The Influence of Learning Environment on Students' Social Behavior

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ABSTRACT

This research is aim to analyze the influence of various learning environments (physical, digital, and hybrid) on students' social behavior. This research aims to contribute valuable insights into the evolving educational landscape, offering practical implications for educators, school administrators, and policymakers in fostering holistic student development. This study is grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in cognitive and behavioral development. This study employs a qualitative research design, using a phenomenological approach to explore students' lived experiences regarding the influence of the learning environment on their social behavior. This study demonstrates that students' social behavior is deeply influenced by the learning environment, whether traditional, digital, or hybrid. Well-structured and supportive learning environments, both physical and digital, promote positive social interactions, empathy, and teamwork among students. Future research should explore the long-term impact of different learning environments on students' social behavior, particularly in the context of evolving educational technologies.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a crucial role in shaping students' social behavior, with the learning environment being one of the key determinants (Cebelleros & Buenaventura, 2024). The school environment, which includes physical, social, and psychological aspects, significantly influences how students interact with peers, teachers (Komardi et al., 2024), and the broader community. In recent years, with the rapid evolution of educational approaches and the integration of technology, understanding the impact of the learning environment on students' social behavior has become increasingly important. Schools serve not only as places of academic learning but also as spaces for socialization, where students develop essential interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and ethical values.

Recent studies and observations indicate that the learning environment directly affects students' social interactions, emotional well-being, and overall behavioral patterns (Kassab et al., 2024). Positive environments, characterized by supportive teachers, inclusive peer relationships, and well-structured classroom settings, promote cooperation, empathy, and respect among students. Conversely, negative environments, such as those with high levels of bullying, discrimination, or lack of student engagement, may lead to social withdrawal, aggression, or reduced self-esteem. The shift towards digital (Junaedi et al., 2024) and hybrid learning due to technological advancements and the COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated social interactions among students, raising concerns about their ability to develop healthy social behaviors.

Current research on learning environments and social behavior focuses primarily on either traditional classroom settings or digital learning platforms (Noor et al., 2022). Studies have highlighted the importance of teacher-student relationships, classroom management strategies, and school culture in fostering positive social behaviors. However, many existing studies lack an integrative approach that considers both physical and digital learning spaces. Furthermore, while research acknowledges the role of socio-economic and cultural factors in shaping student behavior, there is limited discussion on how contemporary educational policies and innovations impact students' social development.

This study seeks to bridge the gap in research by exploring how modern learning environments, encompassing both physical and digital spaces, influence students' social behaviors. Unlike previous studies that predominantly focus on either traditional or online learning separately, this research provides a comprehensive analysis of how hybrid educational models shape students' interpersonal skills and social engagement. Additionally, it examines the role of school policies, teacher interventions, and peer interactions in cultivating positive behavioral outcomes.

This research is aim to analyze the influence of various learning environments (physical, digital, and hybrid) on students' social behavior; to identify key factors within the learning environment that promote or hinder positive social interactions among students; to explore the impact of teacher-student relationships and peer dynamics on students' behavioral development; to assess the role of technological integration in shaping students' social engagement and interpersonal skills; to provide recommendations for educators and policymakers on optimizing learning environments to enhance students' social well-being.

This research aims to contribute valuable insights into the evolving educational landscape, offering practical implications for educators, school administrators, and policymakers in fostering holistic student development.

This study contributes to the field of education and social learning by providing empirical insights into the influence of learning environment on students' social behavior. Moreover, by integrating Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, this study advances theoretical discussions on how learning environment shapes students' social and cognitive development. The findings also offer practical implications for educators and policymakers by highlighting strategies to enhance classroom engagement, social interaction, and academic performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

This study is grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in cognitive and behavioral development (Fernyhough & Borghi, 2023). According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs within a social context where students develop through interactions with more knowledgeable peers and teachers. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights how a well-structured learning environment, with appropriate guidance and scaffolding, can foster not only academic growth but also social competence.

Several studies have applied Vygotsky's theory to analyze how the learning environment influences social behavior. Research by Mercer and Littleton (2007) found that classroom discourse and peer collaboration significantly enhance students' ability to communicate, negotiate, and develop empathy. Similarly, studies on digital learning spaces (Kirschner et al., 2018) suggest that virtual interactions can either strengthen or hinder social skills, depending on how technology is integrated into educational settings.

