



Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Elementary Schools as Agents of Student Socialization

Faslia^{1*}, Muhamad Nur Intan Ode², Fitriani B³

¹Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Muhammadiyah Buton, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Elementary schools are considered crucial spaces for students' socialization, as they provide opportunities for children to develop social skills alongside academic knowledge. This study aims to examine teachers' perceptions of the role of elementary schools in fostering social values and to explore the factors influencing the effectiveness of socialization in the classroom. A qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach was employed. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with five elementary school teachers, focusing on their experiences in integrating social values into daily learning activities and the challenges they faced. The results indicate that teachers perceive schools as not only academic institutions but also as environments where students learn cooperation, empathy, discipline, and respect for others. Socialization occurs through classroom activities, group work, peer interactions, and teachers' modeling of appropriate behavior. However, the study also found that the integration of social values is often limited due to the dominance of cognitive-focused curriculum objectives. In addition, school policy and culture were identified as significant factors in supporting effective socialization, with schools emphasizing character education providing greater opportunities for teachers to foster social skills consistently. The findings suggest that a balanced approach between academic and social development, supported by conducive school policies, is essential for optimizing student socialization in elementary education.

Keywords: Socialization, Social Values, Teacher Perception, Character Education

1. Introduction

Elementary schools play a central role in shaping children's early social development, as they are not only institutions for academic instruction but also environments where students learn norms, values, and patterns of interaction. Teachers, as the primary facilitators in the classroom, hold important perspectives on how schools function as agents of socialization. Their perceptions reveal how effectively schools instill cooperation, discipline, empathy, and respect for diversity in students. Through classroom management, teaching strategies, and daily interactions, teachers influence the way students adapt to social expectations and build relationships with peers. Understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial because it provides insights into the strengths and challenges of socialization processes in elementary education. Teachers

often observe firsthand how students respond to social norms, how they negotiate conflicts, and how they develop a sense of belonging in the school community. By examining these perspectives, researchers and policymakers can better identify practices that foster positive social growth and address barriers that may hinder children's social development. Ultimately, recognizing the role of schools as agents of socialization underscores the importance of integrating academic goals with social learning to prepare students for participation in wider society.

Previous studies have highlighted the crucial role of elementary schools as agents of socialization, with teachers serving as the main mediators of this process. Research by Johnson (2019) emphasized that teachers' perceptions strongly influence the strategies used to integrate social values into daily classroom activities. Similarly, Smith and Turner (2020) found that elementary schools provide structured opportunities for students to practice cooperation and empathy, which are essential for their social adjustment. In addition, Lee (2021) demonstrated that teachers often act as role models in promoting social norms, showing that teacher attitudes can shape students' interpersonal behaviors. These findings underline the importance of understanding teachers' perspectives when examining how schools function as socialization agents.

Further evidence comes from studies exploring how social development is embedded in educational practices. According to Hernandez and Brown (2021), teachers' ability to foster inclusive environments significantly contributes to students' sense of belonging in school communities. Likewise, Patel (2022) noted that effective classroom management not only improves learning outcomes but also strengthens social interaction among peers. More recently, a study by Anderson, Kim, and Zhao (2023) highlighted that the alignment between teachers' perceptions and school policies plays a decisive role in achieving holistic education goals. Together, these studies demonstrate that the role of elementary schools as socialization agents cannot be separated from the perceptions, practices, and commitments of teachers.

