

Theatre-based social-emotional learning program to foster friendship quality in elementary school students

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Abstract: This research focuses on the importance of friendship quality in children's social and emotional development, with a particular focus on primary school-aged children. The purpose of this study is to address the problem by developing a theatre-based learning module with the aim to improve friendship quality among primary school students as well as to determine the effectiveness of the module in improving friendship quality. This research methodology uses a research and development approach using the ADDIE model design. The results showed the study validated the module, achieving a high validity score of 89.94%. The Paired Samples Test revealed a significant improvement in friendship quality, with a mean score increase of -7.815 and a t-value of -3.036 (df = 26, p < 0.05). then it can be stated if the theatre-based SEL based theater programme had a significant impact on students' friendship quality. Theatre-based SEL programmes can facilitate students' understanding of emotions, enhance their ability to empathise, and encourage the development of stronger relationships. Therefore, the theatre-based module proved to be an effective approach in improving students' friendship quality.

Keywords: elementary students; friendship quality; SEL; theatre

1. Introduction

The quality of friendships is a significant factor in the social and emotional development of individuals (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2019; Avramidis et al., 2022). Friendships are distinctive relationships among children, and they play a pivotal role in fostering healthy social and emotional growth (Liu et al., 2022; Mazinder, 2020). The quality of friendships has been demonstrated to enhance social skills, emotional well-being and the ability to cope with daily challenges (Ağır, 2019; Rodda & Estes, 2018). The quality of friendships has been found to significantly impact children's adjustment at school, with better friendship quality providing higher levels of support and companionship (De Souza et al., 2022; Dryburgh et al., 2022).

The issue of the quality of friendships, particularly within the school setting, remains a significant challenge for individuals across all age groups. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission has revealed that there have been 861 cases of child protection violations in educational institutions from January to August 2023. These violations encompass sexual, physical, and/or psychological violence and bullying, with the majority of perpetrators and victims being school students. In order to address the challenges faced by primary school students with regard to the quality of their friendships, it is essential to implement targeted programmes designed to enhance the quality of their friendships (Clark et al., 2022; Gresham, 2015).

Nevertheless, this approach to friendship problems is not without limitations, particularly within the context of educational institutions. Researchers demonstrated that proactive aggression programmes can result in a deterioration in relationship quality over time (Krammer et al., 2023; Luijten et al., 2023). Ağır, (2019) and Mikami et al. (2020) observed that, while interventions such as peer friendship coaching were effective in influencing children's friendship behaviour, these changes did not necessarily result in an

improvement in friendship quality. [Avramidis et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Wargo Aikins \(2022\)](#) highlighted the challenge of maintaining participant engagement in multi-session programmes, while [Calhoun et al. \(2020\)](#) and [Gresham \(2015\)](#) emphasised the necessity of addressing individual differences in social cognition in intervention programmes.

It is also important to think about how befriending interventions can be made relevant to different cultures and individuals. [Wang et al., \(2023\)](#) said it is important to create friendship quality assessments and programmes that are relevant to different cultures. [McDonald et al \(2019\)](#) also said that how similar people think they are in a friendship can affect how they rate it. Future friendship programmes should consider cultural differences and individual differences to be more relevant and effective. Social-emotional learning (SEL) programmes improve students' social and emotional skills. When these skills are developed well, they help students have better relationships with others ([Goh & Connolly, 2020](#); [Hunter et al., 2022](#); [Mak & Fancourt, 2019](#)). SEL programmes help students learn to manage their emotions and behave in ways that are good for others ([Luijten et al., 2023](#); [Smurr & Cano, 2021](#)). SEL programmes in schools help students to get along better with each other. SEL programmes have also been linked to less violence and aggression. This shows that it is important to help children develop social and emotional skills so that they can cope with life's challenges and succeed in different situations ([Müller et al., 2019](#); [Smith et al., 2021](#)).

The five dimensions of SEL (1) self-awareness, (2) self-management, (3) social awareness, (4) relationship skills and (5) responsible decision-making is fundamental to the formation of quality friendships ([Dryburgh et al., 2022](#); [Skryabina et al., 2016](#); [Troop-Gordon et al., 2019](#)). Social awareness and relationship skills are fundamental components that contribute to the quality of friendships. A substantial body of research indicates that social skills are a critical determinant of friendship quality, with social competence being a pivotal factor in fostering positive relationships ([Kusumaningsih & Febriani, 2022](#); [Yap et al., 2022](#)). Furthermore, the capacity to adeptly manage social interactions can enhance the quality of friendships. Those with robust relationship skills are better able to navigate conflict and sustain healthy relationships with their friends ([Ağır, 2019](#); [Chen, 2024](#); [Cunha et al., 2022](#)). It is therefore imperative to develop and refine these skills in order to improve overall friendship quality.

Further potential applications of SEL programmes for the exploration of the implementation of SEL with art media in the classroom are presented by [Farrington et al., \(2019\)](#), [Lea et al., \(2019\)](#), and [Chen, \(2024\)](#). The study conducted by [Farrington et al., \(2019\)](#) emphasises the significant influence of artistic activities on social and emotional learning. This reference indicates the potential for collaboration between the arts and other academic disciplines, proposing that the integration of the arts into SEL programmes can enrich students' learning experiences by nurturing creativity and interdisciplinary connections. Similarly, [Lea et al., \(2019\)](#) and [Chen, \(2024\)](#) concentrated on the utilisation of arts-based interventions to facilitate empathy training in children, underscoring the function of the arts in fostering compassion and empathy. The incorporation of arts activities that encourage perspective-taking and emotional expression can effectively enhance students' social-emotional skills within an SEL framework.