This literature review supports the argument that a well-structured learning environment, whether physical, digital, or hybrid, plays a crucial role in shaping students' social behaviors. By applying Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, this study aims to explore how different environmental factors influence social development and provide recommendations for optimizing learning spaces to enhance students' social well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative (Hadi et al., 2024) and (Nyoto et al., 2024) research design (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), using a phenomenological approach to explore students' lived experiences regarding the influence of the learning environment on their social behavior (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Through in-depth

interviews, observations, and document analysis, this research seeks to understand the complex interactions between students, teachers, and the learning environment.

Data Collection Methods

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with students, teachers, and school administrators to gain insights into their perspectives on how the learning environment impacts social behavior. **Observations**: Classroom observations will be conducted to analyze student interactions, peer relationships, and teacher interventions in shaping social behavior. **Document Analysis**: School policies, curriculum materials (Renaldo et al., 2023), and student behavior reports will be examined to understand institutional influences on student behavior.

Data Validation

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, this study will employ:

- Triangulation: Comparing data from interviews, observations, and document analysis to identify consistent patterns.
- Member Checking: Participants will review transcripts and preliminary findings to verify accuracy and provide additional insights.
- Peer Debriefing: Discussions with fellow researchers will be conducted to enhance the objectivity of data interpretation.
- Thick Description: Providing detailed descriptions of contexts and participant experiences to enhance the transferability of findings.

Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, following these steps:

- Data Familiarization: Reading and re-reading interview transcripts and observation notes to gain an overall understanding.
- Coding: Identifying recurring themes and patterns related to students' social behavior.
- Theme Development: Organizing codes into broader themes that explain the impact of the learning environment.
- Interpretation: Synthesizing findings to draw meaningful conclusions about the relationship between learning environments and social behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings on Learning Environment and Social Behavior

The results indicate that students' social behaviors are significantly influenced by their learning environments. Interviews with students and teachers revealed that structured and supportive learning spaces foster positive social interactions, whereas poorly managed environments lead to disengagement and behavioral issues. Observations confirmed that students in collaborative and well-organized settings exhibit higher levels of communication, empathy, and teamwork.

Influence of Structured and Supportive Learning Environments

In classrooms where teachers actively promote inclusivity, respect, and collaboration, students demonstrated stronger social skills (de Jong et al., 2022). Interview responses highlighted that students in well-structured environments feel more comfortable engaging in discussions, participating in group work, and building relationships with their peers. Observations confirmed that such students exhibited higher levels of communication, empathy, and teamwork. Teachers also noted that these students were more likely to resolve conflicts peacefully and support classmates facing academic or personal challenges. Example: In one classroom with a well-organized seating arrangement and clear rules for interaction, students naturally formed study groups, assisted each other with assignments, and engaged in meaningful conversations.

Impact of Poorly Managed Learning Environments

Conversely, in classrooms where rules were unclear, teacher intervention was minimal, or students felt unsupported, social withdrawal and behavioral issues were more prevalent. Interviews revealed that students in these settings often felt isolated, hesitant to participate, or prone to conflicts with peers. Observations further confirmed that such students exhibited low engagement, frequent distractions, and a lack of cooperation. Teachers reported challenges in maintaining classroom discipline and fostering a sense of community. Example:

In a classroom where students were allowed to move freely without clear guidelines (Renaldo et al., 2024), disruptions were frequent, leading to conflicts and reduced focus on learning tasks.

Role of Teacher-Student Relationships

Teachers play a critical role in shaping students' social behavior (Rahayu et al., 2024). The study found that teachers who actively engage with students, provide emotional support, and establish clear expectations contribute to the development of positive interpersonal skills. Conversely, students in environments with minimal teacher involvement displayed difficulties in social interactions and problem-solving.

Impact of Technology in Learning Environments

Hybrid learning environments presented both opportunities and challenges for students' social development (Nurhasanah, 2023). While digital tools enabled collaboration (Junaedi, Renaldo, Yovita, Augustine, et al., 2023), they also created barriers to face-to-face communication. The study suggests that a balanced integration of technology, with structured in-person interaction, is essential for fostering social skills.

Role of Hybrid and Digital Learning Environments

A key finding was the influence of digital (Junaedi, Renaldo, Yovita, Veronica, et al., 2023) and hybrid learning environments on students' social behaviors. Many students and teachers expressed concerns about the lack of face-to-face interaction in online settings, which affected students' ability to develop interpersonal skills (Gao, 2023). Some students reported feeling disconnected from their peers and teachers, leading to decreased social engagement. However, students who participated in well-structured virtual learning activities, such as group discussions, breakout rooms, and interactive digital assignments, still developed positive social behaviors. Teachers noted that guidance, active participation, and structured communication channels helped mitigate the negative effects of digital learning on social interaction.

