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Building Elementary Students' Motivation through Socio-Emotional Competence in Differentiated Learning

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – Education plays a crucial role in shaping high-quality human resources, with curriculum adaptation being essential to meet the demands of an ever-changing world. One key element is differentiated instruction, which accommodates diverse student learning needs through differentiation in content, process, and product. However, its implementation faces challenges, particularly in integrating differentiated instruction with the development of students' social-emotional competencies. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of integrating differentiated instruction with social-emotional competencies in enhancing students' learning motivation.

Methodology – This study was conducted at SDN 5 Sumber using a qualitative descriptive approach through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis. The participants included the principal, teachers, and fourth-grade students. Data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

Findings – The study found that differentiation was more frequently applied to the learning process rather than content and product. Teachers utilized auditory, visual, and kinesthetic strategies, but content differentiation was limited. Social-emotional competencies were developed through group discussions, reflective sessions, and collaborative activities, leading to increased student engagement, independence, and emotional regulation. Evaluations used formative and summative assessments, with observation rubrics for assessing social-emotional competencies.

Contribution – This study contributes to the understanding that integrating differentiated instruction with social-emotional competency development can effectively enhance students' learning motivation. It also highlights the need for improved teacher training and resources to support content and product differentiation.

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INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in developing quality human resources, where the curriculum serves as a vital component in determining the direction of learning. An effective curriculum must be able to adapt to changes in time, students' needs, and global demands (Ningrum, 2022). Additionally, educational policies implemented by the government also contribute to curriculum development, making it more flexible, relevant, and oriented toward optimal learning outcomes (Evans, Salleh, & Abdul Basit, 2023; Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2020). Indonesia has implemented various educational policies aimed at improving learning quality, one of which is the Merdeka Curriculum, initiated by the Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Anwar Makarim (Usanto, 2022). This curriculum emphasizes a more flexible, adaptive, and student-centered learning approach. One of the key elements of the Merdeka Curriculum is the implementation of differentiated learning, which aims to accommodate the diverse learning needs of students through differentiation in content, process, and product (Karim, Solikhah, Saputri, & Prayitno, 2025; Rahmadayanti & Hartoyo, 2022). In the context of primary education, differentiated learning becomes highly relevant because students possess diverse characteristics and require appropriate approaches to maximize their potential (Fitriyana, Juhana, & Nirmala, 2024).

Although the Merdeka Curriculum has been widely implemented, the application of differentiated learning in various schools still faces challenges. Based on observations and interviews conducted at SDN 5 Sumber on March 5, 2024, it was found that many teachers have not fully understood the concept of differentiated learning, leading to its limited implementation in terms of content, while aspects of process and product remain suboptimal. Some teachers have yet to adopt this approach in their teaching. One of the main challenges encountered is the lack of understanding of how to integrate differentiated learning with the development of students' socio-emotional competence (Ramadansyah, 2021; Rocha, Borges, García-Perales, & Almeida, 2024). Additionally, the religious studies teacher at the school has attempted to implement engaging teaching methods, but they have not been entirely effective in increasing students' engagement and motivation. Consequently, many students feel bored, lack discipline in completing assignments, and experience a decline in learning motivation. This situation highlights the need for a more systematic approach to implementing differentiated learning that not only considers the diversity of students' academic needs but also the socio-emotional aspects that play a crucial role in their learning success (Triyana, 2022).

To address these issues, an innovative approach is needed to integrate differentiated learning with students' socio-emotional competence. Differentiated learning should not only focus on adapting materials, methods, and assessments but also on developing students' socio-emotional skills so that they can become more confident, collaborative, and highly motivated learners (Fitriyah & Bisri, 2023; Sabir, Wang, & Zou, 2024). This integration aligns with the Merdeka Belajar concept, which emphasizes the importance of allowing students the flexibility to determine their own learning goals and reflect on their learning outcomes (Haq & Wakidi, 2024; Supini, 2020). Socio-emotional competence includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Pino, Alvariñas-Villaverde, & Pino-Juste, 2021; Zuhro et al., 2023).