The intricate dynamics between the quality of friendships and social-emotional competencies are foundational to the development of effective social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions. Research has consistently shown that social-emotional learning encompasses a variety of competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which are crucial for fostering positive interpersonal relationships among students ([Casciano et al., 2019](#); [Maithreyi, 2023](#); [Olive et al., 2021](#)). The quality of friendships significantly influences students' emotional well-being and academic performance, highlighting the need for targeted interventions that specifically address these aspects within educational settings ([Liu et al., 2022](#); [Smith et al., 2022](#); [Wicaksono et al., 2022](#)). The necessity for a module that

can serve as a practical guide in social-emotional learning to enhance the quality of friendships is evident in order to address friendship issues. The development of modules as part of instructional design is based on the necessity for systematic and organised learning media (Attar-Schwartz et al., 2019; Avramidis et al., 2022; Blaisdell, 2024). In many studies that develop modules, the main objective is to create learning media that are both enriching and can be used independently. Alternatively, modules are used as guidelines in a continuous and contextualised learning process (Fakhri & Faujiyah, 2019; Strindberg & Horton, 2022).

The implementation of SEL with arts media, such as theatre, can offer a distinctive and engaging approach to fostering students' social and emotional development (Martí-Vilar et al., 2023). The evidence suggests that theatre-based interventions can enhance social-emotional competence and reduce bullying behaviour among adolescents (Troop-Gordon et al., 2019). Theatre provides a platform for students to engage in creative and profound exploration of emotions, perspectives, and social interactions, thereby fostering a more nuanced understanding of themselves and others. Theatre-based programmes align with the principles of experiential learning, allowing students to actively engage in role-playing, storytelling, and improvisation to develop essential social and emotional competencies (Calhoun et al., 2020; Casciano et al., 2019; Farrington et al., 2019). The utilisation of arts-based learning has been identified as an efficacious methodology to enhance social-emotional competence and mitigate aggressive behaviour in students (Cunha et al., 2022; Strindberg & Horton, 2022). Nevertheless, the potential of theatre-based SEL programmes to enhance students' quality of friendship has seldom been examined. Consequently, this study seeks to develop and implement a theatre-based SEL programme with the objective of improving students' quality of friendship.

The objective of this study is to develop a SEL program for students in primary school. The program's objective is to enhance the quality of friendship relationships. This research enhances students' social and emotional competencies through direct instruction and the integration of SEL principles into theatre arts projects. The utilisation of theatre as a pedagogical tool facilitates the development of social and emotional competencies in a creative manner. Arts projects facilitate interaction, collaboration and communication, thereby enabling students to comprehend and regulate emotions, empathise and cultivate positive relationships with their peers. It is anticipated that this learning module will enhance students' friendship experiences in primary school. The program introduces a novel approach to social-emotional development in primary education. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the SEL literature and improve friendship relationships among primary school students.

2. Materials and Methods

This study used a research and development (R&D) method based on the model proposed by (Branch, 2009). This method is designed to develop an innovative learning module by focusing on the real needs in the field, especially in terms of improving the quality of friendship of primary school students through theatre-based social emotional learning. The research was conducted through a series of structured and systematic development stages using the ADDIE model (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) which became the main framework in the module development process as shown in Figure 1.

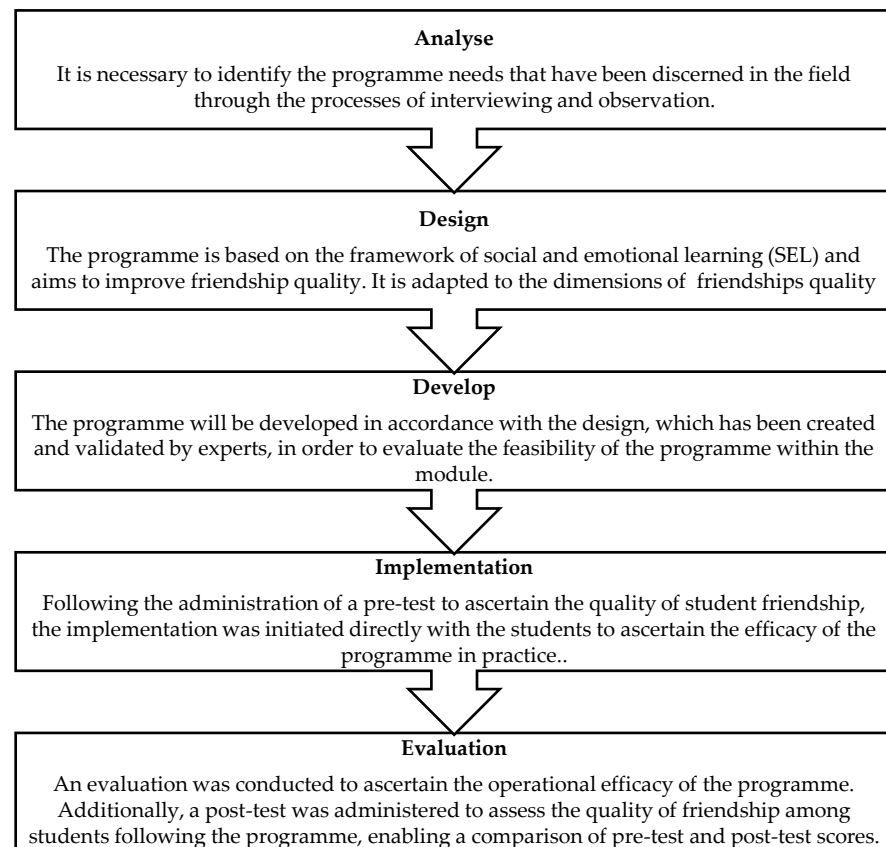


Figure 1. ADDIE research design

2.1 Analyze

In the initial stages of the study, the researchers investigated the social and emotional challenges that the students encountered in their friendships. A systematic approach was employed to identify the obstacles that the students faced in their interactions. The needs analysis utilised a range of methods, including observation of the school environment and interviews with teachers. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of the process that students undergo in forming friendships.