Comparison of Different Learning Environments

Table 1. Comparison Result

Learning Environment	Observed Social Behavior	Key Findings
Traditional (Structured & Supportive)	High communication, collaboration, and empathy	Encourages positive student interactions and teamwork
Traditional (Poorly Managed)	Low engagement, conflicts, and social withdrawal	Leads to behavioral issues and reduced peer support
Hybrid Learning	Moderate social interaction, dependent on structure	Requires strong teacher intervention to maintain engagement
Digital Learning	Lower social interaction, potential isolation	Structured activities and teacher guidance are crucial

The table presents key findings on how different learning environments influence students' social behavior based on observations and analysis. It categorizes learning environments into four types, structured traditional, poorly managed traditional, hybrid, and digital, and highlights their impact on students' social interactions.

Traditional (Structured & Supportive). In well-organized traditional classrooms with clear rules and strong teacher guidance, students demonstrate high levels of communication, collaboration, and empathy. These environments encourage teamwork, peer support, and positive interpersonal relationships.

Traditional (Poorly Managed). In contrast, traditional classrooms that lack structure and effective management result in low student engagement, frequent conflicts, and social withdrawal. Without clear expectations or supportive teacher involvement, students struggle to build positive social interactions, leading to behavioral issues.

Hybrid Learning. This model, which combines in-person and online learning, shows moderate levels of social interaction. The effectiveness of hybrid learning in fostering social behavior largely depends on how well it is structured. Strong teacher intervention, such as clear communication strategies and interactive activities, is essential to maintaining student engagement.

Digital Learning. Online learning environments tend to result in lower levels of social interaction and, in some cases, social isolation. Without face-to-face interaction, students may find it challenging to develop communication and teamwork skills. However, when digital learning includes structured activities and active teacher guidance, it can still support social engagement and interaction.

Contribution to Novelty

This research contributes to the field by providing a comprehensive analysis of how different learning environments, traditional, digital, and hybrid, shape students' social behavior. Unlike previous studies that focused solely on either physical or online settings, this study integrates multiple perspectives to highlight the combined effects of both environments. It emphasizes the importance of structure, teacher involvement, and digital engagement strategies in fostering positive social interactions. The findings offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to optimize learning environments, ensuring they effectively support students' social development and overall well-being.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that students' social behavior is deeply influenced by the learning environment, whether traditional, digital, or hybrid. Well-structured and supportive learning environments, both physical and digital, promote positive social interactions, empathy, and teamwork among students. Conversely, poorly managed environments can lead to disengagement, social withdrawal, and conflicts. The research highlights the critical role of teacher involvement and the careful integration of technology in fostering healthy social behaviors. By providing a comprehensive analysis of various learning environments, this study offers valuable insights into optimizing educational settings to enhance students' social development and overall well-being.

Implication

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, school administrators, and policymakers. It is essential to design learning environments that prioritize structure, clear communication, and teacher involvement to foster positive social behaviors. The integration of technology in hybrid and digital learning environments should be approached strategically, with a focus on ensuring active participation and face-to-face interaction. Additionally, educational policies should consider the importance of supportive, inclusive environments that promote empathy, respect, and collaboration among students. This study provides actionable recommendations for improving both traditional and modern learning spaces to support students' social well-being.

Limitation

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The sample size may not fully represent the diversity of learning environments across different regions and educational systems (Mukhsin et al., 2024). Additionally, the research relies on qualitative methods, which, while providing in-depth insights, may be subject to researcher bias and may not be generalized to all educational settings. The study also does not account for external factors, such as family background or socio-economic status, that could influence students' social behavior. Future research should consider these factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how various elements impact social development in education.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made for optimizing learning environments:

- For Educators: Actively engage with students, provide emotional support, and maintain clear expectations to encourage positive social interactions.
- For School Administrators: Ensure that classrooms are well-structured and that teacher-student relationships are nurtured. Additionally, integrate digital tools effectively in hybrid learning environments, ensuring that these tools complement face-to-face interactions.
- For Policymakers: Support policies that promote inclusive, well-managed learning environments that foster social skills, emotional intelligence, and collaboration. Provide training for educators on managing both physical and digital learning spaces effectively.

Future Research

Future research should explore the long-term impact of different learning environments on students' social behavior, particularly in the context of evolving educational technologies. Studies could also investigate the role of socio-economic factors, teacher professional development, and the interplay between family environments and school settings. Additionally, examining the influence of cultural and regional differences on students' social behavior could offer a more nuanced understanding of how diverse learning environments affect

social outcomes. Longitudinal studies could provide insights into how students' social behaviors evolve as they transition between different learning environments over time.

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