Students who cultivate these qualities will be more equipped to handle social and intellectual obstacles in their classroom. Teachers must also have sufficient training in order to use differentiated instruction in a way that supports the development of socioemotional competence. To ensure the effective application of this technique throughout all educational levels, support from parents, schools, and sustainable education policy

is crucial.

According to constructivist theory, which forms the basis of differentiated learning, students build their own knowledge via their experiences (Maryam, 2021; Wibowo, Wangid, & Firdaus, 2025). According to their needs, interests, and traits, instructors serve as facilitators in this setting, assisting students in finding purpose in their education. The socio-emotional development theory of Vygotsky, which stresses the importance of social contact in children's learning, is also consistent with this method (Thapa, Nganga, & Madrid Akpovo, 2022; Triyana, 2022). Socio-emotional competence and individualized learning may be used to help students improve their social skills, better control their emotions, and cultivate a positive attitude toward learning. This strategy has also been shown in earlier studies to improve critical thinking abilities, student engagement, and learning motivation (Amalia, Rasyad, & Gunawan, 2023). Avandra et al.'s study from 2023 also shows that socio-emotional learning helps children in elementary school become more motivated to learn and more confident and excited about their classes. Consequently, it is anticipated that combining the two strategies would provide the greatest advantages for the growth of students.

There are various ways in which this study is comparable to earlier studies. First, it aligns with the study by Amalia et al. (2023), which highlights differentiated learning as an innovation to support students with diverse needs. Second, it is related to the research by Avandra et al. (2023), which emphasizes the importance of socio-emotional learning in enhancing students' learning motivation. Both studies affirm that social and emotional aspects must be considered in education. Third, this research supports the findings of Pozas et al. (2021) regarding the impact of differentiated learning on students' well-being, social inclusion, and academic self-concept. Despite these similarities, significant differences exist. While this study looks at the integration of socio-emotional skills in differentiated learning and its effect on primary school children's learning motivation, the study by Amalia et al. (2023) concentrates on the overall idea of differentiated learning and its implementation issues. While this study integrates both ideas, Avandra et al.'s (2023) study examines the impact of socio-emotional learning on learning motivation without connecting it to differentiated learning. Additionally, Pozas et al.'s study from 2021 used a quantitative analysis at the secondary school level, while this study employs a qualitative method to examine how socio-emotional integration in differentiated learning affects learning motivation in elementary school students.

This research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of implementing differentiated learning integrated with socio-emotional competence in enhancing students' learning motivation. This research will specifically evaluate how well this strategy may raise student involvement, enable students to acquire socio-emotional skills, and provide answers to the difficulties of various learning requirements in elementary schools. This study is unusual in that it combines individualized learning with socio-emotional competency development to increase the learning motivation of primary school kids. Unlike earlier research stressing just one factor, this one integrates into a whole learning paradigm. Students' learning experiences and instructors' tactics in motivating their pupils are investigated using a qualitative descriptive technique. By providing specific guidelines for teachers in using more inclusive and successful teaching approaches, the results of this research both practically and intellectually help. Furthermore, this study may be a guide for legislators creating teacher preparation courses to enable the use of differentiated learning supporting the development of socio-emotional competency. Thus, this research has the potential to raise students' whole development, teaching quality, and their will to learn in a classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the phenomena of implementing differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competency in improving the learning motivation of fourth-grade students at SDN 5 Sumber, Kradenan District, Blora Regency. Based on post-positivist philosophy, the qualitative research technique was used to investigate the natural circumstances of the study topic, in which the researcher served as the main tool. Data collecting methods were triangulated; data analysis was inductive; and the study results underlined meaning rather than generalization (Sugiyono, 2019).

Along with all twelve fourth-graders, the study subjects included the administrator of the school, the homeroom teacher in fourth grade, the teacher in religious and character education, and the physical education (PE) teacher. Five fourth-graders, one fourth-grade teacher, one Religious and Character Education teacher, one Physical Education, Sports, and Health teacher, and the administrator of the school made up the main informants for this project.

