

## **The Influence of Socioeconomic Environment on the Social Interaction Skills of Early Childhood Aged 5–6 Years**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to determine the influence of the socio-economic environment on the social interaction of early childhood aged 5-6 years. Early childhood is considered a golden period for development, where social interaction plays a crucial role in shaping character and social skills. The socio-economic environment including parents educational background, family income, and access to social facilities is believed to significantly influence children's patterns of social interaction. This research employed a quantitative approach using the ex post facto method. Data were collected through closed ended Likert scale questionnaires distributed to 230 parents of children aged 5-6 years in the Ampel Sub-district, Surabaya. The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis techniques included Pearson correlation and simple linear regression using IBM SPSS 25. The results showed a significant relationship between the socio- economic environment and children's social interaction. The higher the family's socio economic condition, the better the child's ability to engage in social interaction. This study provides practical contributions for parents, early childhood educators, and educational institutions in designing inclusive learning strategies and policies that take family socio-economic factors into account.

**Keywords:** Socio economic environment, social interaction, early childhood.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Early childhood represents a critical developmental stage in which children rapidly acquire foundational skills across physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains (Zamzam et al., 2023). During this period, the role of parents is central, as their involvement shapes children's early learning experiences and character development (Riwidyanti & Komalasari, 2016). To ensure optimal growth, children also require structured support from early childhood education institutions and qualified educators, who work together with families to create nurturing developmental environments (Saroinsong et al., 2020).

According to Article 1, Clause 14 of Indonesia's Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, early childhood education refers to organized educational services for children from birth to six years old, with developmental assistance extended up to age eight (Ayuni et al., 2022). PAUD serves as the initial platform that lays the foundation for children's holistic development, ensuring both their physical well-being and socio-emotional readiness for future learning.

A substantial body of research highlights that early educational experiences facilitate children's social development by enhancing communication, cooperation, and participation in group activities (Rachmawati & Rakhmawati, 2021).

Children enrolled in PAUD programs tend to demonstrate more advanced social competencies—such as sharing, peer communication, and conflict resolution—compared to those not attending formal early education (Widyaningsih & Tamrin, 2020). These findings affirm the essential role of PAUD in enabling children to build early social skills.

Grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, social interaction with adults and peers is crucial for the development of self-regulation and social behaviors (Hasibuan & Marlita, 2018). Through such interactions, children practice verbal and nonverbal communication, internalize social norms, and acquire cultural knowledge necessary for functioning within their communities (Cahyani & Saroinsong, 2023).

However, children's opportunities to develop social interaction skills are not solely influenced by PAUD environments; they are also shaped by the family's socio-economic conditions. Socio-economic status affects access to educational resources, healthcare, stable housing, and broader public services, all of which influence children's developmental opportunities (Kamsi & Ertati, 2024). Families with higher socio-economic standing often have greater access to learning materials, digital tools, and enrichment activities that facilitate diverse peer interactions. These advantages contribute to stronger social competence in early childhood.

Understanding how socio-economic factors shape children's social interactions is essential for designing equitable early educational policies. Disparities in social interaction stemming from socio-economic inequality underline the urgency of ensuring equal access to quality early childhood education and developmental support systems.

Despite the recognized importance of social interaction for early development, empirical studies that specifically explore the relationship between socio-economic environment and early childhood social interaction remain limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. Existing literature often discusses these concepts separately or only in general terms, without examining their direct interplay. This gap indicates a need for focused research that provides evidence-based insights into how socio-economic conditions influence young children's social competencies.

Therefore, this study seeks to address the following research question: How does the socio-economic environment influence children's social interaction? The purpose of the study is to identify and analyze the extent to which socio-economic factors contribute to variations in social interaction among early childhood learners.

## **METHOD**

This study utilized a quantitative research approach with a survey method. This research uses a data collection instrument in the form of a questionnaire using a Likert scale (Ningrum, 2020). The population comprised children aged 5-6 years living in Surabaya.

