0.70, signifying strong associations between the observed variables and their underlying constructs. Although a few indicators had loadings between 0.50 and 0.70, they were retained because the overall AVE and construct reliability remained within acceptable limits.

Furthermore, Composite Reliability (CR) values for all constructs were above 0.70, reflecting excellent internal consistency of the measurement model. This implies that the instruments consistently measure the intended variables and yield dependable data. Overall, the results indicate that the instruments used to assess Learning Motivation and Social Skills are both statistically valid and reliable, making them suitable for subsequent structural model analysis in this research.

3.2. Descriptive Statistics Test

This test needs to be conducted to obtain an overview of the data on learning motivation (X) and social skills (Y), such as the mean, maximum, minimum, and standard deviation of each variable. The data related to the variables of learning motivation and social skills were obtained through a questionnaire filled out by the students with four answer choices. The scores used in the questionnaire ranged from 1 to 4, so both variables had a score range of 25 to 100. The results of the descriptive statistical test can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Test

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
MOTIVASI BELAJAR	42	62	94	76.17	7.821
SOCIAL SKILL	42	51	80	68.55	6.352
Valid N (listwise)	42				

Source: Output from IBM SPSS Statistics. Version 29.0.0.0, Secondary data processed in 2025.

Based on the results of descriptive statistical analysis conducted using SPSS, it was found that the average value of student learning motivation was 76.17 with a standard deviation of 7.82, and minimum and maximum values of 62 and 94, respectively. Meanwhile, the average social skills of students were recorded at 68.55 with a standard deviation of 6.35, with a range of values between 51 and 80. These findings indicate that, in general, students have a fairly good level of learning motivation and social skills, although there are variations between individuals.

3.3. Classical Assumption Test

Classical assumption tests, specifically normality and linearity assessments, were conducted to verify the appropriateness of applying simple linear regression. The outcomes of these tests are summarized below.

3.3.1. Normality Test

The normality of the residual data was evaluated using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. The analysis results are presented in the following table.

Table 2. Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
			Unstandardized Residual
N			42
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean		
	Std. Deviation		
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute		
	Positive		
	Negative		
Test Statistic			.113
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c			.200 ^d
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) ^e	Sig.		
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	.182

		Upper Bound	.202
a. Test distribution is Normal.			
b. Calculated from data.			
c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.			
d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.			
e. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.			

Source: Output from IBM SPSS Statistics. Version 29.0.0.0, Secondary data processed in 2025.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normality yielded a significance value of 0.200 ($p > 0.05$), indicating that the residuals followed a normal distribution. Therefore, the assumption of normality required for simple linear regression was satisfied.

3.3.2. Linearity Test

Table 3. Linearity Test

ANOVA Table							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SOCIAL SKILL * MOTIVASI BELAJAR	Between Groups	(Combined)	1023.271	21	48.727	1.544	.168
		Linearity	418.256	1	418.256	13.254	.002
		Deviation from Linearity	605.015	20	30.251	.959	.537
	Within Groups		631.133	20	31.557		
	Total		1654.405	41			

Source: Output from IBM SPSS Statistics. Version 29.0.0.0, Secondary data processed in 2025.

In addition, the linearity reported a significance value of 0.002 for the linear component and 0.537 for deviation from linearity, confirming that the relationship between the variables was significantly linear without substantial deviation. Therefore, the data met the required assumptions for linear regression.

3.4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis

This analysis was performed using SPSS to examine the relationship and the effect of learning motivation on social skills. The resulting regression equation is:

$$Y = 37.442 + 0.408X,$$

where Y represents the social skills score and X denotes the learning motivation score.

Regression Coefficient

Given that the regression coefficient is positive (+0.408), it indicates that learning motivation (X) positively influences social skills (Y).

Table 4. Regression Coefficient

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	37.442	8.499		4.406	<.001
	MOTIVASI BELAJAR	.408	.111	.503	3.679	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: SOCIAL SKILL

Source: Data output generated using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 29.0.0.0, based on secondary data processed in 2025.

Hypothesis Test Comparing Sig. Values of 0.05

Table 5. Hypothesis Test

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	418.256	1	418.256	13.534	<.001 ^b
	Residual	1236.148	40	30.904		
	Total	1654.405	41			
a. Dependent Variable: SOCIAL SKILL						
b. Predictors: (Constant), MOTIVASI BELAJAR						

Source: Output from IBM SPSS Statistics. Version 29.0.0.0, Secondary data processed in 2025.