Data collecting methods included documentation, interviews, and observations. With an eye on the use of individualized instruction combined with social-emotional competency, observations were performed utilizing a structured observation tool to investigate the fourth grade teaching and learning process. To probe their knowledge, experiences, and viewpoints on the study issue, in-depth interviews were done with the principal of the school, instructors, and students themselves. Documentation included gathering teacher and student records, school profile data, and pertinent portfolio documentation on the use of social-emotional competency and differentiated education. Comprising four stages—data gathering, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification—data analysis used Miles and Huberman's interactive paradigm (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

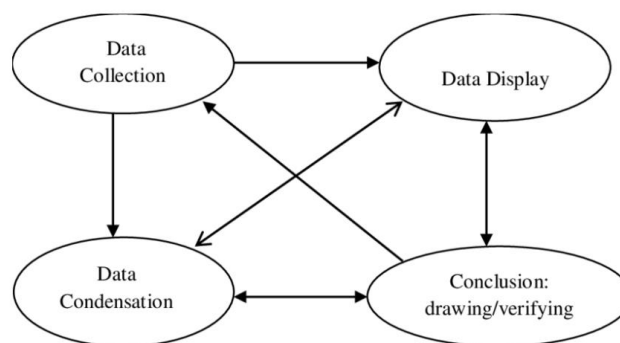


Figure 1. Data Analysis Model of Miles and Huberman
Source: (Miles et al., 2014)

The researcher obtained data during the stage known as data collecting by means of documentation, observations, and interviews. During the stage of data reduction, the researcher collected, chose, and concentrated on data pertinent to the study goals, therefore spotting developing trends and patterns. The preparation stage of the research process started with issue identification, establishing study goals, and formulation of the research proposal. Following the previously mentioned methods, the data collecting process then proceeded via observation, interviews, and documentation. Using the Miles and Huberman's model's steps, the gathered data were then examined. The whole study was carried out at SDN 5 Sumber from August to November 2024. This methodical research approach and procedure should help to provide a thorough knowledge of the use of differentiated instruction combined with social-emotional competency and its effects on the learning motivation of fourth-grade children at SDN 5 Sumber.

FINDINGS

Implementation of Differentiated Learning Integration with Social-Emotional Competencies

This research assesses how well diversified learning combined with social-emotional competences improves fourth-grade students' learning motivation at SDN 5 Sumber. Data were gathered from the classroom teacher, PE teacher, religious education teacher, students, and school administrator by means of a qualitative method including observations and interviews. Beginning on August 3, 2024, the research ran observations on August 6, 7, and 20 followed by interviews on September 2–4, with an eye on planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Planning Stage

Based on observations and interviews, SDN 5 Sumber's fourth-grade teacher has developed differentiated instruction by include social-emotional abilities. The planning process includes mapping students' learning needs based on visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning styles, which are incorporated into the teaching module with differentiation in content, process, and product. However, it was found that the differentiation of content and product has not been fully adapted to individual needs. This is supported by the teaching module documents:

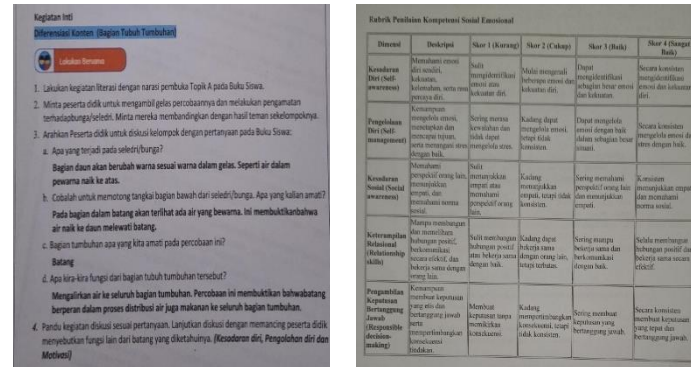


Figure 2. Teaching Module Document for Grade IV Teachers

The PE teacher in this study has made efforts to integrate social-emotional competencies into lesson planning. This is evident from the lesson planning documents, which outline strategies for developing students' social skills through various activities. The teacher intentionally designs activities that encourage student interaction, such as teamwork in group games, reflective discussions after sports activities, and role-playing in simulated social situations. Additionally, the lesson planning documents indicate that the teacher adapts instructional approaches based on students' physical and emotional characteristics by providing varied tasks that allow them to learn according to their abilities. However, limitations were found in the implementation of content and product differentiation, as the materials delivered tend to be uniform, and the learning outcomes show little variation. This suggests that process differentiation is more dominantly applied compared to content and product differentiation.