This phase was designed to elucidate the conditions of friendship in the classroom, with a particular focus on grade 6 students, who are particularly vulnerable at this stage of social-emotional development, given that they are facing the transition from primary to junior high school. The insights gained from this investigation will inform the development of products or interventions that can assist students who encounter social challenges in academic settings. This activity examines the specific needs of students and the potential benefits of using learning materials to facilitate more effective interactions with their peers.

2.2 Design

The theatre-based SEL module was developed in accordance with the SEL framework from (CASEL, 2018). The framework is based on five main dimensions (Figure 2), as follows: (1) Self-awareness, which encompasses the capacity to recognize one's emotions; (2) Self-management involves the effective management of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, including the capacity to delay gratification, control impulses, and manage stress; (3) Social awareness entails the capacity to adopt a perspective, empathies, comprehend social norms, and recognize the nuances of social interactions; (4) Relationship skills encompass the ability to nurture healthy relationships through effective communication and collaboration; (5) Responsible Decision-Making, the

capacity to make thoughtful decisions involves understanding the impact of one's actions on oneself and others, considering ethical standards, safety, and potential consequences.



Figure 2. Dimension of SEL

The competencies delineated in the SEL framework are also tailored to the level of social-emotional development. In this research, the SEL programme is specifically designed for elementary school students. As Denham (2018) asserts, the outcomes of SEL programmes are tailored to developmental tasks. For primary school students, the ideal outcomes of an SEL programme include the formation of stable dyadic friendships and peer reputations (1) Control of aggressive impulses; (2) Demonstration of emotion regulation in peer groups and the showing of emotions in appropriate contexts; (3) Resolution of complex social difficulties with a range of flexible solutions; (4) In alignment with the objective of the theatre-based SEL programme to enhance the quality of friendships, the programme is structured in accordance with the dimensions that constitute friendship quality.

Bukowski et al., (1994) posits that friendship quality can be understood through five main dimensions (1) Companionship, which encompasses the extent to which individuals allocate time and energy to interact and engage in activities with friends, ranging from occasional meetings to intensive leisure time together; (2) Conflict, which includes the frequency and intensity of disputes that occur in friendships, and its impact on relationship dynamics; (3) Help, which emphasizes the importance of providing mutual support, both instrumentally, such as lending money or helping with tasks, as well as in the form of emotional support that strengthens friendship bonds; (4) Closeness, which describes the emotional intimacy and deep feelings of connectedness between friends, indicating the importance of depth of emotional connection in friendships; (5) Security, which involves trust, the ability to share secrets, and mutual support that creates a sense of security and encourages supportive and lasting friendships. These dimensions collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and evaluating the quality of friendship.

2.3 Develop

At this stage, the designed module is transformed into a pedagogical instrument designed to be used by educators. The development process includes the preparation of learning materials, learning methods, and tools, including guides for instructors, student scenarios, and assessment instruments. All these elements are designed with the aim of fulfilling the learning objectives and meeting the needs of the students. The completed module is a theatre-based social and emotional learning module which aims to promote friendship among primary school students.

The feasibility and validity of the module were assessed by three experts in the fields of educational psychology and child psychology. This was done in order to validate the feasibility of the module and to minimize bias, with a view to ensuring its feasibility for implementation. The feasibility and validity of the module are strongly influenced by several key aspects (Table 1), (1) The comprehensiveness of the material it contains. A comprehensive module ensures that all necessary topics are covered in depth, thus meeting learners' needs effectively; (2) Additionally, the suitability of the material to the specific needs of learners or programmes is crucial, as this ensures relevance and practical application; (3) The systematic order and arrangement of the material also plays an important role, as a well-structured module will enhance comprehension and facilitate logical learning progression; (4) Furthermore, materials should be the material should be accessible to understand, using clear language and accessible explanations to cater for different levels of learning; (5) Another important factor is the module's ability to motivate learning by engaging learners and encouraging their interest in the subject matter; (6) Alignment of the sequence of materials with programme requirements ensures coherence and supports the achievement of learning objectives; (7) Finally, combining different materials can enrich the learning experience by addressing different learning styles and maintaining learners' interest. These elements collectively contribute to the development of effective and impactful educational modules.