Based on the results, the significance value (sig.) is 0.001, which is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, indicating that learning motivation (X) has a significant effect on social skills (Y).

Seeing the magnitude of the influence of variable X on Y

To determine the extent of this influence, the coefficient of determination (R^2) obtained from the SPSS Model Summary output is used. This coefficient indicates the proportion of variance in social skills (Y) that can be attributed to variations in learning motivation (X) within the context of the simple linear regression analysis.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.503 ^a	.253	.234	5.559
a. Predictors: (Constant), MOTIVASI BELAJAR				

Source: Data output generated using IBM SPSS Statistics, Version 29.0.0.0, based on secondary data processed in 2025.

The output shows an R Square value of 0.253, indicating that learning motivation (X) accounts for 25.3% of the variance in social skills (Y). The remaining 74.7% of the variation in social skills is explained by other factors not included in this study.

From this result, where Y denotes the score of social skills and X represents the level of learning motivation, the regression coefficient of 0.408 and a p-value below 0.001 demonstrate a statistically significant and positive relationship between the two variables. This implies that for every one-point increase in learning motivation, there is a corresponding increase of 0.408 points in social skills. The R Square value reinforces that learning motivation contributes meaningfully to the development of social skills, accounting for 25.3% of the observed variation. Therefore, students with higher motivation tend to exhibit better social competencies.

3.5. Path Coefficient Analysis (PLS-SEM)

The SEM analysis using SmartPLS supported the regression findings. The path coefficient was 0.714, with a t-statistic of 12.352 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a strong and statistically significant effect of learning motivation on social skills. This result reinforces the predictive role of motivation in students' social development.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that learning motivation is a significant factor in shaping elementary students' social skills. Students with higher motivation tend to participate more actively in interactions, demonstrate better cooperation in group tasks, and show more openness toward peer feedback and discussion. These results align with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012), which emphasizes intrinsic motivation as a foundation for positive social engagement. Supporting this, the findings of Andriani & Rasto (2020) and Li et al. (2021) also highlight motivation's role in enhancing students' communicative and collaborative abilities.

However, it is important to note that learning motivation only explains 25.3% of the variance in students' social skills. This suggests that other factors, such as teacher interaction style, classroom climate, and family support,

may also play important roles in shaping students' social behaviors. Previous research indicates that a positive and autonomy-supportive teaching style can strengthen the translation of motivation into interpersonal behavior (Kim et al., 2023), while classroom norms and physical arrangement can either support or hinder peer collaboration (Fernandez & Torres, 2024). At home, parental modeling and emotional support are also strongly linked to children's social development (Rahman & Ahmed, 2020). Future studies should therefore consider incorporating these variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of what influences students' social skills.

From a practical perspective, the results suggest that teachers should not only foster motivation through engaging materials and student-centered learning but also explicitly integrate structured social interaction activities into Social Studies instruction. Cooperative learning models such as Numbered Heads Together, role-play scenarios, or peer feedback routines may bridge motivational gains into actual social behavior improvement. Creating a psychologically safe classroom environment where students feel valued and heard may also enhance both motivation and social responsiveness.

While this study provides initial insights into the motivational basis of students' social development, it is limited by its relatively small sample size and single-school setting. Further research involving larger and more diverse populations, and possibly using mixed methods or longitudinal tracking, is needed to explore causal relationships and mediating factors more deeply.

4. CONCLUSION

This study successfully demonstrated that learning motivation plays a significant role in shaping students' social skills in Social Studies learning at the elementary level. High levels of motivation enhance students' abilities to communicate, collaborate, and respect peer perspectives. Based on the results of both regression and SEM analysis, it can be concluded that learning motivation has a direct and significant effect on social skills, accounting for 25.3% of the observed variance. These findings have important implications for educators to design instructional approaches that strengthen motivation as a means to improve students' social competence. One effective strategy is for teachers to provide meaningful, student-centered activities such as group projects or real-world problem-solving tasks, that naturally foster engagement and internal motivation. Further research is recommended to explore other contributing factors to students' social skills in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

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