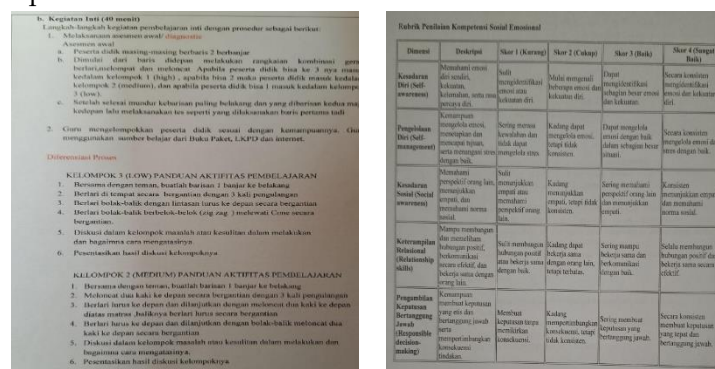


Figure 3. Physical Education Teacher's Teaching Module

The results of interviews and observations indicate that PABP teachers have not yet implemented differentiation in lesson planning. However, they have made efforts to integrate social-emotional competencies through activities such as communal prayers and group discussions. A deeper understanding of differentiation, particularly in terms of content and product, needs to be optimized to ensure more effective learning that meets students' needs, as supported by the teaching module documents:

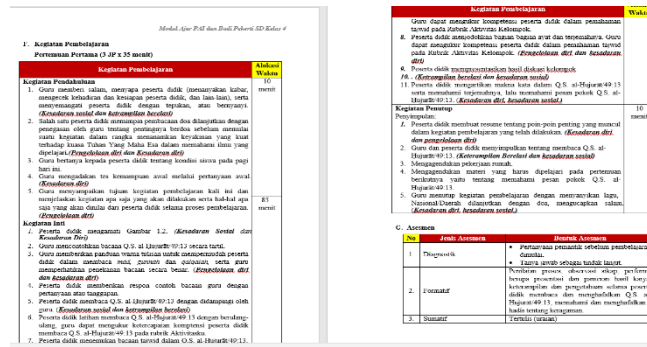


Figure 4. RECD Teacher's Teaching Module

Implementation Stage

The results of interviews and observations indicate that the implementation of differentiated learning in Grade IV at SDN 5 Sumber demonstrates the application of process differentiation tailored to students' learning styles. Auditory learners listen to verbal explanations, visual learners observe videos and images, while kinesthetic learners manipulate tangible materials such as plant roots and stems. Although the learning process aligns with the plan, content differentiation still provides uniform material, and the product is limited to lesson plan presentations without significant variation. Social-emotional competencies are integrated through group discussions, ice-breaking activities, and positive reinforcement, which encourage collaboration, self-awareness, and emotional regulation.

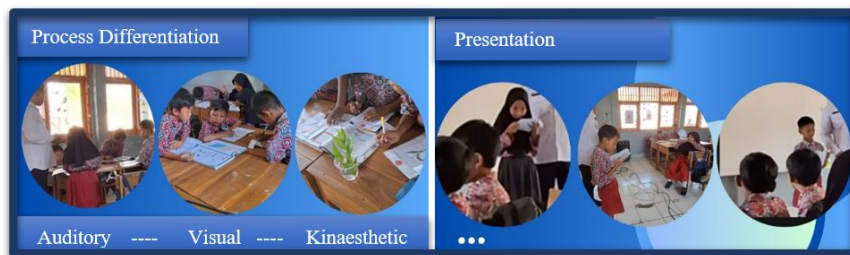


Figure 5. Grade IV Teacher's Learning Documentation

In PE learning, the teacher implements process differentiation by adjusting physical activities based on students' skill levels (low, medium, high), such as variations in running tracks and jumping exercises. However, content and product differentiation have not yet been applied. The teacher uses group activities to support students' social awareness and incorporates ice-breaking activities when students lose focus during the lesson.



