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Curriculum Model for Enhancing Social Capital and Social Skills Among Elementary School Students

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to develop and validate a comprehensive curriculum model designed to enhance social capital and social skills among elementary school students through a mixed-methods approach.

Methods and Materials: A sequential mixed-methods research design was employed, beginning with a qualitative phase involving semi-structured interviews with curriculum specialists, educational psychologists, and elementary teachers in Tehran selected through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis generated foundational components for the curriculum model. These qualitative themes informed the development of quantitative instruments administered to 312 elementary teachers selected via stratified random sampling. Quantitative analyses included descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM) using SPSS and SmartPLS. Reliability and validity indices, including composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and average variance extracted, were calculated to assess the measurement structure and test the theoretical framework emerging from the qualitative findings.

Findings: EFA supported a four-factor model explaining 72.14% of total variance with strong factor loadings across components. CFA results demonstrated excellent model fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.41$, RMSEA = 0.056, CFI = 0.957, TLI = 0.944), confirming the validity of the measurement model. SEM revealed significant predictive relationships among latent constructs: social interaction skills significantly predicted social capital development ($\beta = 0.63$, $t = 11.42$), prosocial behavioral training strongly predicted social skills enhancement ($\beta = 0.58$, $t = 10.76$), and curriculum contextualization predicted implementation feasibility ($\beta = 0.47$, $t = 8.23$). Additionally, social capital development significantly enhanced student social participation ($\beta = 0.54$, $t = 9.61$), and social skills enhancement improved classroom behavioral adjustment ($\beta = 0.49$, $t = 7.88$).

Conclusion: The validated model demonstrates that a culturally grounded, interaction-centered curriculum integrating prosocial training, cooperative learning, and contextualized instruction can significantly strengthen social capital and social skills among elementary students.

Keywords: Social skills; Social capital; Curriculum model; Elementary education; Prosocial behavior

1. Introduction

The development of social skills and social capital during the elementary school years is widely recognized as a crucial foundation for children's emotional, cognitive, and interpersonal growth. As children transition from early childhood to formal schooling, they face increasing demands for collaboration, emotional regulation, communication, and responsible behavior, all of which constitute essential domains of twenty-first-century competencies. Numerous studies have emphasized that social skills not only facilitate peer relationships but also contribute significantly to academic performance and long-term wellbeing. For instance, reciprocal relations between social and academic skills across elementary years have been documented, demonstrating that students who develop stronger social competencies tend to achieve more academically and maintain healthier behavioral profiles (Caemmerer & Hajovsky, 2022). This bidirectional link underscores the importance of designing curriculum models that target social skills explicitly and systematically.

In many educational settings, particularly at the elementary level, social-behavioral challenges such as aggression, poor communication, dependency on digital devices, emotional dysregulation, and lack of cooperative behavior are increasingly prevalent. Interventions that focus on structured play, guided group activity, and intentional social learning have shown positive effects on reducing aggressive behavior and improving prosocial functioning (Saad et al., 2022). Such outcomes highlight the need for curriculum-embedded methodologies rather than isolated, short-term programs. Studies examining elementary students' emotional involvement in reading adventure stories indicate that narrative-based approaches significantly enhance children's empathy, imagination, and interpersonal understanding (Jannah et al., 2025). Literary engagement can therefore serve as an important tool for strengthening character values and emotional sensitivity.

Arts-based methods have also shown promise. Group art therapy grounded in expressive therapy models has been effective in improving emotional regulation, peer interaction, and behavioral adjustment among young learners (H. Kim et al., 2024). Related research demonstrates how fairy-tale therapy fosters social-communicative skills by enabling children to express feelings, negotiate roles, and reenact social dilemmas through symbolic storytelling (Berinskaya & Kolosova, 2025). These findings show that creative, narrative, and symbolic activities allow students to

internalize social norms more effectively than direct instruction alone.

Another cluster of contemporary findings underscores the value of sports and movement activities for skill formation. The implementation of structured futsal programs has been associated with improvements in leadership, teamwork, and emotional management in elementary children (Hidayat et al., 2024). Similarly, rhythmic gymnastics has been shown to enhance motor development, peer cooperation, and shared rule-following among young learners (Simamora et al., 2024). Engagement in soccer programs and related physical activities contributes to children's social development by strengthening teamwork, responsibility, and adaptive behavior (Mei, 2024). Collectively, these studies highlight the integral relationship between physical activity and social growth.