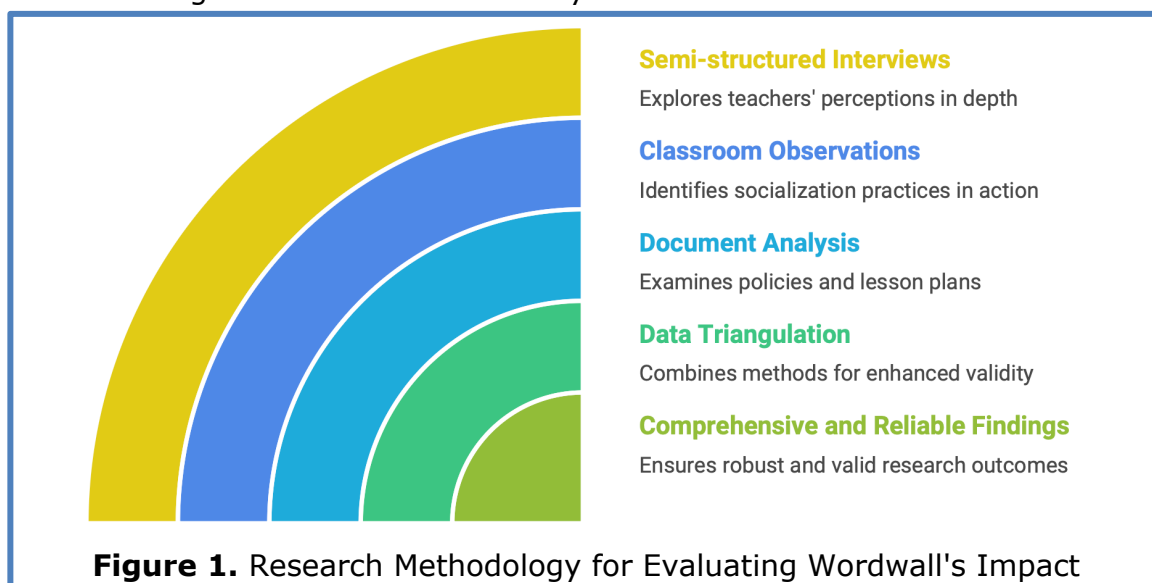
Although many studies emphasize the importance of elementary schools as agents of socialization, there remains a gap between educational policy ideals and actual classroom practices. Curricula often prioritize academic achievement, while socio-emotional aspects receive less balanced attention. This situation leads to teachers' understanding of the school's role in socialization not always being optimally implemented. Differences in interpretation between the school's vision and teachers' perceptions also create gaps that may reduce the effectiveness of the socialization process. Another problem lies in the limited competence of teachers in integrating social values into learning. Many teachers remain focused on cognitive achievement, leaving student social interactions less constructively guided. As a result, students often lack adequate social skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution. This condition risks producing a generation that excels academically but is weak in social aspects, which are essential for life in society.

The challenges faced by teachers and schools stem not only from internal educational issues but also from broader social dynamics. The rapid development of technology, digital media, and shifting patterns of children's interactions strongly influence the socialization process in elementary schools. Teachers are therefore required to adapt quickly in designing learning strategies that can

balance the impact of modern social environments. Thus, identifying the gaps, problems, impacts, and challenges becomes crucial to strengthen the role of elementary schools as agents of student socialization. To address these issues, schools need to strengthen teachers’ competencies in integrating social values into classroom practices through continuous professional development, collaborative learning communities, and supportive policies that balance academic and social goals. Encouraging teachers to adopt inclusive pedagogical approaches and to utilize interactive learning methods can enhance students’ social-emotional skills while maintaining academic achievement. This research is important because it highlights how teachers’ perceptions shape the effectiveness of schools as agents of socialization, offering valuable insights for improving both educational practice and policy. By exploring this topic, the study contributes to creating a more holistic learning environment that prepares students not only for academic success but also for active and responsible participation in society.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach, aiming to explore teachers’ perceptions of the role of elementary schools as agents of student socialization. The qualitative method is considered suitable because it allows researchers to capture in-depth insights into teachers’ experiences, opinions, and interpretations regarding socialization practices within the school environment. A descriptive approach is applied to provide a clear and systematic portrayal of how teachers perceive their responsibilities in guiding students’ social development. The subjects of this research consist of elementary school teachers who actively teach in public and private schools. The selection of participants is based on purposive sampling, focusing on teachers with teaching experience of at least three years to ensure they possess adequate understanding of both academic and social aspects of student learning. By involving teachers from different school contexts, the study aims to capture varied perspectives that enrich the analysis and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of elementary schools in student socialization.



The data in this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, allowing researchers to explore teachers’ perceptions in depth while still maintaining focus on the research objectives. Interviews were conducted face-

to-face and, when necessary, supplemented with online sessions to accommodate participants' schedules. This method was chosen because it enables teachers to freely express their views and experiences, providing rich and detailed information about how they perceive the role of elementary schools as agents of student socialization. In addition to interviews, the study also utilized classroom observations and document analysis to strengthen data validity. Observations were carried out during teaching and learning activities to identify how socialization values were integrated into daily practices, while school documents such as lesson plans and code of conduct were reviewed to examine formal policies supporting social development. The use of multiple data collection techniques provided triangulation, ensuring that the findings were more comprehensive and reliable.