Figure 6. Documentation of PE and RECD Teacher's Learning Activities

According to the findings of this research, instructors mostly use group discussions as a means of increasing student involvement in the instruction of Religious Education and Character Development (RECD). Still, the learning process is consistent and there is no evident variation in terms of content, method, or tool. By means of diverse activities like collective prayers, introspection, and Tajweed instruction—which assist train pupils' attentiveness and social awareness—teachers have effectively included social-emotional abilities

into the learning process. Still, the study findings emphasize the necessity of further content and product diversification development in order to maximize learning and more adequately satisfy student demands.

Practically, classroom instructors and physical education (PE) teachers use process differentiation more often as students' learning styles are more readily seen and supported using basic tactics like the use of visual and aural media or kinesthetic exercises. Content and product uniqueness, on the other hand, nevertheless need more complicated modifications involving the creation of additional materials and variances in job forms, therefore they are not always used as ideal. Although they have not particularly included differences in content or evaluation strategies, PE instructors sometimes modify physical exercises based on student ability. This is mostly because of limited resources and the absence of sensible rules for applying topic distinction in activity-based learning. Furthermore observed is that integrating social-emotional abilities into instruction is somewhat simpler than distinguishing materials and approaches. Teachers now include group talks, reflections, and cooperative projects among their tools for helping their pupils grow in their social and emotional capacity. Therefore, even if content and product still provide difficulties for differentiation, attempts to improve social-emotional competences have grown to be a necessary component of the instructional strategies followed by teachers.

Evaluation Stage

Formative and summative evaluations are used in the Grade IV evaluation stage at SDN 5 Sumber, which is based on the findings of observations, interviews, and document analysis. In addition to evaluating social-emotional abilities using a rubric that includes indications like collaboration, emotion control, and accountability, the Grade IV teacher assesses learning outcomes via group discussions, written examinations, and an analysis of students' replies in the lesson plan. The two main methods used to evaluate learning are formative and summative assessments. Using techniques like group discussions, written examinations, and response analysis in the lesson plan, formative assessment enables instructors to continually monitor the learning process and offer instant feedback (Muhammad et al., 2024). According to Annette (2022), summative assessments are used to evaluate students' final performance at the end of a learning session. The findings of observations and interviews are supported by documents:

No.	Nama Siswa	Keterampilan Diri	Pengendalian Diri	Keterampilan Sosial	Respon Emosi	Pengendalian Emosi	Tingkat Skor	Keterangan
1	Siswa 1	3	4	3	4	3	16	Baik
2	Siswa 2	3	3	3	3	3	12	Cukup
3	Siswa 3	4	4	4	4	4	20	Sangat Baik
4	Siswa 4	3	3	4	3	3	16	Baik
5	Siswa 5	3	4	4	3	3	16	Baik
6	Siswa 6	3	3	3	4	3	16	Baik
7	Siswa 7	4	4	4	3	4	19	Sangat Baik
8	Siswa 8	3	3	3	3	3	12	Baik
9	Siswa 9	4	3	3	3	4	17	Baik
10	Siswa 10	3	4	3	4	3	17	Baik
11	Siswa 11	4	3	4	4	4	19	Baik
12	Siswa 12	2	3	3	3	3	14	Cukup

Penjelasan Rubrik:

Keterampilan Diri, Pengendalian Diri, Keterampilan Sosial, Respon Emosi, Pengendalian Emosi, dan Tingkat Skor adalah penilaian yang diberikan.

Keterangan: Keterangan diberikan berdasarkan nilai skor.

3: Baik
 12: Cukup
 16: Baik
 20: Sangat Baik

Tabel ini dibuat oleh guru dan digunakan sebagai acuan penilaian.

