

Social Skills and Learning Engagement in Social Studies among Grade 4 Learners

Grescin J. Obial

Master of Arts in Teaching, Major in Social Studies, Graduate School Valencia Colleges (Bukidnon),
Inc. Purok 17-A, Hagkol, Valencia City, Bukidnon Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the relationship between social skills and learning engagement among Grade 4 learners in San Fernando II District, Division of Bukidnon, during the 2025-2026 school year. Specifically, it examined the levels of social skills, affectivity, responsibility, civility, and assertiveness, and their association with learning engagement. The research employed a descriptive-correlational design with a sample of 188 randomly selected Grade 4 learners. Two adapted questionnaires were used: one measuring social skills based on Freitas and Del Prette (2015), and another assessing learning engagement following Bertolani, Mortari, and Carey's (2014) framework.

Findings revealed that learners demonstrated very high levels of affectivity and responsibility, and high levels of civility and assertiveness. Moreover, learners exhibited a very high level of learning engagement. Significant positive correlations were found between affectivity, responsibility, civility, and learning engagement, indicating that these social skills contribute to learners' motivation and participation. However, assertiveness was not significantly related to learning engagement, suggesting that its influence may be less direct or context-dependent.

Teachers, parents, and school heads can use these insights to support social skill development and boost academic involvement. Future research is encouraged to explore the role of assertiveness further and investigate tailored interventions that strengthen specific social skills to optimize learning engagement across various educational contexts.

Keywords: social skills in terms of affectivity, responsibility, civility, assertiveness, learning engagement

INTRODUCTION

Social skills play a crucial role in learners' academic and social development, particularly in elementary education, where peer interaction and collaborative learning are essential. However, many learners experience difficulties in communication, cooperation, and emotional regulation due to limited opportunities for meaningful social interaction and inadequate modeling of positive behaviors. These challenges may hinder learners' ability to actively participate in classroom activities and negatively affect their engagement in learning.

Learning engagement, which includes behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement, is a key factor in academic success. Learners who are socially competent are more likely to participate in discussions, collaborate with peers, and persist in learning tasks. Conversely, learners with underdeveloped social skills may experience disengagement, reduced confidence, and limited participation in classroom activities (Cook et al., 2021).

Although previous studies have established the importance of social skills in enhancing academic engagement, there is limited research examining specific dimensions of social skills, such as affectivity, responsibility, civility, and assertiveness, and their relationship with learning engagement in elementary contexts, particularly in rural Philippine settings. This gap highlights the need to explore how different aspects of social skills contribute to learners' engagement.

Anchored on Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), which emphasizes learning through observation, interaction, and reinforcement, this study investigates the relationship between social skills and learning engagement among Grade 4 learners in San Fernando District II, Bukidnon. Understanding this relationship may provide insights for developing interventions that enhance both social competence and academic participation.

The study is anchored in Social Learning Theory (1977), developed by Albert Bandura, which posits that individuals learn through observing and imitating the actions, attitudes, and emotional expressions of others. Bandura emphasized the importance of modeling, imitation, and reinforcement in the process of social skills learning and argued that interactions in society are central to how a person learns (Bandura, 1986). Moreover, Social Learning Theory emphasizes the mutual dependence between behavior, environment, and cognition, which Bandura (1989) called reciprocal determinism. Such a dynamic interaction implies that self-efficacy and motivation lead to engagement in learning within a supportive, socially interactive learning environment. Whenever students see positive social experiences, such as teachers nurturing them to contribute or peers being motivated to learn, they tend to gain confidence in themselves. Engagement is also enhanced by reinforcement, whether through direct praise or peer approval, and students tend to be more willing to actively participate in classroom activities (Bandura, 1997).

