



The Role of Peers in the Social-Emotional Development of Gifted Children in Early Childhood Education

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ABSTRAK. Studi ini mengkaji peran teman sebaya dalam perkembangan sosial-emosional anak-anak berbakat dan berprestasi. Metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) digunakan untuk mencari data dari basis data internasional seperti Scopus, Springer, Elsevier, Taylor and Francis Online, dan Google Scholar. Sebanyak 8 studi dari beberapa negara, seperti Swedia, Iran, Swiss, dan Amerika Serikat, ditemukan dalam pencarian awal. Selain itu, lima studi yang secara khusus membahas peran teman sebaya dalam perkembangan sosial-emosional anak berbakat dan berprestasi ditemukan di Brasil, Korea, dan Turki, serta satu buku dari Negara Bagian New York, Amerika Serikat. Analisis tematik dilakukan dengan bantuan perangkat lunak NVivo 12 untuk mengidentifikasi pola berulang dan tema-tema penting. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hubungan teman sebaya secara signifikan mempengaruhi kesejahteraan emosional anak berbakat dengan meningkatkan rasa percaya diri, kompetensi sosial, dan ketahanan emosional mereka. Interaksi teman sebaya yang mendukung membantu mengurangi perasaan isolasi dan menjadi dasar untuk mengembangkan keterampilan sosial-emosional kritis seperti empati, regulasi emosi, komunikasi, dan kolaborasi. Temuan ini menekankan bahwa hubungan teman sebaya yang positif sangat penting dalam mempromosikan pertumbuhan sosial-emosional yang sehat. Oleh karena itu, upaya yang disengaja diperlukan untuk menciptakan lingkungan sosial yang inklusif dan mendukung guna memfasilitasi perkembangan holistik anak berbakat.

Kata Kunci : Anak-anak Berbakat dan Berprestasi; Teman Sebaya; Perkembangan Sosial Emosional; Dukungan Sosial; Keterampilan Sosial Emosional

ABSTRACT. This study examines the role of peers in the social-emotional development of gifted and talented children. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method was used to search international databases such as Scopus, Springer, Elsevier, Taylor and Francis Online, and Google Scholar. A total of 8 studies from several countries, such as Sweden, Iran, Switzerland, and the United States, were found in the initial search. In addition, five studies that specifically addressed the role of peers in the social-emotional development of gifted and talented children were found in Brazil, Korea, and Turkey, and one book from New York State, USA. Thematic analysis was conducted with the help of NVivo 12 software to identify recurring patterns and significant themes. The study results show that peer relationships significantly affect the emotional well-being of gifted children by enhancing their self-confidence, social competence and emotional resilience. Supportive peer interactions help reduce feelings of isolation and lay the foundation for developing critical social-emotional skills such as empathy, emotion regulation, communication and collaboration. These findings emphasise that positive peer connections are critical in promoting healthy social-emotional growth. Therefore, deliberate efforts are needed to create inclusive and supportive social environments to foster the holistic development of gifted children.

Keyword : Gifted and Talented Children; Peers, Social Emotional Development; Social Support; Social Emotional Skills

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INTRODUCTION

Peers in the social and emotional development of gifted and talented children have an important role in forming the social abilities of children with extraordinary intelligence. In adapting socially, gifted children have their own challenges because they have differences in the way they think, interests, and emotional levels compared to their peers [1]–[6]. Relationships with peers who provide support can help gifted and talented develop social-emotional skills, empathy, and self-confidence in social interactions [7]–[11].

The role of peers in the social-emotional development of *gifted and talented* individuals is a complex topic, and the presence of supportive peers plays an important role in helping them face challenges that may arise. Gifted children often find it difficult to establish relationships with their peers due to differences in interests, intellectual abilities and emotional sensitivity [12]–[16]. This can result in social isolation and misunderstanding from their peers of the same age. This condition has the potential to hinder their social development. In addition, the pressure to adapt to group habits often encourages gifted children to hide their abilities to be accepted in social settings. They also often find it hard to understand and express their emotions, which can lead to heightened sensitivity, frustration or social withdrawal [17]–[19]. This allows them to have more sensitive emotions, which makes them feel frustrated, lonely, or anxious. These issues highlight the need for a supportive social environment for gifted and talented children, especially the important role that peers can play in providing emotional and social support and making them feel accepted, understood, and connected. Therefore, it is important to create a conducive environment for gifted children to interact with their peers so that their social skills can develop optimally [20]–[22]. Peers can be a valuable source of social and emotional support for gifted and talented Children, helping them overcome feelings of being othered or lonely.