In parallel, digital and media-integrated instructional approaches continue to expand in elementary education. Teaching coding using Scratch, for example, not only improves students' computational thinking skills but also fosters collaboration, communication, and shared problem-solving during group projects (Fitria, 2025). At the same time, concerns about children's dependence on gadgets have led to increased interest in behavioral skill training as a way of mitigating negative consequences of excessive screen time. Evidence shows that such training—particularly when implemented within an educational context—improves children's self-control, communication skills, and social awareness (Mazaya et al., 2023). The management of children's gadget use within families also plays a critical role; parental monitoring and attention significantly influence the development of social skills and the prevention of social withdrawal among elementary-age children (Kristiyuana, 2024). These findings demonstrate that curriculum development must consider the interplay of school, home, and digital contexts to ensure holistic development.

Various studies reinforce that structured play and community-based learning environments are highly effective in building children's interpersonal capacities. An empathetic communication program utilizing play activities, for example, has been validated as an effective means of enhancing children's emotional regulation, emotionality, and peer relationship skills (Lee & Park, 2023). Similarly, traditional game therapy has been found effective in strengthening social skills by offering students opportunities to collaborate, negotiate, and build trust through culturally familiar activities (Johannes et al., 2024). Song-based music

and movement activities also foster twenty-first-century learning skills and significantly improve children's communication, teamwork, and social awareness (Ow et al., 2023). These findings collectively emphasize that interactive, culturally relevant, and engaging activities provide powerful mediators for social skill acquisition.

Research on character development, morality, empathy, and tolerance highlights other essential foundations for social capital formation. Early cultivation of tolerance and empathy through structured circle-time guidance programs leads to more harmonious interactions and higher-quality peer relationships (Faizin, 2025). The strengthening of language appreciation skills has likewise been shown to improve character formation, social sensitivity, and communicative competence among elementary-school children (Musa, 2025). Furthermore, the introduction of English learning in rural and underserved communities has been shown to positively influence children's early communication competencies and openness to cultural diversity (Karimah & Al-Nur, 2023). Such findings emphasize the need for curriculum models that integrate multicultural awareness and linguistic enrichment alongside social skill development.

Broader structural and institutional factors also influence children's social-behavioral outcomes. The implementation of anti-bullying legislation has been found to significantly enhance children's social-behavioral skills, suggesting that strong policy environments contribute to measurable developmental benefits (Sun & Zhao, 2025). At the school level, instructional programs aimed at building teachers' own social and educational skills lead to improvements in classroom climate and student interactions (Serqueira et al., 2022). Moreover, longitudinal research highlights the variability of social-skill development across demographic groups, signaling the importance of inclusive, equitable, and culturally sensitive curriculum design that addresses diverse student needs (Hajovsky et al., 2023).

Elementary school curriculum research also identifies content-specific areas that indirectly reinforce social competence. Language learning, for example, serves not only to develop literacy but also to cultivate expression, creativity, and interpersonal understanding. Studies on language-based instruction emphasize that structured language activities enhance children's conceptual skills, strengthen communication abilities, and support cooperative learning (Maritim, 2023). Curriculum studies in Indonesia demonstrate that foundational education plays a vital role in shaping children's general abilities, including social

adaptation and early problem-solving (Putri, 2024). Additionally, art, music, and creative STEAM education programs have been shown to foster creative problem-solving and interpersonal skills by engaging children in collaborative, hands-on tasks (M. Kim et al., 2024). These insights suggest that curriculum elements that combine cognitive, aesthetic, and social learning offer strong potential for developing broad-based competencies.

Research on inclusive education further underscores the necessity of designing curriculum models that address diverse learners. Studies on life-skills education in inclusive elementary schools highlight that social skills training must be adapted to the needs of children with varying cognitive, behavioral, and sensory profiles (Mastoah et al., 2023). Related research on strengthening interpersonal skills among differently abled but cognitively capable students confirms the effectiveness of structured intervention programs tailored to student-specific abilities (Contreras, 2023). Such findings make clear that an effective curriculum model must accommodate developmental differences and provide flexible instructional pathways.