Table 1. Module Feasibility Validity Indicators

No	Indicators
1.	Completeness of material in the module
2.	The suitability of the material to the needs
3.	Completeness of learning material with a systematic order and arrangement
4.	The material in the module is easy to understand
5.	The material in the module can motivate learning
6.	The order of the material according to the needs of the programme
7.	Variety of material varies

2.4 Implementation

In the implementation stage, the students, who are the participants in this programme, engage in theatre activities within the classroom setting. The activities have been designed and structured in accordance with the relevant guidelines. Teachers and researchers work in collaboration to guarantee that each component of the module is implemented in accordance with the established guidelines. Prior to the implementation of the theatre-based SEL programme, students were subjected to a pre-test in order to ascertain the level of quality of their friendships within the classroom. The pre-test was conducted by administering the Friendship Quality Scale (FQS), a tool developed by Bukowski (1994), to assess the quality of student friendships. The FQS comprises five primary indicators and six dimensions of friendship quality, namely companionship, help, conflict, closeness, and security. These are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Dimension of Friendship Quality Scale

Dimension	Operational Definition
Companionship	Time spent with friends
Conflict	Disputes that occur with friends
Help	Helping each other and helping and protecting other children who are bothering them
Security	Confidence that in times of need, their friends are reliable and trustworthy.
Closeness	A sense of self, as well as feelings that come from friendship and a sense of how important they are to their friends

The objective of the pretest is to ascertain whether there is a discernible improvement in students' friendship quality scores following the implementation of the theatre-based SEL programme. This will enable an evaluation of the programme's efficacy in enhancing students' friendship quality.

2.5 Evaluation

The evaluation was conducted to ascertain the operational efficacy of the programme, with a particular focus on implementation and overall effectiveness in achieving the stated objectives. Data analysis was conducted through several important stages. Firstly, a normality test was conducted to ensure that the data from the pretest and posttest followed a normal distribution, which is important when using parametric statistical tests. The Shapiro-Wilk Test is one of the commonly used techniques for normality testing, especially recommended for small samples (Ramsey & Ramsey, 1990). Once normality has been confirmed, the next step is to select an appropriate statistical test for comparison of the pretest and posttest results. The paired sample t-test is a parametric method for determining whether there is a significant mean difference between the pretest and posttest, assuming that the difference between the two measurements follows a normal distribution (Ross & Willson, 2017).

To complete the analysis, the effect size was calculated in order to assess the magnitude of the treatment effect. Cohen's *d* is a frequently employed effect size in the context of T-tests. The interpretation of *d* values is as follows: A value of 0.2 indicates a small effect, 0.5 a medium effect, and 0.8 a large effect (Alwahaibi et al., 2020). The interpretation of the statistical test results is based on the p-value. If the p-value of the T-test is less than the significance level (0.05), it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest. Conversely, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference, indicating that the treatment may not have had a meaningful effect (Browne, 2010). The effect size provides insight into the strength of the observed difference, allowing for an evaluation of the treatment effect's magnitude.

3. Results

3.1 Analyze

The findings of the interviews with teachers and observations at SDN Summersari 3 revealed a number of issues pertaining to the dynamics of student relationships, including instances of bullying, exclusion and physical altercations. These issues have a detrimental impact on the learning environment within the classroom. Some students exhibit a tendency to be isolated even in the context of group assignments, while others manifest indications of inferiority complexes (a lack of confidence), and some are frequently absent due to an absence of social support. Furthermore, observations revealed the formation of groups or 'gangs' among students, which frequently resulted in disputes. The conflicts

between these groups frequently resulted in verbal and physical altercations, which further exacerbated the already tense atmosphere in the classroom. Class teachers are aware that these issues impede the learning process, particularly when group work is involved. However, the school has not yet implemented a dedicated programme or policy to address these friendship concerns. Teachers tend to provide individual guidance without a structured approach or programme to address social issues among students. Therefore, a more comprehensive and systematic approach is necessary to foster a conducive school environment where students can feel safe and supported in both social and emotional.

3.2 Design

The design of the theatre-based SEL programme was developed based on the findings of interviews, observations and literature studies. These studies referenced the ideal design of the SEL programme from CASEL (2018) and the social-emotional development of primary school students according to Denham (2018). The design is detailed in Table 3. The programme's objective is to enhance the quality of students' friendships through the implementation of a theatre-based approach. The programme commences with an introductory stage, during which a comprehensive account is provided of the programme's fundamental principles and intended outcomes. Subsequently, the core programme was subdivided into four principal sessions. The initial session was dedicated to introducing the concept of friendship quality to the students, while the subsequent session provided an overview of theatre. The third session, entitled "What Should Be Done," prompted students to engage in discourse concerning the shortcomings observed in the theatrical performance they had viewed, and to actively contribute to the formulation of solutions. The fourth session was devoted to a theatrical performance, wherein students were afforded the chance to present the show before their classmates. Upon the conclusion of all sessions, the programme culminated in a reflection and reinforcement of the material, with the objective of fostering a comprehensive understanding and encouraging the integration of the values learned into everyday life.

Table 3. Syntax of Theatre-based SEL Programme



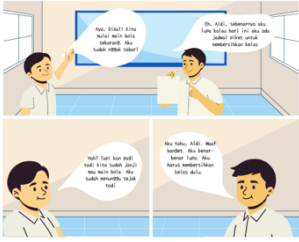
Stages	Objective	Explanation
Introduction	To provide an overview of the programme to be implemented and provide knowledge for programme facilitators	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Programme background 2. Objectives and outcomes of the programme 3. Materials: 4. Social Emotional Learning method 5. Stages of friendship development and common problems related to friendship 6. Theatre as a social emotional learning medium to improve the quality of friendship
Session	<p>Session 1: Friendship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the basic concept of friendship quality. • Identify the importance of friendship <p>Theatre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing general knowledge about theatre to students 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explanation of the importance of friendship 2. The influence of friendship in daily life 3. Discuss the condition of friendship in the student's neighbourhood <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show a video of a theatre performance 2. Explain the important elements of theatre 3. Learn basic emotions as a foundation for theatre