Some strategies to create a supportive environment include developing an inclusive curriculum emphasizing empathy and teamwork, teaching social skills, or implementing a peer mentoring program. In addition, gifted children can realize their maximum potential if parents and educators actively support the development of positive social interactions.

Fundamental theories in psychology emphasise the importance of social environments in the development of gifted children. According to Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory and Dabrowski's Theory of Positive Disintegration, supportive interpersonal relationships help children to navigate identity conflicts and emotional intensity [23]–[25]. Similarly, Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory emphasise the importance of interaction and observation in shaping children's behaviour and emotional regulation. Together, these frameworks emphasise the importance of examining how peer relationships function as a key context for the social and emotional development of gifted and talented children. For intelligent children, the environmental atmosphere is very important for their social and emotional growth. Understanding their unique needs and creating an inclusive atmosphere can make them feel valued and accepted.

This research will discuss social-emotional development of gifted and talented children and the involvement of peers in this process, (the role of peers as a source of social-emotional support, the role of peers in the social skills of gifted and talented children) for the social development of gifted and talented children. Based on the Scopus database, previous research used keywords that refer to research about The Role Of Peers On Gifted And Talented Children used by previous researchers is as shown in Figure 1 below:

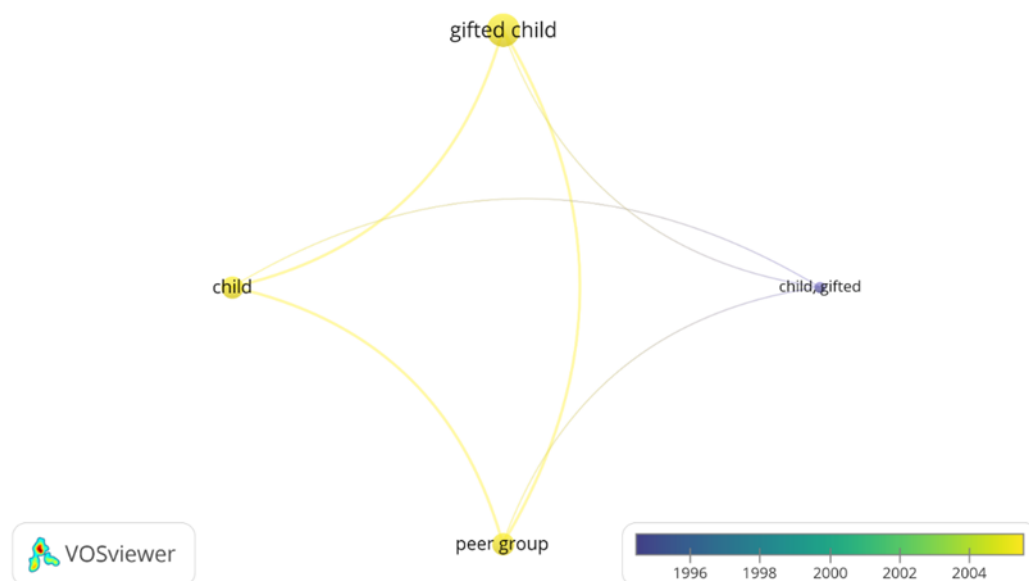


Figure 1. Several keywords refer to the research on the role of peers on gifted and talented children by world researchers based on Scopus data.

Based on the Scopus database analyzed on Monday, December 30, 2024, at 20.00 WIB, research about the role of peers on gifted and talented children was found, with eight studies in total from several countries in the world. Some countries are Sweden, Iran, Switzerland, and the United States. Research in these countries relates to contextual identification and integration of inclusive education, mental health, development of academic talents, peer support, learning disorders and characteristics of gifted children, exploring responsibility, and moral cognitive development.

Research about The Role of Peers in the Social Emotional Development of Gifted and Talented Children 5 studies were found [24], [26]–[29]. This research is available in Brazil, Korea, and Türkiye, and there is research about The Role of Peers in the Social Emotional Development of Gifted and Talented Children in 1 book[30]. from New York State. Figure 2 shows that research from countries such as Brazil, South Korea and Turkey emphasises the role of peers in the social and emotional development of gifted children, highlighting contextual and cultural dimensions relevant to their education.