The ex post facto method was used in this study in order to determine the relationship between the factors that were already in place. In order to gather information from participants, the survey approach used questionnaires, which were composed of a series of written questions. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain frequency and distribution, as well as the correlation between sociological and

psychological characteristics (Sugiyono, 2019). Statements about early childhood social interaction and the socioeconomic environment of the parents were included in the questionnaire.

Simple random sampling was used to select parents as research participants. Asserts that this method eliminates stratification and offers each member of the population an equal chance of being chosen. As a result, 230 respondents filled out the distributed questionnaire for the study.

Validity and reliability tests are necessary for every investigation. A good instrument will have high validity, whereas a less effective one will have low validity. These tests are designed to assess an instrument's effectiveness or validity (Sugiyono, 2019). The instrument's dependability is assessed through reliability testing. With a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.538, which indicates that both variables had moderate reliability, the reliability test revealed that both variables had a very solid reliability interpretation. Simple linear regression and Pearson correlation were used to evaluate the data (Elfahmi, 2023).

Every item in the study instrument has substantial correlation values that are higher than the critical r-value, according to the validity test results, proving the items' validity. The instrument is dependable and consistent in measuring the research variables, as evidenced by the reliability test's value over 0.70 using Cronbach's Alpha.

## RESULT

The two main variables socio-economic environment (X) and social interaction (Y)—were analyzed descriptively. The socio-economic environment variable was measured using eight indicators, while the social interaction variable consisted of thirteen indicators..

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SEE	230	23.30	2.908
SI	230	35.12	5.662
Valid N (listwise)	230		

Based on the descriptive results, all 230 responses were valid. The socio-economic environment (SEE) variable obtained a mean score of 23.30 with a standard deviation of 2.908, indicating relatively homogeneous responses among participants. Meanwhile, the social interaction (SI) variable showed a mean score of 35.12 and a standard deviation of 5.662, suggesting greater variability in children's social interaction levels. The results of these descriptive statistics served as the basis for further inferential testing.

Conversely, the social interaction (SI) variable had a standart devition of 5.662 and a mean score of 35.12. This suggest that there is a significant degree of social connection among the young study participants. The higher standart devition in contrast to the SEE variable, however, indicates that respondents' responses differ in terms of how well children interact with others. The relationship and influence between these two variables will then be further examined through the use of correlation and basic regression tests.

**Table 2. Regression Analysis Summary**

Variabel	Unstandardized B	t	Sig
(Constanta)	9,101	3,688	0,000
SEE (X)	1,117	10,569	0,000

The degree to which the socio-economic environment affects early childhood social interaction was assessed using a straightforward linear regression test. The purpose of this investigation was to explore the hypothesis that childrens social interaction is significantly.

According to the findings of the research carried out with IBM SPSS 25, the R square value was 0,329 and correlation coefficient (r) was 0,573 this suggest that 32,9% of diversity in children's social contact can be attributed to the socio-economic environment, with other factors not included in this study influencing the other 67,1%. The regression model is deemed significant since the significance value is less than 0,05, as indicated by the regression model's significance test (F), which yielded a value of 111.713 and a significance level of 0,000. As a result, early social contact is significantly influenced by a individual's socio-economic surroundings.

With a significance value of 0,000, the regression coefficient test results also revealed a regression coefficient for variable X of 1.117 and a constant (intercept) of 9.101. this means that for every unit increase in the socio-economic environment variable, a child's social interaction score rises by 1.117 units. The simple linear equation  $Y = 9.101 + 1.117X$  was the conclusion of the investigation. At the 0,05 level, the computed t-value of 10.569 is significant, suggesting that variable X does, in fact, affect variable Y. The findings indicate that the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. Thus it can be said the children between the ages of five and six benefit greatly from their socio- economic surrondings in terms of their social interactions.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that young children's social interactions, especially those between the ages of five and six, are significantly and positively influenced by their socioeconomic circumstances. A regression coefficient of 1.117, a significance level of 0.000, and an R square of 0.329 were obtained from the basic linear regression analysis. This indicates that 32.9% of the variance in children's social interaction abilities can be explained by family socioeconomic conditions, while the remaining percentage is attributable to factors not examined in this study. These findings underscore that socioeconomic conditions encompass more than just financial capacity; they also involve parental quality, educational opportunities, emotional stability in the home, and children's opportunities for socialisation.