The use of this theory in the educational setting underscores the need to promote a socially rich, interactive learning process to improve social skills and engagement in learning. Such collaborative learning strategies, such as peer discussions, cooperative tasks, and group projects, allow students to observe, practice, and polish their social skills without being excluded from academic proceedings. The literature supports the idea that classes with high levels of social interaction and peer modeling enhance engagement and learning (Ormrod, 2020). Therefore, applying Social Learning Theory in pedagogy can improve students' social flexibility and long-term academic interaction. The correlation between social skills and learners' engagement in the learning process is shown in Figure 1.

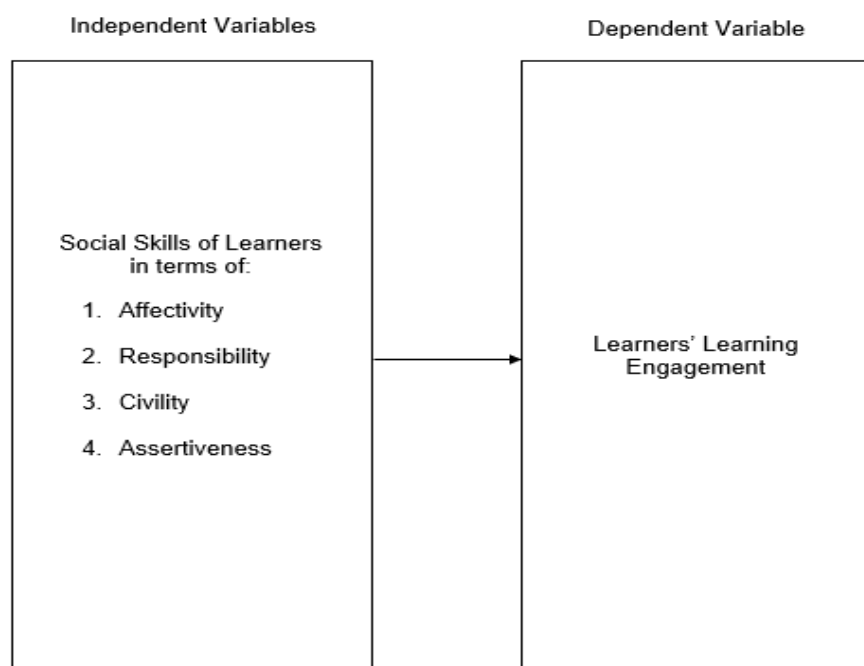


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram showing the Relationship of the Independent and Dependent Variables of the Study

This study aimed to assess the relationship between social skills and learning engagement among Grade 4 learners in San Fernando II District, Division of Bukidnon, for the school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of social skills among Grade 4 learners in terms of affectivity, responsibility, civility, and assertiveness?

2. What is the level of learning engagement among Grade 4 learners?
3. Is there a significant relationship between social skills in terms of affectivity, responsibility, civility, assertiveness, and learning engagement among Grade 4 learners?

Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis was tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Ho. There is no significant relationship among Grade 4 learners in social skills in terms of affectivity, responsibility, civility, assertiveness, and learning engagement.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational research design to examine the relationship between learners’ social skills and their engagement in learning activities. The descriptive–correlational approach is a quantitative method used to describe existing conditions and determine whether relationships exist between variables without manipulating them. In this study, the design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to assess levels of social skills and learning engagement among Grade 4 learners and to determine whether a significant relationship exists between these variables. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in San Fernando District II, Division of Bukidnon, Philippines. San Fernando is a municipality in the southeastern part of Bukidnon, composed of 24 barangays. The area is characterized by mountainous terrain and river valleys formed by the Tigwa and Salug Rivers. The district includes several public elementary schools that serve diverse communities within the municipality. These schools served as the research setting for examining the social skills and learning engagement of Grade 4 learners in the local educational context.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents in the study were Grade 4 learners enrolled in public elementary schools in San Fernando District II during the School Year 2025–2026. These learners were considered appropriate participants because children at this developmental stage are actively developing social skills and engagement behaviors that influence their participation in learning activities.