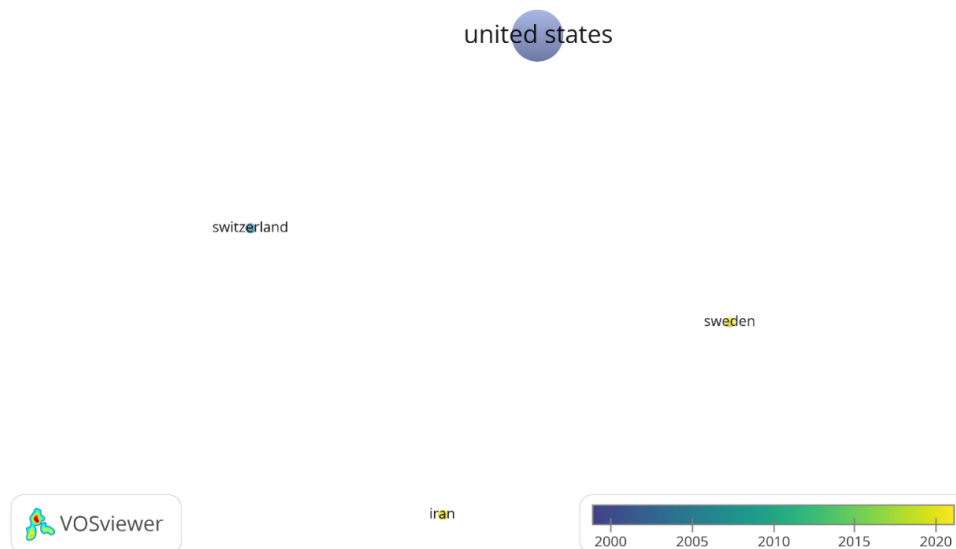


Figure 2. Research in several countries that links several keywords to the role of peers in gifted and talented children

Several figures have conducted related research, The Role Of Peers On Gifted And Talented Children, Figure 3 summarises the key contributions that scholars have made to this area of study, offering fundamental insights into how peer interactions impact the emotional and academic development of gifted children:

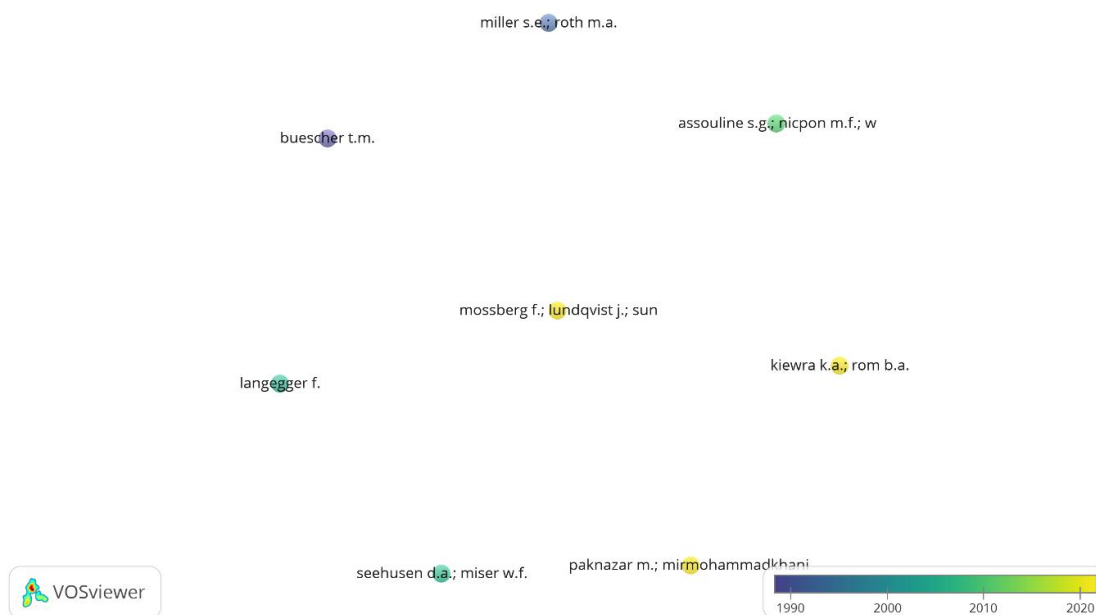


Figure 3. Figures who researched The Role Of Peers On Gifted And Talented Children

Several figures presented in the picture above include [10], [31], [32]. relating the role of peers in the development of gifted and talented children in academics, emotional support, responsibility, ways of interacting or social behavior with peers, identifying inclusive education and providing special services and paying special attention to the social development of gifted and talented children.