Figure 7. Grade IV Teacher's Assessment Document

A key component of elementary education is the growth of kids' social-emotional competencies—cooperation, emotional control, and responsibility. Students' actions under observation using rubrics based on certain criteria helps one to evaluate these abilities. Another useful approach in enabling students to identify their strengths and shortcomings is joint reflection, therefore boosting character-based learning. Real assessment is utilised in Physical Education (PE) courses to measure students social-emotional competences and physical abilities. Direct observation evaluates the sportsmen' methods and fluency, therefore improving the relevance of activity-based learning. Furthermore assessed using observation sheets and rubrics developed by instructors are social-emotional elements like self-regulation and collaboration. This evaluation guarantees that children acquire a whole competency that balances social and physical components by supporting the integration of interpersonal values in sports, thereby assuring that they grow with physical ability.

Lembar Penilaian Kompetensi Sosial Emosional

No	Nama Siswa	Kemampuan Diri	Pengendalian Diri	Kemampuan Sosial	Kemampuan Emosional	Pengendalian Emosional	Total Skor	Keterangan
1.	Siswa 1	2	3	3	4	3	15	Baik
2.	Siswa 2	3	3	4	3	3	16	Baik
3.	Siswa 3	4	3	3	4	4	18	Baik
4.	Siswa 4	3	3	4	3	3	16	Baik
5.	Siswa 5	3	4	3	3	3	16	Baik
6.	Siswa 6	3	3	3	4	3	16	Baik
7.	Siswa 7	4	4	4	4	4	20	Sangat Baik
8.	Siswa 8	3	3	3	3	3	15	Baik
9.	Siswa 9	4	3	3	3	3	16	Baik
10.	Siswa 10	3	4	3	4	3	17	Baik
11.	Siswa 11	4	3	4	4	4	19	Baik
12.	Siswa 12	4	4	3	3	3	17	Baik

Lembar Penilaian Kompetensi Sosial Emosional

No	Nama Siswa	Kemampuan Diri	Pengendalian Diri	Kemampuan Sosial	Kemampuan Emosional	Pengendalian Emosional	Total Skor	Keterangan
1.	Siswa 1	2	4	3	4	3	16	Baik
2.	Siswa 2	3	3	3	3	3	15	Baik
3.	Siswa 3	4	4	4	4	4	20	Sangat Baik
4.	Siswa 4	3	3	4	3	3	16	Baik
5.	Siswa 5	3	4	3	3	3	16	Baik
6.	Siswa 6	3	4	3	3	3	16	Baik
7.	Siswa 7	4	3	3	3	3	16	Baik
8.	Siswa 8	3	3	3	3	3	15	Baik
9.	Siswa 9	4	3	3	3	3	16	Baik
10.	Siswa 10	3	4	3	4	3	17	Baik
11.	Siswa 11	4	3	4	4	4	19	Baik
12.	Siswa 12	2	3	3	3	3	14	Cukup

PENGALAMAN KEMAMPUAN

No	Nama	Kategori	Aspek yang Ditilai				Nilai
			Kemampuan Diri	Kemampuan Sosial	Kemampuan Emosional	Pengendalian Emosional	
1.	Kelompok 1	5	4	4	4	20	83
2.	Kelompok 2	4	4	4	4	16	67
3.	Kelompok 3	4	4	4	4	16	67

Penjelasan Kolom:

Kemampuan Diri, Pengendalian Diri, Kemampuan Sosial, Kemampuan Emosional, Pengendalian Emosional. Ditil dengan 5: Sangat Baik, 4: Baik, 3: Cukup, 2: Kurang, 1: Buruk.

Penjelasan Kolom:

Kemampuan Diri, Pengendalian Diri, Kemampuan Sosial, Kemampuan Emosional, Pengendalian Emosional. Ditil dengan 5: Sangat Baik, 4: Baik, 3: Cukup, 2: Kurang, 1: Buruk.

Penjelasan Kolom:

Kategori: Sangat Baik (80-100%), Baik (60-79%), Cukup (40-59%), Kurang (20-39%), Buruk (0-19%).

Penjelasan Kolom:

Kategori: Sangat Baik (80-100%), Baik (60-79%), Cukup (40-59%), Kurang (20-39%), Buruk (0-19%).