Stages	Objective	Explanation
	Session What should be done <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance students' understanding of friendship dynamics and social conflict. • Encourage discussion and reflection on ways to resolve conflicts constructively. 	1. Brief Scene: Students watch or listen to short scenes depicting conflicts taken from observations or teacher interviews. 2. Discussion: Just before the conflict point reaches its peak, the facilitator stops the scene and invites students to discuss the situation with students. 3. Students are invited to talk about what they would do if they were in the same situation. 4. Invite students to play the role of actors and resolve the conflict according to what they imagined. 5. The facilitator encourages students to relate the scene to their personal experiences.
	Session 4 Theatre Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages students to think creatively in resolving conflicts. • Allows students to apply the solutions they created in a real scenario. 	1. Divide students into small groups. Give each group a different situation to develop into a story. 2. Students discuss the conflict situations and how they would respond if they were in the character's shoes. 3. Invite each group to act out their story in class, and the other groups appreciate the performance of each group. 4. Discuss the scenes that have been performed and each group gives feedback to the group that performed.
Reflection	Evaluate students' understanding and experiences throughout the programme. Identify how knowledge about friendship and can be applied in everyday life.	1. Focus Group Discussion Invite students to discuss their experiences after performing the show. 2. Individual Reflection Students write down their personal experiences and reflect on them in their daily lives.
Strengthening	Provide positive and constructive feedback to students. Encourage students to implement in their daily lives.	1. Facilitator provides feedback after the programme 2. Encourage students to apply what they have learnt in the programme to their daily lives.

3.3 Develop

The configuration of a module is determined in advance in accordance with the module design. The preparatory phase encompasses the selection of pertinent and suitable material within the design, ensuring its intelligibility to participants or students. During the development stage. The module is also structured in accordance with pertinent and readily comprehensible conditions, comprising illustrative cases pertaining to friendship in the surrounding milieu that are salient to students. The module incorporates images that are easily comprehensible, thus preventing any potential for bias in responding to the exemplars of cases presented. Additionally, the theatre-based SEL module incorporates brief dramas on friendship issues that are suitable for elementary school students ([Table 4](#)).

Table 4. The developed theatre-based SEL module

Explanation	Figure
<p>The following examples illustrate how to facilitate discussion about friendship and appropriate images in order to enhance students' engagement in the subject matter.</p>	<p>DISKUSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menunjukkan gambar atau video yang menggambarkan masalah pertemanan seperti perundungan dan pengucilan, serta dapat disesuaikan sesuai permasalahan yang sering terjadi di kelas. • Mendiskusikan dampak dari masalah-masalah ini dengan bahasa yang sederhana. Misalnya, • "Apa yang terjadi jika kita bertengkar dengan teman?" • "Bagaimana cara agar bisa rukun dengan teman kelas?"  <p>21</p>
<p>The following section presents examples of games included in the module.</p>	<p>PENGERTIAN TEATER</p> <p>TUJUAN Memperkenalkan dan menjelaskan tentang teater.</p> <p>PENGANTAR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fasilitator menjelaskan apa itu teater dengan menggunakan contoh visual atau video pendek. • Fasilitator memperkenalkan beberapa istilah teater dasar seperti "aktor," "naskah," "adegan," dan "improvisasi." • Siswa diajak melakukan permainan ekspresi wajah, di mana mereka diminta untuk meniru berbagai ekspresi seperti bahagia, sedih, marah, dan terkejut. <p>AKTIVITAS</p> <p>DEMONSTRASI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menunjukkan video tentang pertunjukan teater pada siswa • Melakukan demonstrasi sederhana tentang teater dengan cara berakting menunjukkan emosi-emosi dasar seperti marah, sedih, dan gembira. <p>CERMIN EMOSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siswa menirukan ekspresi yang diinstruksikan oleh fasilitator, mulai dari ekspresi wajah, gestur tubuh, serta suara. • Siswa diajak mendeskripsikan setiap ekspresi emosi  <p>22</p>
<p>The following is an illustrative example of a short dramatic narrative that can be used as a discussion with students.</p>	<p>Waktu: Sore hari.</p> <p>Karakter: Aldi: Anak yang sangat suka bermain bola. Rizal: Teman Aldi yang juga suka bermain bola tetapi memiliki tanggung jawab piket membersihkan kelas.</p> <p>Adegan: (Aldi dan Rizal berdiri di lapangan bola. Aldi terlihat bersemangat dengan bola di tangannya, sementara Rizal tampak gelisah.)</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Konflik</p> <p>DISKUSI Tepat sebelum titik konflik mencapai puncaknya, fasilitator menghentikan adegan dan mengajak siswa untuk mendiskusikan situasi tersebut.</p> <p>26</p>

Once developed, the module will be validated by expert judgement to assess how feasible the module is for use in an educational or training context. This validation process involves experts in relevant fields, who will evaluate the module based on predetermined eligibility indicators. These indicators include aspects such as clarity of content, suitability of material to learning objectives, regularity of presentation, as well as the practicality of using the module in real situations. Thus, expert judgement is an important step to ensure that the module produced has adequate quality and can be implemented effectively. The results of the expert assessment are in the [Table 5](#).

Table 5. Module Expert Judgement Validity Assessment

Expert Judgement	ΣX	Score (%)	Category
Dr. Anjarie	100	90.90%	Very Valid
Pravisi Shanti S.Psi., M.Psi	91	82.72%	Very Valid
Dr. Hanggara Budi Utomo	86	78.18%	Valid
Total Score	277	83.94%	Very Valid

Based on the results of expert judgement on the theatre-based Social Emotional Learning module designed to improve the quality of friendship of elementary school students, a total score of 83.94% was obtained. This score indicates that the module falls into the highly valid category. This validation indicates that this module has good quality and is in accordance with the needs and characteristics of primary school students in improving social emotional skills, especially in the context of improving and maintaining friendship relationships in the school environment.

