

Effectiveness of Peer Communication in Elementary School from the Perspective of FIRO Theory

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Abstract

This study employs a literature review methodology and utilizes the Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (FIRO) theory as its analytical framework to examine the efficacy of peer communication in primary school settings. FIRO theory posits that interpersonal communication is shaped by three fundamental needs: inclusion, control, and affection. Over the past five years, a growing body of research has demonstrated that structured peer interaction and cooperative learning approaches significantly enhance students' interpersonal responsibility, communication skills, and teamwork abilities. The findings indicate that communication efficacy is optimized when classroom environments are intentionally designed to address students' interpersonal needs, particularly benefiting those with lower baseline social competencies. Furthermore, this study argues that FIRO theory provides a robust analytical lens for understanding how interpersonal needs influence children's engagement in communication processes and their subsequent learning outcomes. In addition, the study offers practical recommendations for developing instructional strategies that align with the psychological dimensions outlined in FIRO, thereby fostering more effective and meaningful peer communication in primary education contexts.

Keywords: Elementary education, FIRO theory, interpersonal needs, communication, social skills.

1 INTRODUCTION

During elementary school, when interpersonal skills are rapidly developing, peer communication is an essential part of children's social development. Through regular social interaction with classmates, children learn how to communicate, bargain, and form cooperative connections during these years (Thaibah, 2023). The classroom environment, academic achievement, and personal growth are all impacted by how well this peer communication works.

According to Schutz's FIRO theory, people interact according to three basic interpersonal needs: inclusion, control, and affection. These requirements influence how relationships are established and sustained in social settings (William Schutz, 1998). Its use clarifies how interpersonal requirements influence children's willingness and capacity to interact with peers in educational settings, despite the fact that it was first developed for adults and organizational situations.

According to recent studies, cooperative learning models and other structured peer learning environments greatly improve social skills by placing students in

shared, goal-based engagement (Salamah et al., 2024). This implies that students communicate more successfully in learning contexts that address interpersonal needs. In order to offer theoretical and practical insights, this article will examine recent empirical research on peer communication among primary school kids and analyze it using FIRO theory.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

The research methods for the proceedings article *Effectiveness of Peer Communication in Elementary Schools from the Perspective of FIRO Theory* used a focused literature-review design that methodically found, evaluated, and synthesized empirical studies from the previous five years (2020–2025) that looked at classroom peer interactions, peer communication, and peer-mediated interventions in elementary or early-years settings. To map interpersonal needs, searches were conducted across major databases (ERIC, PubMed/PMC, Scopus, Web of Science) using keywords like "peer communication," "peer interaction," "peer-mediated," "elementary school," and "classroom talk," along with FIRO/"Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation." Articles were screened by title/abstract and full text, and inclusion was restricted to empirical studies, robust observational or mixed-methods research, RCTs, or quasi-experimental designs published between 2020 and 2025. Study objectives, sample characteristics, intervention or interaction features (how peer communication was operationalized), outcomes (communication skills, social competence, learning gains), and quality indicators were all captured during data extraction. The results were then thematically synthesized and interpreted using the FIRO lens, which maps reported changes in inclusion, control, and affection-related behaviors to FIRO constructs to evaluate how peer communication satisfies interpersonal needs and enhances classroom learning. This strategy was based on new research showing that peer relationships and peer-mediated activities enhance kids' social and communication skills (Mccarty & Light, 2022; Wu & Ko, 2024). That classroom learning processes are shaped by organized peer-to-peer conversation (van Balen et al., 2024) The coding scheme and interpretation were framed by FIRO theory and technical specifications.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to recent research, cooperative learning is one of the most effective methods for helping students improve their communication skills. Sustained, controlled cooperative learning greatly enhances communication, cooperation, and responsibility, especially among kids with initially lower social skills, according to a large-scale study including 558 primary students (Hank & Huber, 2024). These results demonstrate that when students are expected to interact meaningfully with

their peers, structured peer communication environments can act as a catalyst for social development.

3.1 FIRO Interpretation: Inclusion

The need for inclusion stems from a self-awareness that seeks fulfillment by contributing to the group. Being a "relief" for advice, inquiries, and viewpoints is a common propensity. The concept of inclusion is related to "feeling included or not" (Saptamarsita et al., 2024).

3.2 FIRO Interpretation: Control

According to FIRO theory, control has to do with group decision-making, influence, and direction. Students can experience interpersonal agency through classroom activities that let them divide duties, negotiate positions, or make decisions together (Yadav, 2023). By presenting students as contributors with significant influence on interactional processes rather than just participants, these experiences improve students' communication skills.