Penjelasan Kolom:

Kategori: Sangat Baik (80-100%), Baik (60-79%), Cukup (40-59%), Kurang (20-39%), Buruk (0-19%).

Figure 8. PE and RECD Teacher's Assessment Document

Through group activities and presentations, the Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) teacher gauges students' knowledge; the teacher also analyses social-emotional elements via observation and introspection. Still, it was discovered that the three subjects' assessments had not yet included a range of items fit for their learning styles and degree of expertise. The evaluation results emphasize the need to strengthen product differentiation to enhance learning effectiveness and student engagement. In RECB, assessment based on group activities and presentations supports collaborative learning.

Increase in Students' Learning Motivation

Based on interviews, observations, and documents, there has been an increase in students' learning motivation through differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies in the classrooms of general teachers, Physical Education (PE) teachers, and Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) teachers. In the fourth-grade classroom, 75% of students demonstrated interest in the subject matter and perseverance, while 83% showed independence in learning. The highest result was observed in the aspect of emotional management, reaching 92%, due to a group work-based approach, positive reinforcement, and reflective discussions. However, some students were still less enthusiastic and tended to rely on teacher assistance, especially when the material was considered difficult or uninteresting.

Table 1. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation in the Fourth-Grade Classroom

No	Indicator	Students Achieved	%	Students Not Achieved	%
1.	Interest in Material	9	75 %	3	25 %
2.	Perseverance	9	75 %	3	25 %
3.	Independence	10	83 %	2	17 %
4.	Emotional Management	11	92 %	1	8 %

In Physical Education (PE) learning, students' motivation also increased, with 83% demonstrating interest and independence, and 75% showing good perseverance. A total of 92% of students successfully managed their emotions during locomotor movement lessons. The PE teacher implemented process differentiation by grouping students based on skill levels, although the content and product remained uniform. Some lower-ability students required additional support to improve independence and perseverance.

Table 2. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation in PE Learning

No	Indicator	Students Achieved	%	Students Not Achieved	%
1.	Interest in Material	10	83 %	2	17 %
2.	Perseverance	9	75 %	3	25 %
3.	Independence	10	83 %	2	17 %
4.	Emotional Management	11	92 %	1	8 %

In Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) learning, 67% of students exhibited interest and perseverance, while 75% were independent in their learning. Students' emotional management showed excellent results, with 92% able to control their emotions during lessons. However, uniformity in content, process, and product posed challenges in accommodating diverse learning needs. The teacher utilized group discussions and reflections to develop social-emotional competencies, but more specific differentiation was needed.

Table 3. Summary of Students' Learning Motivation in RECD Learning

No	Indicator	Students Achieved	%	Students Not Achieved	%
1.	Interest in Material	8	67 %	4	33 %
2.	Perseverance	8	67 %	4	33 %
3.	Independence	9	75 %	3	25 %
4.	Emotional Management	11	92 %	1	8 %

Overall, differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies has successfully increased students' learning motivation, but optimization in content and product differentiation is necessary for better outcomes. This integrated approach has significantly contributed to students' motivation. In the fourth-grade classroom, 75% of students showed interest and perseverance, 83% were independent learners, and 92% effectively managed their emotions. Similar results were observed in Physical Education (PE) and Religious Education and Character Development (RECD) learning, with consistently high emotional management levels at 92%. Nevertheless, content and product differentiation remain suboptimal, causing some students to struggle in understanding the material or continue relying on teacher assistance.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of differentiated learning integrated with social-emotional competencies has proven effective in increasing students' learning motivation at SDN 5 Sumber, particularly in terms of engagement, independence, and emotional management. Process differentiation, which has been used more effectively than content and product diversification, enables students to learn in accordance with their requirements and learning styles. The results of the study show that when students are given the chance to learn using a variety of techniques, including kinaesthetic exercises, visual and auditory media, and group projects that promote social contact, they are more involved in the process. This is consistent with the idea of Vygotsky, which highlights the value of social contact in fostering comprehension and desire for learning (Erbil, 2020; Saleem, Kausar, & Deebea, 2021). Furthermore, this technique may boost students' confidence since they feel more appreciated and encouraged in a learning process that suits their requirements, according to Tomlinson's theory of differentiated learning (Mahmud, Idul, & Sarmadani, 2024; Walkington & Bernacki, 2020).