A favourable socioeconomic environment that provides opportunities, stimulation, and positive reinforcement plays a crucial role in shaping children's social development. Families with adequate financial resources can meet children's basic needs, such as nutrition, health care, and schooling, while also providing access to books, play materials, and structured social experiences. These forms of capital enrich children's experiences and enhance both the quantity and quality of their social interactions with peers and adults. Furthermore, parents with higher levels of education tend to have a better understanding of child development and often adopt more

responsive parenting practices, such as interactive play, shared dialogue, and modelling appropriate social behaviour. These practices are aligned with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasises the importance of social interaction and guided participation in supporting children's development. According to Vygotsky, children internalize social norms and communication skills through sustained interactions with more competent adults or peers. Thus, households with supportive socioeconomic conditions are more likely to offer enriched interpersonal experiences conducive to social growth.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory also supports these findings by highlighting the role of the family environment as part of the microsystem, which directly shapes children's daily developmental experiences. Parental socioeconomic status (SES) affects not only the material resources available to children but also the emotional climate of the household and patterns of parent-child interaction. Children growing up in positive socioeconomic conditions tend to exhibit greater sociability, confidence, and communication skills. Conversely, families with low socioeconomic status often face elevated stress levels, limited time for interaction due to work demands, and reduced access to socialisation opportunities—all of which may hinder the development of interpersonal competencies. High levels of stress in low-income families may also contribute to harsher or inconsistent parenting practices, which according to attachment theory (Bowlby and Ainsworth), can affect children's ability to form secure relationships and engage positively with peers.

These results are consistent with prior empirical studies, such as Cahyani and Saroinsong (2023), which reported a strong correlation between family economic conditions and the social skill development of preschool-aged children, particularly in areas such as cooperation, emotional regulation, and conflict resolution. Other research grounded in Bourdieu's theory of social and cultural capital also indicates that families with higher SES tend to accumulate greater cultural capital—such as literacy-rich environments, extracurricular activities, and communication-oriented parenting styles—that in turn strengthen children's readiness for school-based social interactions. As such, children from more affluent households are generally better prepared to navigate social challenges at school, including sharing materials, following rules, taking turns, and resolving disagreements with peers.

Cultural context further shapes how socioeconomic circumstances influence children's social development. In Indonesia, for instance, families with higher incomes have greater access to quality early childhood education services, enrichment programs, and community-based activities that encourage interaction and collaborative play. These opportunities provide children with structured environments in which they can practice social norms and engage with diverse peers. Conversely, children from low-income households may face social isolation due to limited resources, parental work schedules, or parenting styles characterised by strictness or overprotection—often arising from economic stress. Such constraints limit children's exposure to social environments essential for developing communication competence and peer-related skills.

Overall, this study demonstrates that socioeconomic conditions exert a substantial influence on young children's social interaction abilities. These findings underscore the need for parents, educators, and policymakers to collaborate in ensuring equitable social development opportunities for all children, regardless of economic background. Policies aimed at reducing socioeconomic disparities—such as parenting education programs, financial support for early childhood education, community-based child development initiatives, and interventions promoting responsive parenting—should be strengthened in order to support optimal social development. Ensuring that all

children have access to stimulating, supportive, and socially rich environments is essential for fostering inclusive early childhood development.

## CONCLUSION

According to this study, the socio-economic environment of the family is very important for fostering social contact in young children. Given that early childhood education policymakers, educators, and parents must take into account how family's financial status affects a child's social development, these findings are extremely pertinent. Bronfenbrenner ecological theory, which highlights the significance of environmental systems in influencing children's behavior and development, is also supported by this study.

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