A total of 188 Grade 4 learners participated in the study.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by School

School	Population (N)	Sample (n)
Kalagangan Central Elementary School	70	36
Bugca Elementary School	42	22
Matupe Integrated School	47	24
Mahayag Elementary School	39	20
Cayaga Elementary School	26	13

Iglugsad Elementary School	33	17
Palacpacan Elementary School	35	18
Dao Elementary School	44	23
Cabuling Elementary School	31	16
Total	367	188

Sampling Procedure

The study employed simple random sampling to select the respondents. This probability sampling method ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected, thereby improving the representativeness of the sample (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

From a total population of 367 Grade 4 learners, a sample size of 188 respondents was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator. Random selection was conducted across the participating elementary schools to ensure fair representation of learners from different schools within the district.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a two-part survey questionnaire.

The first part measured social skills, adapted from Freitas and Del Prette (2015), covering affectivity, responsibility, civility, and assertiveness. The second part measured learning engagement based on Bertolani, Mortari, and Carey (2014), assessing learners’ behavioral, emotional, and cognitive participation.

To ensure content validity, the instruments were reviewed by three experts in education and social-emotional learning. Revisions were made to improve clarity and alignment with the study variables.

A pilot test was conducted among 30 Grade 4 learners outside the study sample. Reliability analysis using Cronbach’s alpha yielded coefficients of 0.92 for the social skills scale and 0.89 for the learning engagement scale, indicating high internal consistency.

Construct validity was supported by item-total correlation analysis, in which all items met acceptable thresholds. Prior to inferential analysis, assumptions for Pearson correlation were examined. Data were tested for normality using the Shapiro–Wilk test and visual inspection of histograms, while linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed through scatterplots. The results indicated that the assumptions were met sufficiently to proceed with parametric analysis.

Despite these strengths, reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias; thus, future studies are encouraged to incorporate multiple data sources.

Scoring Procedure

Responses were interpreted using a five-point Likert scale.

A. Social Skills

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Always	Very High
4	3.41–4.20	Often	High

3	2.61–3.40	Sometimes	Moderate
2	1.81–2.60	Rarely	Low
1	1.00–1.80	Never	Very Low

B. Learning Engagement

Scale	Range	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
5	4.21–5.00	Strongly Agree	Very High
4	3.41–4.20	Agree	High
3	2.61–3.40	Undecided	Moderate
2	1.81–2.60	Disagree	Low
1	1.00–1.80	Strongly Disagree	Very Low

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Division of Bukidnon, the Public Schools District Supervisor of San Fernando District II, and the school heads of the participating schools.

After approval was granted, coordination was conducted with the Grade 4 teachers regarding the administration of the survey questionnaires. The purpose of the study and the instructions for answering the questionnaire were explained to the learners before administration.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected through the assistance of the class advisers. After retrieval, the responses were checked for completeness, coded, and organized for statistical analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation in the research was voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose before completing the questionnaire.

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no personal identifiers, such as names, were collected from the respondents. All data were treated confidentially and used solely for research purposes. The collected information was reported in aggregate to protect participants' identities and privacy.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The following statistical tools were used to analyze the data:

1. Mean and Standard Deviation – used to determine the level of social skills in terms of affectivity, responsibility, civility, and assertiveness, as well as the level of learning engagement among learners.
2. Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) – used to determine whether a significant relationship exists between learners’ social skills and their engagement in learning activities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the respondents in relation to the research problems. The discussion focuses on the level of social skills among Grade 4 learners in terms of

affectivity, responsibility, civility, and assertiveness, the level of learning engagement among learners, and the relationship between social skills and learning engagement.