As detailed in [Table 6](#), a series of evaluations are conducted to provide a comprehensive assessment framework for the module's performance. These evaluations integrate qualitative insights from experts.

Table 6. Evaluation

No	Evaluation
1.	Variations on friendship issues for each grade (4, 5, and 6)
2.	Technical explanations related to implementation, such as who is the implementer, as well as relevance in classroom learning
3.	A more detailed explanation of programme evaluation techniques, as well as the technicalities of completing questionnaires
4.	The module display is more illustrative of the programme
5.	The need for a usage guide for facilitators

3.4 Implementation

A total of 27 Grade 6 students participated in this study. Of these, the participants were divided into 16 female/woman students and 11 male/man students ([Figure 3](#)).

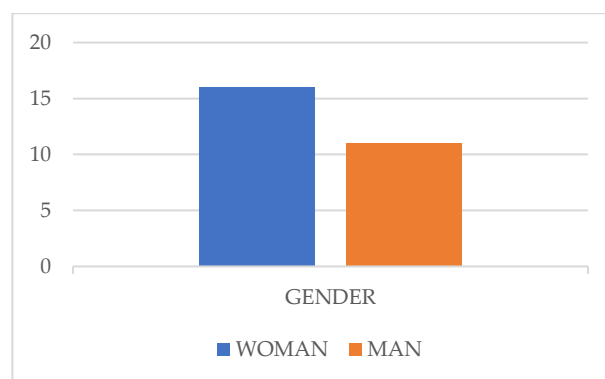


Figure 3. Gender distribution of students

The ages of the participants ranged from 11 to 13 years old, which is generally categorized as early adolescent development according to the classification of human development (Figure 4). At this stage, children begin to experience significant physical, emotional and social changes as they enter the pre-adolescent to adolescent phase.

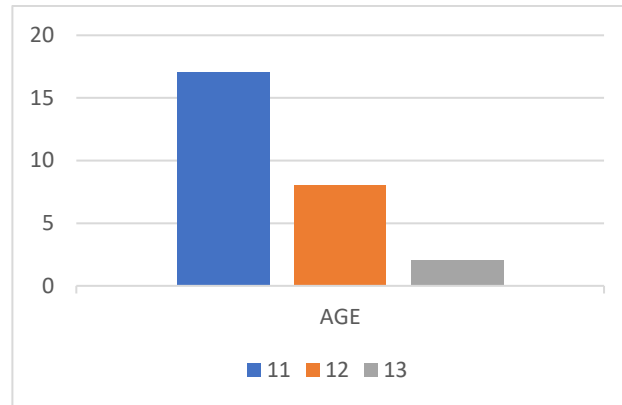


Figure 4. Age distribution of students

Prior to the implementation of the programme, students were administered the Friendship Quality Scale (FQS) post-test to ascertain the level of friendship quality. The results of the pre-test indicated that the range of friendship quality scores obtained by students ranged from 43 to 89 (Table 7). A score of 43 or below indicated that a proportion of students exhibited relatively low friendship quality, while a score of 89 or above indicated that a subset of students demonstrated particularly robust friendship relationships. This range reflects a notable divergence in the quality of relationships between students in the class.

Table 7. FQS Pre-test Results

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
PRE	27	43	89	70.74	11.548

The mean score for the pre-test was 70.74. This suggests that, on the whole, the quality of friendships in this class was satisfactory, although there were students whose friendship quality was below or above average. Moreover, the standard deviation of 11.548 demonstrates the extent to which the scores diverge from the mean. The range of the standard deviation indicates a notable disparity in the quality of friendships among the students. This analysis provides a crucial foundation for understanding the social dynamics in the classroom and evaluating the extent to which the intervention will impact the quality of friendship among the students.

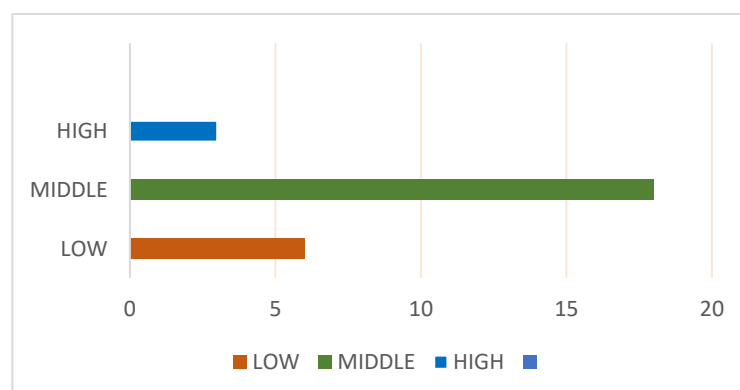


Figure 5. Pretest score categorization

The distribution of student score categorization in class 6 differed significantly from that observed in the pretest. Three students were classified as high scorers, while only 18 students scored in the medium category (Figure 5). Six students were classified as low scorers, indicating low friendship quality. These results demonstrate that, although the majority of students exhibited a moderate friendship quality score, there was no significant difference between the two categories.

The first session introduced the concept of healthy friendship and the fundamentals of theatre, incorporating interactive games to reinforce social skills. The second session comprised a discussion and the formulation of creative solutions through theatre performance on the theme of friendship conflict. The third session centered on group performances to facilitate the development of collaboration, creativity and performance courage. The fourth session concluded with reflection and reinforcement, ensuring that the principles of friendship were integrated into the students' lives. The programme proved effective in promoting enjoyable learning while strengthening social relationships.