Children's social development is also influenced by broader socio-emotional supports, many of which can be embedded into a well-designed curriculum. For example, participation in community child-center programs featuring STEAM activities promotes cooperative problem-solving and interpersonal communication (M. Kim et al., 2024). Early education research suggests that emotional engagement with learning materials—for instance, through adventure story reading—supports the development of empathy and emotional intelligence (Jannah et al., 2025). Additionally, appreciation of literature has been identified as a means of strengthening language, character, and social-emotional competencies (Musa, 2025). These findings reinforce the principle that social skills flourish when cognitive, emotional, and cultural components are integrated within the curriculum.

Finally, the broader educational landscape continues to advocate for the prevention of behavioral and emotional problems through developmentally appropriate interventions. Programs such as Papilio-6to9 illustrate how social and emotional skills can be systematically embedded within curriculum frameworks to prevent future behavioral challenges (Lechner et al., 2023). The role of academic institutions in promoting optimal student behavior extends beyond teaching academic content; schools must nurture safe, positive, and participatory environments in which social capital can thrive. With bullying, social isolation, and

digital dependency on the rise, schools cannot rely solely on punitive behavior management or sporadic intervention programs. Instead, curriculum design must embed social learning within daily instructional routines and across subject areas.

Given these extensive insights from international research, it becomes evident that elementary school children require an intentional, integrated curriculum model that explicitly nurtures social capital and social skills through academic content, physical activity, creative arts, narrative practices, and structured play. An evidence-based curriculum model that synthesizes these diverse pedagogical elements while being culturally appropriate for the Iranian context is essential to ensure sustainable developmental outcomes for students in Tehran's elementary schools. Therefore, the aim of this study is to develop a comprehensive curriculum model that enhances social capital and social skills among elementary school students through a mixed-methods research design.

2. Methods and Materials

This study employed a mixed-methods design using a sequential exploratory approach to develop a comprehensive curriculum model aimed at enhancing social capital and social skills among elementary school students. The qualitative phase served as the foundation for model construction, followed by a quantitative phase to validate the components extracted. The research was conducted in Tehran, where diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and educational contexts provided an appropriate environment for exploring curriculum needs and testing the model's applicability. In the qualitative phase, participants included curriculum specialists, educational psychologists, sociologists, and experienced primary school teachers who were selected through purposive sampling based on criteria such as expertise, years of experience, and familiarity with social skills education. Semi-structured interviews continued until data saturation was reached. The quantitative phase involved elementary school teachers and educational consultants from various districts of Tehran, selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different school types and regions. The sample size was determined based on the requirements of structural equation modeling, ensuring an adequate number of respondents for reliable and valid statistical testing.

Multiple tools were used to gather rich and comprehensive data in both qualitative and quantitative

phases. In the qualitative phase, data were obtained through semi-structured interviews that explored participants' perceptions regarding the essential components of a curriculum designed to enhance social capital and social skills. The interview protocol included open-ended questions focusing on instructional needs, social interaction mechanisms, contextual factors, and expected behavioral outcomes. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for in-depth analysis. In the quantitative phase, standardized questionnaires were utilized to measure perceived importance and effectiveness of the identified curriculum components. Instruments assessing social capital and social skills development were adapted from validated international scales and localized through expert review to ensure cultural appropriateness for the Iranian elementary school context. A researcher-developed questionnaire was also constructed based on themes extracted from the qualitative findings, and its validity was examined using expert judgment and confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability was ensured through pilot testing and Cronbach's alpha coefficients, demonstrating acceptable internal consistency for all scales used.

Data analysis followed a two-stage mixed-methods process consistent with the sequential exploratory design. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, allowing the identification of core themes, subthemes, and conceptual categories relevant to curriculum design for enhancing social capital and social skills. Transcribed interviews were reviewed repeatedly to ensure immersion in the data, and codes were generated inductively before being organized into broader themes. Trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis was enhanced through peer debriefing, member checking, and triangulation across participants. The findings of this phase informed the construction of the measurement tools used in the quantitative phase. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to validate the curriculum model. Structural equation modeling was conducted to examine the relationships among identified components and to test the overall model fit. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS and SmartPLS software to ensure robust validation of the proposed curriculum framework.

3. Findings and Results

The findings of this mixed-methods study begin with the qualitative analysis results, presented in Table 1. This table summarizes the themes, subthemes, and key conceptual

codes extracted from participants' interviews. The subsequent tables present the quantitative results, including descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modeling outcomes.