The social development of gifted children has been discussed in several studies [13], [24], [29]. Most studies have focused on general social adjustment or emotional well-being, rather than thoroughly examining the specific mechanisms through which

peers contribute to these outcomes. For example, studies in Brazil and Korea emphasised peer acceptance, yet failed to explore in depth the role of peers in developing emotional regulation, empathy, and collaborative competence. Unlike previous studies, this research takes a comprehensive systematic literature review approach to synthesise global findings and thematically analyse how peer interactions contribute to various dimensions of social and emotional development, including confidence, communication and emotional resilience, in gifted children during early childhood. This integrative focus on both social and emotional domains addresses a significant gap in existing literature.

METHOD

This study used a systematic literature review (SLR) to examine the contribution of peer relationships to the social and emotional development of gifted and talented children. The SLR method was chosen because it can synthesise existing knowledge systematically and identify thematic patterns across multiple studies[33], [34]. Relevant literature was gathered from five major academic databases: Scopus, Springer, Elsevier, Taylor & Francis Online and Google Scholar. Keyword searches included combinations such as 'gifted and talented children', 'peer relationships', 'social-emotional development', 'social support', and 'emotional skills'.

The inclusion criteria for the studies were as follows: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2025; (2) written in English; (3) focusing on gifted and talented children in the context of peer interaction and social-emotional development; and (4) containing empirical findings or conceptual analyses that were aligned with the research objectives. Studies were excluded if they: (1) addressed only academic performance without linking it to social-emotional aspects; (2) involved non-gifted populations; or (3) were opinion pieces or editorials lacking methodological rigour.

Once the relevant studies had been identified, a thematic analysis was conducted with the help of NVivo 12 software. Data analysis followed the framework of Miles and Huberman,[35]. involving three steps: condensing the data, displaying it, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Articles were coded inductively and recurring themes related to peer influence on confidence, emotional resilience, empathy, communication and social competence were identified. The findings were organised in tables and visualised to facilitate synthesis. Figure 4 summarises the analytical procedure and has been revised to reflect standard research terminology more clearly.

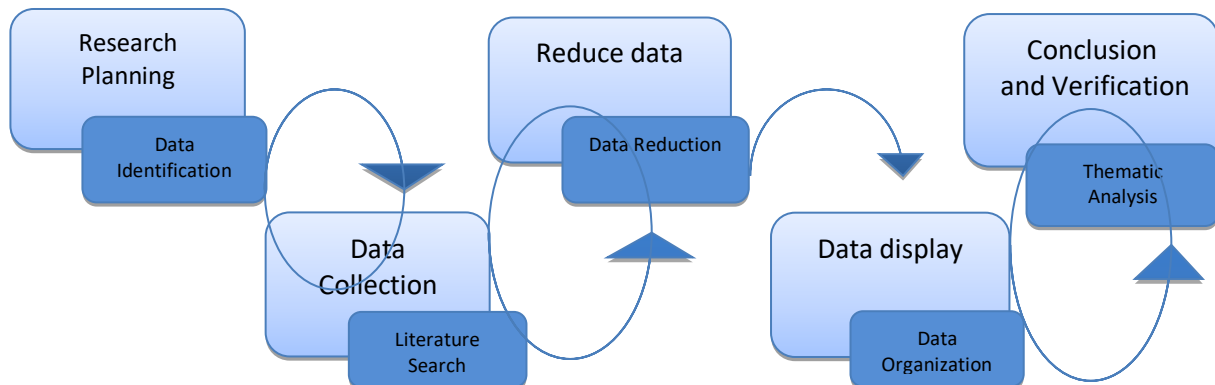


Figure 4. Stages of Data Analysis By [36]

With the help of the NVIVO 12 software package, the data for this study were processed. The author carried out a descriptive analysis by describing the indications of the findings. The data was visualized by uploading 25 relevant papers into the NVIVO 12 Program. The next step was an in-depth study of the main topics relevant to the role of peers in social-emotional development. Gifted and talented children. This research applies thematic coding to find patterns and themes in the data. A coding process is carried out by identifying and categorizing data into relevant themes, which are then analyzed to understand the relationships and implications. The descriptive results of this research contribute to suggestions for the important role of peers in social-emotional development.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research objectives, this study examines how the role of peers in the social-emotional development of gifted children. The sub-focus includes the influence of peers on social-emotional skills and the important role of peers in the social-emotional development of gifted children.

Table1. Thematic Summary of Peer Influence on Gifted Children's Development

	Findings Thematic Findings	Description Descriptionsa and Interpretations
(i) The role of peers in social-emotional development	Self confidence	Supportive interactions with peers promote self-worth, acceptance and social courage in gifted children.
	Social competence	Social functioning is enhanced by engagement in collaboration, sharing, and peer-led problem solving.