Level of Social Skills among Grade 4 Learners

Table 1. Overall Level of Social Skills among Grade 4 Learners

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Affectivity	4.22	0.391	Very High
Responsibility	4.47	0.409	Very High
Civility	4.18	0.338	High
Assertiveness	4.18	0.451	High
Overall Mean	4.26	0.397	Very High

Table 1 presents the overall level of social skills among Grade 4 learners. The results reveal an overall mean of 4.26 (SD = 0.397) interpreted as Very High, indicating that learners frequently demonstrate positive social behaviors in their interactions with peers and teachers. Among the dimensions of social skills, responsibility obtained the highest mean (M = 4.47), followed by affectivity (M = 4.22), while civility (M = 4.18) and assertiveness (M = 4.18) also showed high levels. These findings suggest that learners consistently demonstrate responsible behaviors such as following classroom rules, completing tasks, and listening to teachers. At the same time, they show affective behaviors such as empathy, friendliness, and emotional awareness toward their peers.

The high level of social skills observed among learners indicates that Grade 4 students possess well-developed interpersonal abilities that contribute to positive classroom interactions and cooperative learning environments. These skills play a critical role in supporting learners' emotional well-being, social relationships, and participation in academic activities.

The findings support Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977), which posits that individuals acquire social behaviors through observation, imitation, and reinforcement within social environments. According to Bandura (1986), learners develop social skills by observing the behaviors of teachers, peers, and other role models in their environment. Positive interactions and reinforcement strengthen these behaviors, allowing learners to internalize appropriate social responses in school settings.

The results are also consistent with previous studies. Mou et al. (2021) emphasize that empathy and emotional understanding promote stronger peer relationships and enhance learning motivation. Similarly, Bharuthram and van Heerden (2022) highlight that supportive peer interactions foster emotional well-being and encourage collaborative learning among students. Research by Cipriano et al. (2023) also indicates that affective and social competencies contribute significantly to the development of positive classroom climates and learner engagement. The findings imply that schools should continue implementing programs and instructional practices that promote social-emotional learning. Developing learners' social skills can strengthen peer relationships, improve classroom behavior, and support learners' active participation in academic activities.

Level of Learning Engagement among Grade 4 Learners

Table 2. Level of Learning Engagement among Grade 4 Learners

Variable	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Learning Engagement	4.33	0.240	Very High

Table 2 presents the level of learning engagement among Grade 4 learners. The results show an overall mean of 4.33 (SD = 0.240) interpreted as Very High, indicating that learners demonstrate strong participation and involvement in classroom learning activities. The findings reveal that learners frequently demonstrate behaviors associated with high engagement, such as paying attention during lessons, completing assignments, participating in discussions, and persisting in academic tasks even when they are challenging. Learners also show strong confidence in their academic abilities and willingness to seek help when they encounter difficulties.

These results suggest that learners are actively involved in their learning processes and exhibit positive attitudes toward academic activities. High engagement reflects learners’ behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in classroom learning, which contributes to improved academic outcomes.

The findings align with Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of motivation, self-efficacy, and environmental influences in shaping learner behavior. According to Bandura (1997), learners who observe supportive interactions and receive positive reinforcement are more likely to develop confidence and actively participate in learning activities. Empirical research also supports these findings. Fuertes et al. (2023) explain that learners who possess positive self-perceptions are more motivated and persistent in academic tasks. Likewise, Cavanagh (2019) notes that attention, participation, and persistence are essential components of effective learning engagement. Research by Martin-Garcia et al. (2023) further indicates that engaged learners demonstrate greater persistence and a stronger growth mindset when facing academic challenges.

The results imply that fostering positive classroom environments and supportive teacher–student relationships can significantly enhance learners’ engagement. Instructional strategies that encourage participation, collaboration, and meaningful learning experiences can further strengthen learners’ motivation and academic involvement.

Relationship Between Social Skills and Learning Engagement

Table 3. Correlation Analysis between Social Skills and Learning Engagement

Variable	r	p-value	Interpretation
Affectivity	.303	.000	Significant
Responsibility	.155	.037	Significant
Civility	.293	.000	Significant
Assertiveness	.085	.255	Not Significant
Overall	.350	.000	Significant

Table 3 presents the correlation between social skills and learning engagement among Grade 4 learners. The results show a significant positive relationship between overall social skills and learning engagement ($r = .350$, $p = .000$). Among the dimensions of social skills, affectivity ($r = .303$) and civility ($r = .293$) showed moderate positive correlations with learning engagement, while responsibility ($r = .155$) showed a weaker but still significant relationship. However, assertiveness ($r = .085$) did not demonstrate a statistically significant relationship with learning engagement.