Table 1

Qualitative Analysis Results: Themes, Subthemes, and Key Codes

Theme	Subtheme	Key Conceptual Codes (Condensed)
Social Interaction Foundations	Emotional Expression Skills	Identifying emotions; expressing needs; listening with empathy; regulating impulsive reactions
	Peer Communication Patterns	Turn-taking; respectful dialogue; nonverbal communication cues; assertiveness training
	Conflict Management	Sharing responsibilities; peaceful dispute resolution; negotiation strategies; tolerance
Social Capital Development	Trust-Building Processes	Cooperative tasks; group problem-solving; honesty norms; reliability in group activities
	Shared Values and Norms	Classroom rules co-creation; respect for diversity; moral decision-making; collective responsibility
	Cooperative Networks	Peer mentoring; micro-group activities; classroom helper roles; collaborative learning structures
Prosocial Behavioral Promotion	Altruistic Behavior	Helping peers; volunteering roles; empathy-driven actions; perspective-taking
	Classroom Citizenship	Compliance with rules; participation in class duties; leadership opportunities; fair participation
	Responsibility Development	Completing group tasks; accountability; duty-following; self-monitoring
Curriculum Contextualization	Cultural Adaptation	Use of Iranian social stories; culturally relevant examples; alignment with school customs
	Family-School Alignment	Parent communication; home-school activity continuity; shared behavioral expectations
	Institutional Feasibility	Teacher readiness; resource availability; time allocation; administrative support

The qualitative analysis produced four major themes with several subthemes and rich conceptual codes, demonstrating the complexity of designing a curriculum aimed at enhancing social capital and social skills. Participants emphasized that social interaction foundations—particularly emotional expression, communication patterns, and conflict management—represent core building blocks for student development. Social capital development emerged as a distinct and necessary theme, with trust-building and cooperative networks being critical for establishing

supportive classroom environments. Prosocial behavioral promotion highlighted the importance of encouraging altruism, classroom citizenship, and responsibility, all of which teachers viewed as prerequisites for social maturity. Curriculum contextualization further underscored the need for culturally grounded, feasible, and family-aligned curriculum elements tailored to Tehran's educational environment. Overall, the qualitative data provided a comprehensive framework that guided the development of the quantitative instruments and structural model.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Curriculum Components (N = 312)

Component	Mean	SD
Interpersonal Skills	4.21	0.52
Communication Competence	4.18	0.49
Cooperative Learning	4.32	0.47
Trust-Building Skills	4.09	0.55
Norm Internalization	3.94	0.61
Classroom Social Participation	4.27	0.50
Community Engagement Readiness	3.88	0.57

Teachers rated all components of the curriculum model highly, with mean scores above 3.80 on a 5-point scale,

indicating widespread agreement regarding the relevance of each component. Cooperative learning and classroom social

participation received the highest means, reflecting strong endorsement for collaborative instructional approaches. Trust-building skills and interpersonal communication were also highly rated, demonstrating teachers' recognition of their importance in enhancing social capital. Norm

internalization and community readiness were rated relatively lower, suggesting that these may require more explicit instructional strategies. Low standard deviations across components indicate consistent response patterns among the teacher sample.

Table 3

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Results

Index / Factor	Value / Range
KMO	0.913
Bartlett's Test	$\chi^2 = 2843.27, p < 0.001$
Number of Extracted Factors	4
Total Variance Explained	72.14%
Factor 1 Loadings (Social Interaction Skills)	0.71–0.85
Factor 2 Loadings (Social Capital Development)	0.68–0.82
Factor 3 Loadings (Prosocial Behavioral Training)	0.64–0.80
Factor 4 Loadings (Curriculum Contextualization)	0.63–0.77

The EFA results confirmed that the curriculum model consists of four strong and interpretable latent constructs that align well with the qualitative findings. The KMO value of 0.913 indicates sampling adequacy, and the significant Bartlett's test confirms that the correlation matrix is appropriate for factor analysis. The extracted factors

explained over 72% of the variance, demonstrating strong explanatory power. High factor loadings for all items across the four constructs show a solid underlying structure and indicate that the items strongly represent their respective dimensions. These EFA results provided a robust foundation for the subsequent confirmatory analysis.