The data analysis in this study was carried out using a qualitative descriptive technique that followed the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing as suggested by Miles and Huberman. Data reduction involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing the information obtained from interviews, observations, and documents so that the most relevant points to the research focus were retained. The reduced data were then displayed in the form of thematic descriptions and matrices, making it easier to interpret patterns related to teachers' perceptions of the school's role as an agent of socialization. After organizing the data, the next stage was conclusion drawing and verification. The researcher identified recurring themes, compared perspectives among different participants, and linked the findings to theoretical frameworks on socialization and education. Verification was conducted continuously throughout the research process to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the results. Triangulation between interviews, observations, and document analysis further strengthened the validity of interpretations. Through this process, the data analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of how teachers perceive and implement the socialization function of elementary schools.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Findings

Based on the research findings, teachers perceive elementary schools not only as academic institutions but also as primary spaces for student socialization, where children learn to interact, cooperate, and understand social norms. However, the integration of social values into learning remains limited due to the dominance of cognitive aspects in the curriculum, causing the socialization process to occur spontaneously in certain situations, such as during group work or conflict resolution. In addition, school policy support has been shown to significantly influence the effectiveness of teachers' roles, with schools that emphasize character education and provide collaborative spaces being better able to assist teachers in instilling social values compared to schools that focus solely on academic achievement.

Elementary schools are regarded as the primary spaces for student socialization

Elementary schools are regarded as the primary spaces for student socialization because this is where children begin to adapt to a broader social environment beyond their families. Teachers believe that schools do not only

serve as places for transferring knowledge but also as arenas for students to build relationships, learn rules, and understand the values that apply in social life. Classroom activities, school regulations, and daily interactions such as playing and working in groups serve as important media for developing children’s social skills. Thus, elementary schools have a dual function: fostering cognitive development while simultaneously instilling social skills necessary for life in society. Furthermore, the interactions that occur in elementary schools are considered crucial in shaping students’ social character from an early age. Teachers observe that through experiences of interacting with peers, children learn empathy, cooperation, tolerance, and constructive conflict resolution. This makes schools the first systematic social laboratory for children. Therefore, the role of elementary schools in the socialization process should not be underestimated, as they provide a framework for internalizing values and norms that will influence students’ attitudes, behaviors, and social identity in the future.

Table1. Teacher Interview Results on the Role of Elementary Schools as Agents of Socialization

No	Interview Question	Teacher’s Answer
1	In your opinion, is the role of elementary schools limited only to teaching academic subjects?	“No, elementary schools also play an important role in instilling social values such as discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect.”
2	How do you integrate social values into the teaching and learning process?	“I usually integrate social values through group work, class discussions, and by setting a positive example for students.”
3	What challenges do you face in guiding students in social aspects?	“The main challenge is that the curriculum prioritizes academic achievement, so there is less time to focus on social education.”
4	How do students respond to learning activities that include social values?	“Most students are enthusiastic; they enjoy learning through teamwork or role play because it is more interactive and engaging.”
5	What kind of school support helps you most in instilling social values?	“Support in the form of extracurricular activities, character-based school programs, and consistent school rules greatly helps me in guiding students.”

The interview results indicate that teachers perceive elementary schools not only as academic institutions but also as primary spaces for instilling social values. Teachers stated that through learning activities, group work, class discussions, and daily behavioral examples, students can learn values such as discipline, cooperation, and mutual respect. Students’ responses to learning activities that incorporate social values were also positive, as they were more enthusiastic when participating in interactive activities such as role-playing or group work. This emphasizes that the socialization process can be effective when teachers are able to integrate social values into teaching and learning activities. However, the interviews also revealed challenges faced by teachers, particularly the dominance of a curriculum that emphasizes academic achievement, which limits opportunities to instill social values. To address this, school support plays a crucial role, such as through character education programs, extracurricular activities, and consistent school rules. This support provides teachers with greater space to develop a balanced approach to learning that integrates both cognitive and social aspects. Therefore, the role of teachers in student

socialization can be more effective when supported by conducive school policies and a positive school climate.

Limited Integration of Social Values due to the Dominance of Cognitive Aspects

The integration of social values in elementary school learning still faces various limitations due to the dominance of cognitive aspects emphasized in the curriculum. Most teachers acknowledge that their main focus is directed toward achieving measurable academic targets, such as exam scores and competency standards. This condition causes social aspects to receive less attention in the learning process. As a result, social values are not planned systematically but instead emerge spontaneously in certain situations, such as when students work together in groups or when teachers handle minor conflicts among students. These limitations impact the suboptimal development of students’ social skills, which should ideally be cultivated alongside academic abilities. Without clear and consistent integration, students may grow with strong knowledge but limited abilities in empathy, communication, cooperation, and social problem-solving. Social skills are crucial for supporting children’s success in societal life in the future. Therefore, the challenge for teachers and schools is to find learning strategies that not only focus on cognitive aspects but also position social values as an integral part of the educational process.