3.5 Evaluation

The evaluation was conducted to ascertain the operational efficacy of the theatre-based SEL programme and to determine its impact on the quality of students' friendships. Once all intervention sessions had been completed, the researcher proceeded to collect further data in order to assess the students' friendship quality. The questionnaire used for this stage of data collection was the same as that used in the pretest, with the exception of the order of the questions. This approach was taken in order to reduce potential bias that might occur due to the consistent order of questions. It is anticipated that the resulting data will provide a more accurate representation of the changes in students' friendship quality after the intervention.

In this analysis, 27 respondents were involved. The minimum score obtained by participants was 59, while the maximum score reached 95. The mean score of the respondents was 78.56, indicating that the overall mean score increased by 7.82 compared to the pretest. The standard deviation of the pretest was 8.768, suggesting that the scores were less variable than those observed in the pretest (Table 8).

Table 8. FQS post-test Results

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
POST	27	59	95	78.56	8.768

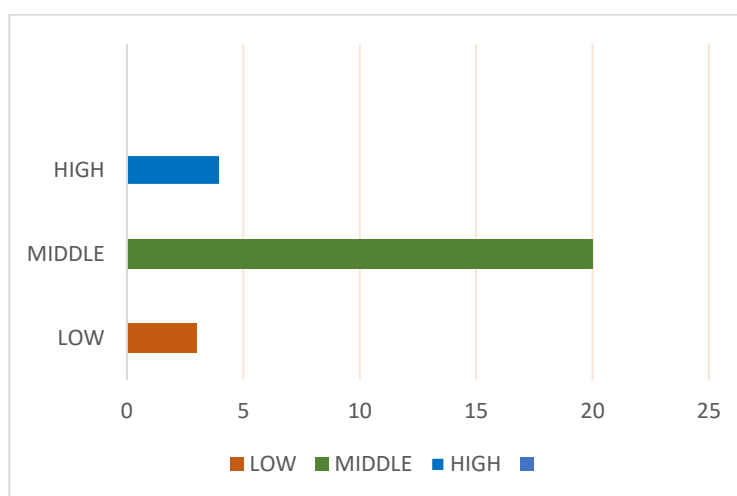


Figure 6. Post-test score categorization

Prior to commencing further analysis, it is imperative to ascertain that the data gathered from the pre-test and post-test results exhibit a normal distribution. To this end, a normality test was performed employing the Shapiro-Wilk methodology (Table 9, Table 10, and Table 11).

Table 9. Shapiro-Wilk normality pre-test

	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE	.945	27	.164

The Shapiro-Wilk test gave results with a significance value of 0.164, which is above the threshold value of 0.05. This result indicates that the pretest data distribution tends to be close to normal. Thus, the Shapiro-Wilk test provides an indication of a distribution that is close to normal.

Table 10. Shapiro-Wilk normality post-test

	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE	.982	27	.898

The normality test results for posttest data show a significance value greater than 0.05, namely 0.898. This confirms that the posttest data is normally distributed, both based on the Shapiro-Wilk test and the Shapiro-Wilk test.

Table 11. Paired Sample T-Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	PRE - POST	-7.815	13.376	2.574	-13.106	-2.523	-3.036	26	.005

The results of the Paired Samples Test, conducted to compare the pretest and posttest scores, revealed a statistically significant difference between the two conditions. The results of the analysis demonstrate that the mean value of the difference between the pretest and posttest is -7.815, indicating a decrease of 7.815 from the pretest condition to the posttest condition. This decrease is in a negative direction, suggesting that the posttest value is higher than the pretest value, which indicates an increase after the intervention or treatment.

The standard deviation value of 13.376 demonstrates the extent of the variation in the difference between the two measurements. The standard error of the mean value of 2.574 indicates that the mean estimate of this difference is a reasonably accurate representation of the population as a whole. Furthermore, the mean difference falls between -13.106 and -2.523, which does not include the 95% null value ($p < 0.05$). This provides assurance that the discrepancy between the PRE and POST scores is not merely a coincidence.

The statistical test yielded a t-value of -3.036 with a degree of freedom (df) of 26. The relatively large t-value indicates a significant difference between the two measurements. Furthermore, the significant value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.005 indicates that this difference is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$). This provides sufficient evidence to suggest that the treatment or intervention of the theatre-based SEL programme had an effect on friendship quality.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that the implementation of a SEL programme that incorporates elements of theatre has a notable impact on enhancing the quality of

children's friendships. The findings demonstrate that the level of students' friendship quality following the implementation of the Theatre-based SEL programme exhibits a tendency to increase. However, the statistical increase is not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the potential of the programme in this study is an innovative approach to improving the quality of friendship. In particular, the utilisation of creative activities as a medium for the delivery of learning, namely theatre, is worthy of note. The programme enables children to develop essential social skills, including empathy, communication and cooperation, while simultaneously facilitating the formation of stronger and more meaningful friendships (Lee & Shin, 2018; Ünal & Erden, 2023). Theatre activities facilitate the practice of role-playing, which in turn enhances children's capacity to comprehend alternative perspectives and bolsters their self-assurance in social interactions (Bella & Evaggelinou, 2018; Martí-Vilar et al., 2023).