Table 4

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Fit Indices

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
χ^2/df	2.41	< 3.00
RMSEA	0.056	< 0.08
CFI	0.957	> 0.95
TLI	0.944	> 0.90
SRMR	0.041	< 0.08
Standardized Factor Loadings	0.62–0.86	> 0.60
Composite Reliability (CR)	0.78–0.91	> 0.70
Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	0.52–0.67	> 0.50

Goodness-of-fit indices show that the measurement model provides an excellent fit to the data. RMSEA, SRMR, CFI, and TLI all fall within ideal ranges, confirming that the model structure aligns well with observed data. The strong factor loadings, high composite reliability values, and

acceptable AVE values support both the reliability and convergent validity of the constructs. These results confirm that the curriculum components identified during the qualitative phase are statistically valid and can be reliably measured in elementary school contexts.

Table 5

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

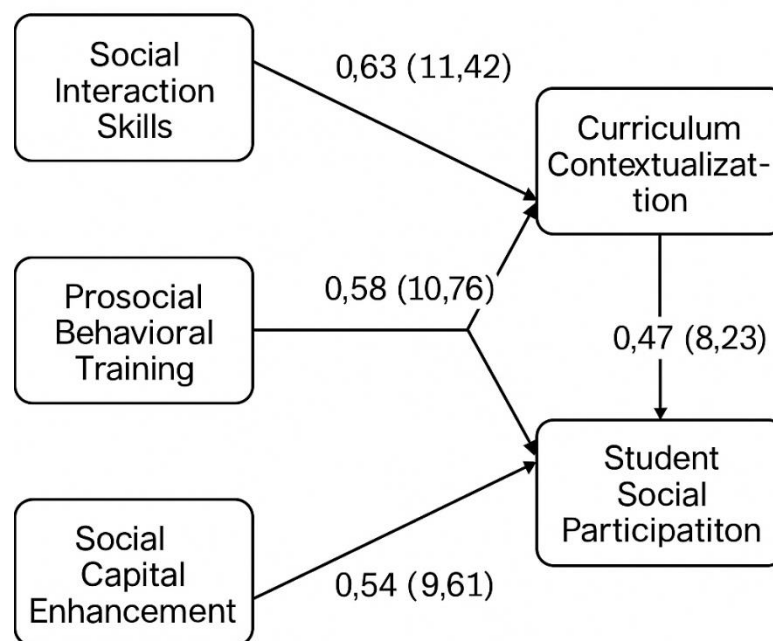
Path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value
Social Interaction Skills → Social Capital Development	0.63	11.42	< 0.001
Prosocial Behavioral Training → Social Skills Enhancement	0.58	10.76	< 0.001
Curriculum Contextualization → Implementation Feasibility	0.47	8.23	< 0.001
Social Capital Development → Student Social Participation	0.54	9.61	< 0.001
Social Skills Enhancement → Classroom Behavioral Adjustment	0.49	7.88	< 0.001

The SEM results demonstrate strong, statistically significant relationships among the latent variables of the curriculum model. Social interaction skills showed the strongest effect on social capital development, confirming the central pedagogical role of communication and interaction in building student social capital. Prosocial behavioral training also exerted a substantial influence on social skills enhancement, emphasizing the value of

structured behavioral instruction. Curriculum contextualization significantly predicted implementation feasibility, suggesting that alignment with cultural, institutional, and family contexts is essential for practical curriculum adoption. Overall, the model presents a coherent and empirically supported framework for enhancing social capital and social skills in elementary education.

Figure 1

Ranking of Teachers' Readiness Dimensions for Employing AI in the Teaching–Learning Process



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to design and validate a curriculum model aimed at enhancing social capital and social skills among elementary school students. The findings from both the qualitative and quantitative strands converge to support a comprehensive, multidimensional framework rooted in social interaction, prosocial behavior, social capital development, and contextualized curriculum implementation. Qualitative analyses revealed four principal themes—social interaction foundations, social capital development, prosocial behavioral promotion, and curriculum contextualization—each comprising several subcomponents essential for interpersonal growth in elementary learners. Quantitative results further validated these constructs through high factor loadings, strong

reliability indices, and a well-fitting measurement and structural model. Together, these results confirm that interventions grounded in cooperative learning, emotional regulation, conflict management, cultural relevance, and institutional feasibility can significantly strengthen children's interpersonal competencies and social capital.

The strong effect of social interaction skills on social capital development, as seen in the structural model, aligns with the extensive body of literature emphasizing that social skills serve as the foundation for children's broader relational competencies. Research consistently demonstrates that children who develop effective interpersonal communication, turn-taking, and conflict resolution abilities are more likely to form trusting peer relationships and participate positively within the school community (Caemmerer & Hajovsky, 2022). The present study supports this pattern by showing that stronger social interaction skills

predict richer social capital, suggesting that elementary curriculum must emphasize dialogic, cooperative, and interactive classroom practices. Similarly, studies involving traditional games and play-based learning confirm that interactive activities provide the authentic social scenarios necessary for developing trust, empathy, and cooperative behavior (Johannes et al., 2024). Therefore, the finding that social interaction acts as a core antecedent of social capital development is both theoretically and empirically supported.