Table 2. Teacher Interview Results: Integration of Social Values

No	Interview Question	Teacher’s Answer
1	How do you perceive the role of elementary schools in students’ social development?	“Elementary schools are important places for children to learn to interact, be disciplined, and understand social rules from an early age.”
2	What methods do you usually use to instill social values in learning?	“I use group work, educational games, and provide direct examples of respectful behavior.”
3	What are the main challenges you face in guiding students’ social aspects?	“The curriculum emphasizes academics more, so time to instill social values is still limited.”
4	How do students respond when social values are taught through learning activities?	“Most students enjoy it; they are more active when learning is made interactive and involves teamwork with peers.”
5	What kind of school support do you expect to strengthen students’ social education?	“Extracurricular programs, positive habits, and consistent school rules greatly help teachers.”

The interview results indicate that teachers perceive elementary schools as important spaces for students’ social development. Teachers emphasize that schools are not only intended for teaching academic knowledge but also serve as places where children learn rules, discipline, and cooperation. To support this, teachers integrate social values through various learning methods, such as group work, educational games, and modeling appropriate behavior in daily activities. Students’ responses to these approaches are generally positive, as they become more enthusiastic and active when learning is interactive and involves collaboration with peers. However, teachers also face significant challenges, particularly due to the curriculum’s emphasis on academic achievement. This focus limits opportunities to develop social education, which often only occurs incidentally. Therefore, school support plays a crucial role, such as through

extracurricular programs, positive behavioral routines, and consistent school rules. With such support, teachers have greater freedom to implement balanced learning strategies that integrate both cognitive and social aspects, making the student socialization process more effective.

School Policy Support and Its Influence on Socialization

School policy support has been shown to significantly influence the effectiveness of student socialization in elementary schools. Teachers working in schools that emphasize character education report that they are better able to guide students because these policies provide room for social development alongside academic achievement. Schools that offer collaborative programs, extracurricular activities, and a positive school culture create conducive environments for students to practice social skills in real situations. With this support, teachers can more easily integrate social values into daily learning activities. Conversely, teachers in schools that focus primarily on academic achievement face limitations in fostering social values. Excessive focus on cognitive goals often sidelines the socialization process, preventing students from gaining sufficient structured social experiences. This demonstrates that successful socialization depends not only on the teacher’s role but also on school policies that provide guidance and a supportive framework. Thus, balanced policy support between academic and social aspects is key to creating a more effective socialization process in elementary schools.

Table 3. Teacher Interview Results on Socialization in Elementary Schools

No	Interview Question	Teacher’s Answer
1	How do you perceive the role of elementary schools in shaping students’ social attitudes?	“Elementary schools are very important as the first place where children learn to socialize outside the family.”
2	How do you instill social values in learning activities?	“I usually teach social values through group discussions, cooperative tasks, and by modeling good behavior.”
3	What challenges do you often face in guiding students’ social development?	“The main challenge is that the curriculum emphasizes academics, so the time for social education is limited.”
4	How do students respond to learning activities that incorporate social values?	“Most students are enthusiastic; they are more motivated when learning involves cooperation or educational games.”
5	What kind of school support do you consider important for promoting social education?	“Extracurricular programs, positive routines, and clear school rules greatly help in instilling social values.”

The interview results show that teachers view elementary schools as primary environments where students learn to socialize beyond the family. Teachers emphasize that through classroom activities, students gain not only academic knowledge but also important social values such as cooperation, responsibility, and respect for others. Teachers employ various approaches to instill these values, from group discussions and collaborative tasks to modeling behavior in daily life. According to teachers, this approach is effective because students understand social values better when practiced directly in learning activities. On the other hand, teachers face challenges in integrating social values due to the curriculum’s strong focus on academic achievement. Social learning often occurs only incidentally, for example, during group activities or conflict resolution. Nevertheless, students respond positively to activities that

embed social values, showing enthusiasm in cooperative and educational games. Teachers note that consistent school support through extracurricular programs, positive routines, and clear rules is crucial for strengthening social education. With this consistent support, teachers can more freely guide students to develop a balanced growth in both academic and social aspects.