3.3 FIRO Interpretation: Affection

Warmth, trust, and intimacy between people are all considered aspects of affection. According to research on peer counseling programs, when there is emotional safety, kids tend to talk more honestly with their peers since they are seen as encouraging, nonjudgmental listeners (Munif et al., 2025). FIRO theory says that trust and relationship warmth encourage more open and involved communication among students, even if attachment is less commonly emphasized in academic cooperative learning studies.

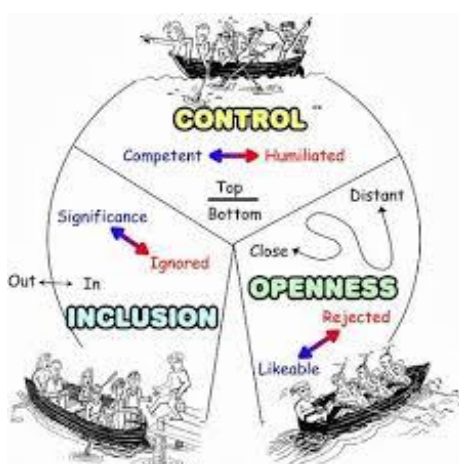
Tabel 1. Literature-review table (2021–2025)

Article (Year)	Objective/Focus	Methodology	Finding	Limitation/GAP
FIRO analysis as a study of interpersonal communication : Does GULALI program can strengthening character (Hikmah & Husnita, 2023)	To examine how a school-based program (GULALI) fulfills students' interpersonal needs (FIRO) via peer and teacher interactions	Qualitative descriptive study with program participants, teachers, and students	- Inclusion: Students feel more accepted in class through GULALI. - Control: Empowerment of students to share control and influence in certain activities. - Affection: Students receive attention and fair treatment, satisfying closeness/emotional needs	Not specific to <i>pure peer-to-peer</i> communication; includes teacher-led component. Also, sample may be limited in generalizability.

Article (Year)	Objective/Focus	Methodology	Finding	Limitation/GAP
Cultural Distance and Social Needs: The Dynamic (FIRO Theory) (Zhang et al., 2025)	To apply FIRO theory to understand social needs (inclusion, control, affection) of newly arrived students (e.g., immigrant students) in school	Quantitative survey study with new students, measuring FIRO needs and social integration	- Inclusion: New students' need to participate in class and peer groups. - Control: Desire to influence their learning environment and be directed. - Affection: Emotional bond and support with peers	Focus is not elementary school specifically; rather on "newly arrived" students (could be older), and not intervention of peer communication.
Developing educational communicative effectiveness of a peer relationship scale (Kalavasonlu & Akcamete, 2024)	To develop and validate a scale measuring communicative effectiveness in peer relationships	Scale development, survey with high school students (670 participants)	Although not explicitly using FIRO theory, the scale measures <i>communicative effectiveness</i> among peers, which relates to how well inclusion, control, and affection needs are met in peer interactions.	High school sample (not elementary), and not directly tied to FIRO theory.
Influence of Teachers' Grouping Strategies on Children's Peer Social Experiences in Early	To explore how teacher grouping strategies affect peer social experiences	Longitudinal observational study in early elementary classrooms (teacher reports, peer	Although not FIRO-theory based, findings relate to inclusion (how grouping affects belonging),	No direct theoretical linkage to FIRO; the role of students' interpersonal needs (inclusion,

Article (Year)	Objective/Focus	Methodology	Finding	Limitation/GAP
Elementary Classrooms (Kim et al., 2020)	(friendships, conflicts)	observations	control (how peer conflict / ability grouping may influence power dynamics), and affection (friendship development). Teachers' heterogeneous grouping predicted loss of friendship.	control, affection) is not explicitly measured.

3.4 Gambar



Gambar 1. FIRO THEORY

4 CONCLUSION

This review of the literature shows that peer communication is very successful in enhancing the social and interpersonal abilities of elementary school pupils, especially when learning frameworks are made to accommodate kids' interpersonal requirements. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that cooperative learning environments improve accountability, teamwork, and communication. These results can be better explained by FIRO theory as the satisfaction of demands for inclusion, control, and affection. Students interact with others more successfully and confidently when these demands are satisfied. Thus, FIRO provides educational practitioners with a useful foundation for creating classroom environments that promote both academic success and interpersonal growth.

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