The efficacy of SEL programmes in enhancing students' friendship quality skills has been demonstrated. These skills encompass dimensions such as togetherness, conflict resolution, helpfulness, closeness, and safety. The evidence indicates that social skills acquired through SEL programmes can enhance peer relationships, foster empathy, and mitigate aggressive behaviour among students (Olive et al., 2021; Roh et al., 2018). These programmes prioritise not only individual development but also the fostering of positive social interactions, which are vital for the formation of quality friendships (Algoe, 2019; Rondón García & Ruiz Trascastro, 2021). One promising approach in SEL programmes is the utilisation of theatre arts. Theatre provides a distinctive opportunity to impart social and emotional competencies through activities such as role-playing and improvisation, which facilitate the exploration of diverse perspectives and emotions. Such activities facilitate not only the expression of students' own emotions but also their comprehension of and empathy for the emotions of others. This is an essential element in the formation of close and secure friendships (León-Jiménez et al., 2020; L. Wang et al., 2023).

In the context of friendship quality, the companionship aspect can be enhanced through the implementation of SEL-based theatre programmes that encourage collaboration and interaction between students. The involvement of students in theatre activities facilitates the development of essential social skills, including cooperation, active listening, and appreciation of others. These competencies contribute to the strengthening of the sense of companionship among students (Moreno-Fernández, 2021; Sareef & Noushad, 2022). Furthermore, theatre programmes can assist students in the effective management of conflict. The examination of intricate characters and circumstances enables students to perceive issues from diverse perspectives and identify constructive resolutions (Alsarrani et al., 2023; O'Toole, 2023). The helping aspect of friendship can also be reinforced through the implementation of theatre-based SEL programmes. The involvement of students in activities that require teamwork and support enables them to provide assistance to one another and offer emotional support (Klasnić et al., 2021; Saccardi & Masthoff, 2023). This is significant because high-quality friendships are frequently characterised by mutual support, where individuals feel secure in disclosing problems and seeking assistance from their friends (Cuadros & Berger, 2016; Kelner & Gavriel-Fried, 2023).

The formation of close friendships, which is contingent upon mutual trust and openness, can be facilitated by SEL-based theatre programmes. The enactment of emotional expression and the sharing of personal experiences facilitate the establishment of more profound connections between students. When students feel at ease in disclosing their feelings and experiences, this engenders a secure and nurturing atmosphere, which is vital for the nurturing of healthy relationships (Firmin et al., 2023; Shean & Mander, 2020). The sense of safety and comfort in friendship is also shaped by the competencies acquired through the SEL programme. Students who participate in the programme tend to demonstrate enhanced emotional regulation and decision-making abilities in social contexts, which contribute to the establishment of more resilient and positive relationships

(Luijten et al., 2023; Van Berkel & Bosman, 2023). The skills of self-awareness and self-management, which are taught in SEL programmes, enable students to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the impact of their actions on others. This, in turn, strengthens mutual trust in friendships (Thaintheerasombat & Chookhampaeng, 2022; Zhang et al., 2022).

In regard to the elements of social-emotional learning (SEL) that facilitate the development of positive peer relationships, self-awareness is of paramount importance. Students who possess good self-awareness are better able to identify their emotions and how they influence their social interactions (Gopal, 2022; Y. Wang et al., 2019). This enables them to interact with their friends in a more positive and constructive manner (Firmin et al., 2023). Furthermore, self-management facilitates students' ability to regulate their emotions and behaviour, which is vital for maintaining healthy relationships and avoiding conflict (Chang et al., 2021; McDonald et al., 2019).

The development of social awareness and relationship skills is also a crucial element in the formation of quality friendships. Students who demonstrate high social awareness are better able to comprehend and respond to the needs and emotions of their peers, which enhances the quality of social interactions (Rodriguez et al., 2020). The capacity to communicate effectively and resolve conflicts in a constructive manner is a key aspect of developing and maintaining healthy relationships (Liu et al., 2022; Roh et al., 2018). The capacity to make responsible decisions is also a key factor in determining the quality of friendships. Students who are able to make responsible decisions in social interactions tend to establish more positive and respectful relationships (Jałowiecka-Frania, 2022; Rodriguez et al., 2020). These skills are crucial for maintaining healthy relationships, as they enable individuals to avoid behaviours that can damage relationships, such as aggression or exclusion (Ağır, 2019; Calhoun et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to gain insight into the potential impact of a theatre-based learning programme on the quality of friendship among primary school students. The results indicated that the programme had a notable effect on enhancing the quality of friendships. The statistical analysis indicated that the average friendship quality score increased by 7.815, with a t-value of -3.036 ($df = 26$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that the changes were not coincidental and provides evidence that the programme may be effective in improving social relationships among students. It is hoped that this study will provide a basis for further development of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes at the primary school level, particularly arts-based programmes such as theatre. It may be suggested that arts-based programmes could be a valuable alternative for developing students' social and emotional competencies, which are crucial for their character building and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing literature on arts-based interventions in educational contexts, which is still relatively limited, especially those that focus on the quality of relationships between students.

It is important to acknowledge that this study is not without limitations. One area for potential improvement would be the limited sample size, with only 26 students involved in the study. Additionally, there may be scope to enhance the generalizability of the results by considering a more diverse range of student backgrounds. It would be beneficial for future research to consider involving a larger and more diverse sample, with a greater range of students' social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. This could help to enhance the external validity of the findings and improve the ability to generalize the results to a wider population.

This study suggests that schools may wish to consider developing social and emotional competencies through a theatre-based programme as a way of creating a more supportive and conducive learning environment for students. The programme has the additional benefit of focusing on social skills, which can in turn enhance positive social

interactions and the quality of relationships between friends at school. It may therefore be helpful for educators and policy makers to consider the integration of arts-based programmes in the SEL curriculum to support students' social and emotional development at the primary school level.

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