3.2 Discussion

Elementary schools are regarded as the primary spaces for student socialization because this is where children begin to learn how to adapt to a broader social environment beyond their families. Teachers perceive that the role of schools is not limited to the transfer of academic knowledge but also serves as an arena for students to build relationships, learn rules, and understand values that apply in social life (Johnson, 2019). Classroom activities, school regulations, and daily interactions, such as playing and group work, serve as important media for developing children's social skills, making elementary schools function dually: fostering cognitive development while simultaneously cultivating social competencies necessary for life in society.

Interactions that occur in elementary schools play a crucial role in shaping students' social character from an early age. Through experiences of interacting with peers, children learn empathy, cooperation, tolerance, and constructive conflict resolution (Smith & Turner, 2020). Teachers act as facilitators who guide these social interactions to ensure they remain constructive and normative. This demonstrates that schools are not merely places for academic learning but also serve as children's first systematic social laboratory. However, research also finds that the effectiveness of socialization in schools is influenced by how teachers understand and implement social values in learning (Lee, 2021). Teachers who recognize the importance of the school's social role tend to be more creative in designing activities that promote positive peer interactions. Conversely, a lack of awareness or limited teacher competence in integrating social values can hinder the socialization process, causing students to miss opportunities to internalize norms and values that should be acquired early. In addition, school policy and culture play a significant role in supporting teachers as agents of socialization (Anderson, Kim, & Zhao, 2023). Schools that provide collaborative spaces, extracurricular activities, and a positive environment facilitate teachers in consistently instilling social values. Conversely, schools focused solely on academic achievement limit the opportunities for teachers to develop students' social aspects. This emphasizes that the success of student socialization depends not only on the teacher's role but also on structural support and school policies that promote character education.

The integration of social values in elementary school learning continues to face various limitations due to the dominance of cognitive aspects emphasized in the curriculum. Most teachers admit that their primary focus is directed toward achieving measurable academic targets, such as exam scores and competency standards (Hernandez & Brown, 2021). This condition reduces attention to social aspects, resulting in social values not being systematically integrated into teaching and learning activities. Consequently, student socialization often occurs spontaneously, for example when children work together in groups or when small conflicts arise among classmates (Patel, 2022). This indicates that without a deliberately designed approach, social learning lacks a clear framework, thereby limiting opportunities for students to fully develop their social skills.

The limitations in integrating social values have a direct impact on students' social competencies, which ideally should be developed in parallel with academic achievement (Mawarni, 2023). Students who possess strong academic knowledge but weak social skills, such as empathy, communication, and collaboration may face difficulties in social interactions and in addressing complex social problems. Therefore, integrating social values becomes an essential element in shaping students who are balanced both cognitively and socially. The challenge for teachers and schools is to develop learning strategies that consistently balance academic and social dimensions (Anderson, Kim, & Zhao, 2023). Schools that provide support through character education policies, collaborative activities, and a positive school culture create space for teachers to design more holistic learning experiences. Thus, the successful integration of social values strongly depends on teachers' awareness, pedagogical approaches, and structural support from schools.

School policy support has been shown to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of student socialization in elementary schools. Teachers working in schools with policies that emphasize character education feel better supported in guiding students, as these policies provide room for the development of social values alongside academic achievement (Johnson, 2019). Policies that promote character education enable teachers to design learning activities that balance cognitive and social aspects, allowing the socialization process to proceed more systematically.

Schools that offer collaborative programs, extracurricular activities, and a positive school culture create conducive environments for students to develop social skills in real contexts (Smith & Turner, 2020). Activities such as group work, academic competitions involving teamwork, and mentoring programs help students learn empathy, tolerance, and communication skills. With a supportive school environment, teachers can more easily integrate social values into daily learning activities, making student socialization more effective. Conversely, teachers in schools with policies focused solely on academic achievement face limitations in instilling social values (Lee, 2021). Excessive emphasis on cognitive goals often sidelines the socialization process, preventing students from gaining structured social experiences. This demonstrates that successful socialization depends not only on the teacher's role but also on school policies that provide guidance and a supportive framework. Therefore, balanced policy support between academic and social aspects is key to creating an effective socialization process in elementary schools (Anderson, Kim, & Zhao, 2023). Schools that maintain this balance can encourage teachers to implement holistic learning strategies while ensuring students develop both cognitively and socially. This underscores that school policy cannot be overlooked in shaping a generation of students who are not only academically competent but also socially skilled.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that elementary schools play a crucial role as agents of student socialization. Teachers perceive that, in addition to teaching academic knowledge, schools serve as an initial environment where students learn social interaction, cooperation, understanding rules, and internalizing social values. This socialization process occurs through various learning activities, peer interactions, and teachers' modeling, allowing schools to function dually: developing cognitive abilities while simultaneously