Including social-emotional capabilities into the curriculum helps pupils improve their interpersonal abilities as well. Along with group prayers in Religious Education, activities like group talks, reflections, and role-playing in Physical Education (PE) classes have helped students grow in self-awareness, emotional control, and teamwork. A good learning environment and supporting students' psychological well-being depend on the development of social-emotional competencies, according to CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020), which finally helps to boost learning motivation. This research does, however, also highlight difficulties applying distinction, especially in terms of content and product attributes. Although process differentiation has been well-executed, learning materials and task forms remain quite homogeneous, hence not entirely meeting the various learning requirements of students. Creating more customised and adaptable learning resources, including interest-based projects or adaptive learning modules, might help. Moreover, a calculated move in enhancing the efficacy of diversified learning in primary schools might be teacher training on creating and using more thorough differentiation techniques. Particularly at the primary level, these results support other research that underline how various and social-emotional learning approaches could improve student involvement and academic performance (Chang & Hall, 2022; Massaad & Chaker, 2020). Thus, a key first step in making sure every student can realise their full learning potential is optimising content and product differentiation.

This study shows that, especially in terms of engagement, independence, and emotional management, the use of varied learning combined with social-emotional competence is efficient in increasing students' learning motivation. This study further demonstrates its efficacy in real-world use by utilizing observation and interview data, in line with research by Amalia et al. (2023), which emphasizes varied learning as an innovation that is appropriate to student diversity. Avandra et al. (2023) continue to highlight the need for

social-emotional learning in increasing learning motivation, in line with the results of this study, which includes social-emotional elements to help develop students' interpersonal skills. Despite the difficulties in more general application, Pozas et al.'s (2021) study supports this conclusion by showing that instructional differentiation improves students' well-being, social inclusion, and academic self-concept. This study supports previous results by offering empirical data on the application of social-emotional competence and differentiated learning at the elementary level, highlighting that although process differentiation has been implemented effectively, content and product differentiation still need optimization to meet students' specific needs better.

These results imply that, especially in engagement, independence, and emotional management, using varied learning combined with social-emotional competencies could represent a successful strategy to increase students' learning motivation. To be more successful, however, content and product uniqueness must be improved to more closely fit students' particular requirements. These results provide teachers' designers and implementers new perspectives from which to stress training and mentorship in developing and executing thorough differentiation techniques. Additionally, schools need to provide resources that support the development of flexible teaching materials and more diverse evaluation methods to accommodate different learning styles and competency levels. Therefore, optimizing differentiated learning implementation will not only enhance learning motivation but also contribute to students' academic achievement and psychological well-being as a whole.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies effectively enhances the learning motivation of fourth-grade students in elementary school. The research confirms that applying differentiation in the learning process, particularly through approaches tailored to students' learning styles, can increase engagement, independence, and emotional regulation. These findings affirm that integrating social-emotional competencies, such as cooperation, self-awareness, and emotional management, plays a crucial role in creating a more inclusive learning environment that supports students' psychological development. However, this study also reveals that differentiation in terms of content and product remains suboptimal, as learning materials and assigned tasks tend to be uniform and do not fully accommodate the diverse learning needs of students.

The main challenges in this study include limited resources for developing more flexible learning materials and a lack of teacher training in implementing differentiation strategies more effectively. Additionally, the small sample size, which is limited to a single school, poses a constraint on the generalizability of the findings to a broader context. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the sample scope, including different grade levels and schools with varying socioeconomic conditions, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of differentiated instruction integrated with social-emotional competencies. Furthermore, the development of technology-based learning models that support differentiated content and product implementation should be explored further to optimize adaptive and individualized learning strategies. Thus, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to improving the quality of elementary school education and serve as a foundation for more inclusive and responsive educational policies that address students' diverse needs.

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