	Overcoming loneliness	Positive peer inclusion helps reduce isolation and feelings of otherness.
	Navigating social challenges	Peers provide social cues, comfort, and adaptive responses to emotional difficulties.
	Emotional security	Peers offer safe emotional spaces. These enable emotional expression and internal stability.
(ii) The role of peers in influencing social-emotional skills	Increased empathy	Recognize and understand other people's feelings, and learn to care in friendly relationships.
	Emotion regulation	Observing and practicing emotional responses improves emotional self-management.
	Communication and collaboration skills	Able to listen, express feelings, discuss, and give spontaneous responses with peers.

The role of peers in social-emotional development. Self-confidence and increased Social competence: Gifted and talented children learn and develop through observing and imitating their friends' experiences. This aligns with Bandura's social cognitive theory, which suggests that people acquire behaviours and beliefs through observation and imitation, as well as environmental reinforcement [37]. In this context, peers serve as models for adaptive behavior, problem-solving, and emotional resilience. The presence of a positive peer environment allows gifted children to internalize social scripts and reinforce their social self-efficacy. [22], [25], [38], [39]. Help overcome loneliness, help navigate social challenges, and provide emotional security. In this context, peers serve as role models for adaptive behaviour, problem solving and emotional resilience. A positive peer environment enables gifted children to internalise social scripts and reinforce their social self-efficacy [40]–[43].

Additionally, Baumeister and Leary's Need to Belong Theory posits that human beings are inherently motivated to establish meaningful interpersonal connections. Reviewed studies have shown that children who experience consistent peer support exhibit lower anxiety levels and stronger social engagement [29], [44], [45]. These outcomes affirm that a sense of belonging, cultivated through peer acceptance, is central to healthy emotional development [46]–[48].

However, not all studies reported uniformly positive outcomes [49]–[52]. It was found that some gifted children continued to experience peer rejection despite interventions, suggesting that contextual factors, such as the classroom environment and cultural norms, influence the effectiveness of peer support. Furthermore, the limited availability of longitudinal evidence raises questions about the durability of peer influence over time. Future studies should address these gaps, particularly in culturally diverse settings and across different stages of development.

The role of peers in influencing social-emotional skills. Increased sense of empathy, Emotional regulation, Communication and cooperation skills, In the second domain, it is evident that peer interaction plays a pivotal role in the development of essential social and emotional competencies. According to Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks, children acquire emotional and interpersonal skills through interaction, reflection and receiving feedback in social situations. Gifted children, who may otherwise experience social dissonance due to their development being out of sync, benefit from peer exchanges that normalise their emotional expressions [53]. Gifted children develop empathy as they interpret emotional cues, respond to their peers' needs and engage in mutual support. Similarly, through modelling and social practice, children learn to regulate emotions such as frustration and excitement in socially constructive ways. Communication and collaboration, which are essential outcomes of social and emotional learning (SEL), are also fostered through peer-guided activities, group discussions, and shared play experiences.

Nonetheless, challenges persist. Some studies have highlighted disparities in the development of social and emotional skills among gifted children placed in non-supportive peer groups. [54]–[57]. Cultural misunderstandings, a lack of inclusivity, and teacher bias can all hinder the peer dynamic required for optimal emotional growth [49], [58]–[60]. Therefore, peer-oriented interventions must be culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate, as well as being consistently supported by educators and families [61]–[63].

CONCLUSION

This systematic review highlights the multifaceted role of peers in supporting the social-emotional development of gifted and talented children, particularly during early childhood. Peers build self-confidence, social competence, empathy, emotional regulation, and collaborative communication significantly. Through positive interactions, gifted children experience greater emotional security and a stronger sense of belonging, which is vital for their holistic development. The novelty of this research lies in its integrative synthesis across multiple countries and frameworks, combining Social Cognitive Theory, the Need to Belong Theory, and Social-Emotional Learning perspectives within the context of gifted education. Unlike previous studies that focused on single aspects (e.g., academic outcomes or general social skills), this study emphasizes the *specific developmental mechanisms* through which peers impact emotional growth in gifted children. For educators and institutions, these findings suggest the importance of fostering inclusive, emotionally supportive peer environments in early learning settings. Peer mentorship, cooperative learning models, and empathy-based curricula may be particularly effective in enhancing socio-emotional outcomes for gifted learners. Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of peer interactions to understand developmental trajectories over time. In addition, cross-cultural comparisons are needed to examine how cultural norms and educational systems influence the peer dynamics of gifted children in diverse contexts.

AWARD

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