cultivating social skills necessary for life in society. Furthermore, the success of student socialization is highly influenced by school policy and culture. Schools that provide space for character education, collaborative activities, and a positive environment enable teachers to consistently instill social values. Conversely, schools that focus excessively on academic achievement limit teachers' ability to develop students' social aspects. Therefore, the integration of social values into learning and balanced policy support are key to creating an effective and optimal socialization process in elementary schools.

References

- Anderson, P., Kim, S., & Zhao, L. (2023). *Teachers' perceptions and school policy alignment in achieving holistic education goals*. *Journal of Educational Research*, 45(2), 123-139.
- Benninga, J. S. (2003). *The relationship of character education to academic and nonacademic outcomes*. *Journal of Research in Character Education*, 1(1), 1-17.
- Cappella, E., & Weinstein, R. S. (2013). *Classroom peer relationships and behavioral adjustment in elementary school*. *Journal of School Psychology*, 51(3), 319-332.
- Clements, K. A., & Yeager, D. S. (2025). *Impacts of learning assistants on student belonging and confidence*. *Life Sciences Education*, 24(2), 1-13.
- Cooper, C. M., & McIntyre, L. (2023). *Perceptions of social-emotional learning among K-12 teachers: A national survey*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(4), 789-804.
- Dabdoub, J. P., & McGrath, D. (2024). *Redesigning schools for effective character education: Leadership training programs*. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 62(5), 567-584.
- Fagan, B. J., & McGinnis, P. (2024). *Teachers' perceptions of social-emotional learning: A meta-analysis*. *Journal of Educational Research*, 117(2), 215-229.
- Ferrara, K. M. (2019). *The effectiveness of character education on student behavior and academic performance*. Rowan University Dissertations and Theses.
- Fischer, S. N. (2017). *Teacher perceptions of the social-emotional learning program: A qualitative study*. Capstone Projects, 1285.
- Hernandez, R., & Brown, T. (2021). *Fostering inclusive classroom environments: Implications for student belonging and social development*. *International Journal of Educational Studies*, 38(4), 201-218.
- Hisda, W. T., Yusnan, M., Firasti, F., Purwaningsih, T., & Aras, L. O. (2023). *Peningkatan Keterampilan Belajar Bahasa Indonesia Tentang Membaca Dongeng Dengan Penerapan Metode Demonstrasi*. *Trapsila: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, 5(1), 1-8.
- Huck, C., Zhang, J., Garby, L., & Li, X. (2023). *Development of an instrument to assess teacher perceptions of social-emotional learning in PK-12 schools*. *Educational Research and Development Journal*, 26(1), 24-42.

- Johnson, M. (2019). *Teachers as mediators of social values in elementary schools*. *Education and Society*, 31(1), 45-62.
- Lee, C. (2021). *Role modeling and teacher attitudes in promoting social norms in schools*. *Journal of Early Childhood Education*, 29(3), 87-101.
- Mawarni, D. (2023). *Balancing academic and social competencies in elementary education*. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research*, 15(2), 75-90.
- Najjarpour, M. (2025). *Teachers' perceptions of challenges to integrating social and emotional learning in English as a foreign language classrooms*. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 45, 1-12.
- O'Brennan, L. M., & Bradshaw, C. P. (2014). *Influence of classroom and school climate on teacher perceptions of school safety*. *Journal of School Psychology*, 52(5), 525-537.
- Patel, R. (2022). *Effective classroom management and peer interaction in elementary schools*. *Journal of Child Development and Education*, 40(1), 33-49.
- Person, S. M. (2024). *Teachers' lived experiences implementing social and emotional learning in elementary schools*. Liberty University Doctoral Dissertations.
- Smith, J., & Turner, L. (2020). *Elementary schools as socialization agents: Cooperation and empathy development*. *Journal of School Psychology*, 52(3), 150-166.
- Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2011). *A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement*. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(1), 82-96.
- Zeichner, K., & Gore, J. (2020). *Teacher socialization: A review of the research*. College of Education, Michigan State University.
- Zengilowski, A., & McDonald, D. (2023). *The collective classroom "we": The role of students' sense of belonging in academic achievement*. *Learning and Instruction*, 79, 101-115.