Another important finding from this study is the substantial effect of prosocial behavioral training on social skills enhancement. This result aligns with previous research showing that structured, intentional prosocial instruction—such as circle-time discussions, peer assistance routines, and empathy-based dialogues—can significantly elevate children's tolerance, empathy, and cooperation (Faizin, 2025). In the context of this study, prosocial training was associated with improved emotional regulation, communication competence, classroom citizenship, and altruistic tendencies. Studies using expressive arts therapy also report increases in emotional control and sociality when prosocial behaviors are explicitly modeled and practiced (H. Kim et al., 2024). Similarly, anti-aggression interventions grounded in guided play and behavior modeling have shown improvements in children's cooperative behavior and peer adjustment (Saad et al., 2022). The consistency between these findings and the present study reinforces the essential role of structured prosocial instruction in curriculum development.

The strong influence of curriculum contextualization on implementation feasibility highlights the importance of cultural, institutional, and ecological relevance in curriculum design. The qualitative results revealed that teachers identify cultural adaptation, family-school alignment, and availability of institutional resources as vital conditions for the successful implementation of social-skill curricula. These findings are consistent with prior studies demonstrating that culturally grounded programs—such as fairy-tale therapy, culturally relevant stories, and community-rooted STEAM activities—enhance student engagement and strengthen social-communicative competencies (Berinskaya & Kolosova, 2025; M. Kim et al., 2024). Furthermore, children's emotional involvement in adventure stories, which vary across cultural contexts, has been shown to foster empathy and social imagination (Jannah et al., 2025). Studies emphasizing the role of parent-school cooperation, particularly in managing digital device use and promoting healthy behavioral routines, also support

the need for contextual alignment in curriculum frameworks (Kristiyuana, 2024). The present findings emphasize that without considering local cultural expectations, parental involvement, and environmental constraints, even well-designed curriculum interventions may fail to achieve their intended outcomes.

The results also show that social capital development significantly predicts children's social participation, demonstrating that the accumulation of trust, shared norms, and cooperative networks leads to more active involvement in classroom and school activities. This finding supports research on empathy-based communication programs, which found that increased social capital corresponded with improved emotional regulation and peer relationship skills (Lee & Park, 2023). Similarly, interventions such as rhythmic gymnastics, futsal programs, and soccer-based activities—which inherently require trust-building and group cooperation—have been shown to increase students' motivation to participate in social and collaborative tasks (Hidayat et al., 2024; Mei, 2024; Simamora et al., 2024). The present study reinforces these patterns by demonstrating that social capital acts as a mediating variable that enhances social participation and fosters collaborative classroom environments.

Moreover, the direct relationship between social skills enhancement and classroom behavioral adjustment found in the structural model is consistent with longitudinal studies showing that improvements in social skills predict reductions in maladaptive behaviors and increases in prosocial conduct across elementary years (Hajovsky et al., 2023). Preventive programs that integrate emotional and behavioral training have similarly reported positive long-term effects, such as reduced behavioral issues and enhanced social-emotional functioning (Lechner et al., 2023). The present findings thus align with the evidence that social skill development is an effective mechanism for promoting healthy classroom behavior and mitigating emotional or behavioral difficulties.

The descriptive results of this study, which showed high teacher ratings for interpersonal communication, cooperative learning, and classroom social participation, align with earlier findings that emphasize the centrality of interactive learning experiences in childhood education. Teachers frequently observe that cooperative tasks, peer mentoring systems, and play-based learning significantly enhance social-related behaviors (Ow et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies on behavioral skill training for children with gadget addiction have demonstrated that structured

interpersonal routines, such as group discussions and partner activities, effectively reduce social withdrawal and increase peer interaction (Mazaya et al., 2023). Collectively, these studies support the high levels of agreement among teachers in the present research regarding the importance of cooperative and participatory learning practices.