The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between overall social skills and learning engagement, indicating that learners with stronger interpersonal competencies tend to participate more actively in classroom activities. However, a notable exception was observed in the assertiveness dimension, which showed no significant relationship with learning engagement.

This result suggests that assertiveness may function differently from other social skills such as affectivity and civility. While affectivity and civility emphasize empathy, cooperation, and respect, qualities that directly

support collaborative learning, assertiveness involves expressing one's opinions and standing up for oneself, which may not always align with classroom norms, particularly in collectivist cultural contexts.

In the Philippine setting, where respect, harmony, and group cohesion are highly valued, assertive behaviors may be less encouraged in formal classroom environments. Learners may prioritize politeness and conformity over self-expression, which could explain why assertiveness does not significantly contribute to observable engagement. This interpretation is consistent with Rashidi et al. (2023), who noted that assertiveness is more strongly associated with personal confidence and social relationships than with direct academic participation.

Additionally, the lack of significance may reflect instructional practices. If classroom activities are predominantly teacher-directed, opportunities for learners to express assertive behaviors may be limited. In such environments, engagement is more closely linked to compliance, participation, and cooperation rather than independent expression.

From a theoretical perspective, Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) emphasizes that behavior is shaped by environmental reinforcement. If assertive behaviors are not consistently modeled or reinforced in the classroom, learners may not perceive them as relevant to academic participation. Furthermore, the moderate strength of the overall correlation ($r = 0.350$) suggests that while social skills contribute to engagement, they are not the sole influencing factor. Other variables such as teaching strategies, classroom climate, and learner motivation may also play significant roles in shaping engagement.

Overall, the findings highlight that not all social skills equally influence learning engagement. Skills related to cooperation and emotional awareness appear to be more directly linked to classroom participation, while assertiveness may require specific instructional contexts to become relevant to academic engagement.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study indicate that Grade 4 learners demonstrate high to very high levels of social skills and learning engagement. However, the results reveal that not all dimensions of social skills equally influence engagement.

Affectivity, responsibility, and civility were found to significantly contribute to learners' engagement, highlighting the importance of empathy, cooperation, and respectful behavior in promoting active participation in classroom activities. In contrast, assertiveness did not show a significant relationship, suggesting that its role in learning engagement may be context-dependent and influenced by cultural and instructional factors.

The study supports Bandura's Social Learning Theory, emphasizing that social behaviors reinforced within the learning environment shape learners' engagement. However, the findings also indicate that engagement is influenced by multiple factors beyond social skills alone.

These results underscore the importance of fostering social-emotional competencies that align with collaborative and interactive learning environments. Schools should continue implementing programs that strengthen learners' interpersonal skills and create opportunities for balanced self-expression.

Overall, developing targeted social skills can enhance learners' engagement, but instructional design and classroom context remain critical in determining how these skills translate into active participation.

For Future Research

Future studies are encouraged to adopt mixed-method approaches by integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative data such as interviews, classroom observations, or focus group discussions. This would provide deeper insights into how social skills are expressed and how they influence learners' engagement in real classroom settings.

Expanding the study to include multiple districts or regions would improve the generalizability of findings and allow for comparisons across different educational and cultural contexts. Additionally, future research may

examine other variables such as teaching strategies, classroom climate, and learner motivation to better understand the factors influencing engagement.

Further investigation into assertiveness is also recommended, particularly exploring how cultural norms and instructional practices shape its role in learning engagement. Experimental studies may also be conducted to examine how targeted social skills interventions influence learners' academic participation over time.

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