The finding that norm internalization and community engagement readiness received comparatively lower ratings suggests ongoing challenges in helping students internalize social and moral norms beyond the classroom. This pattern aligns with research showing that while younger children readily acquire interpersonal skills through guided interactions, the internalization of civic values, responsibility, and community behavior requires prolonged, context-rich instruction supported by both school and home environments. Studies involving literature appreciation programs, which emphasize character formation and cultural exposure, highlight this challenge by demonstrating that internalizing values requires repetitive modeling, guided reflection, and meaningful engagement with moral content (Musa, 2025). Similarly, research on Indonesian language curriculum emphasizes that civic and moral understanding must be embedded in a broader cultural and linguistic framework to promote deep internalization (Maritim, 2023). These findings help explain why components involving broader social norms and community orientation may require more sustained curricular attention.

Additionally, studies focusing on inclusive education strongly support the present study's finding that prosocial and social-skill curricula must be adaptable to students with diverse learning needs and developmental trajectories. Research on life-skills education in inclusive schools shows that social-skill programs must incorporate flexibility, differentiated instruction, and personalized support strategies to ensure equitable outcomes for all learners (Mastoah et al., 2023). Findings from interventions targeting students with disabilities but intact cognitive functioning likewise demonstrate the importance of structured, accessible interpersonal-skill programs for fostering social integration (Contreras, 2023). The alignment of these studies with the present findings reinforces the critical need for inclusive curriculum design.

The integration of digital and creative pedagogies within social-skill learning is also reflected in the study's results. The moderate ratings for community engagement readiness and norm internalization suggest that creative instructional strategies—such as coding with Scratch, STEAM activities, group art therapy, and story-based interventions—may help

bridge these gaps. Research consistently demonstrates that such methods enhance collaboration, communication, and problem-solving skills while supporting deeper engagement with social and cultural values (Fitria, 2025; H. Kim et al., 2024; M. Kim et al., 2024). The present findings thus point toward the importance of integrating multidisciplinary, interactive, and culturally relevant pedagogies in the curriculum model.

The findings related to curriculum contextualization also resonate with research showing the importance of policy frameworks and institutional support. Studies on anti-bullying legislation, for example, demonstrate that systemic structures significantly impact children's social-behavioral development by shaping school policies, teacher expectations, and behavioral norms (Sun & Zhao, 2025). Programs designed to enhance teachers' instructional skills in social-emotional domains also highlight the importance of institutional readiness in achieving meaningful behavioral and social outcomes (Serqueira et al., 2022). These ideas support the present study's emphasis on implementation feasibility as a central component of the curriculum model.

Overall, this study contributes to the emerging consensus in global educational research that social skill development cannot be addressed through isolated lessons or fragmented interventions. Instead, it requires systematic, curriculum-embedded efforts that integrate cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and cultural dimensions. The convergence between this study's findings and the broader literature underscores the necessity of designing holistic curriculum models for social-skill and social-capital development in elementary education.

This study has several limitations. First, although the sample included teachers from multiple districts in Tehran, the findings may not reflect the educational environments of other regions with different cultural, socioeconomic, or institutional contexts. Second, the reliance on teacher-rated questionnaires in the quantitative phase may introduce response biases related to perceptions rather than direct behavioral observations. Third, qualitative data were limited to the perspectives of educators and experts; incorporating student or parent perspectives may have provided a more comprehensive understanding of social-skill development needs. Finally, although structural equation modeling provides strong evidence for the relationships among variables, causal inferences are limited due to the study's non-experimental design.

Future studies should expand the sample to include schools from diverse regions and cultural backgrounds to

enhance the generalizability of the curriculum model. Longitudinal research would provide deeper insight into how social skills and social capital evolve over time and whether the curriculum model leads to sustained improvements in behavior and participation. Future research may also integrate observational methods, peer reports, or performance-based assessments to complement teacher ratings. Additionally, intervention-based studies could implement the proposed curriculum model in schools and examine its effectiveness through experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Exploring digital, artistic, or outdoor-learning modalities in more depth may also yield innovative pathways for curriculum enhancement.

For practical application, curriculum designers should incorporate interactive, cooperative, and culturally grounded learning activities that promote authentic social engagement. Schools should prioritize teacher training in prosocial instruction, emotional guidance, and cooperative classroom management. Administrators should ensure adequate resources, supportive policies, and family involvement to facilitate the implementation of social-skill curriculum components. Teachers are encouraged to integrate social learning across academic subjects, reinforcing social norms and interpersonal competencies through daily instructional routines.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were under the ethical standards of the institutional and, or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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