
Relationship Between Critical Thinking and Social Skills of Grade 4 Students in Lahore

Mamoon Naz¹, Dr. Jahan Ara Shams²

¹ MPhil Scholar, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

² Assistant Professor, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan,

Email: jahanara.shams@aiou.edu.pk

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Abstract

The current research aims to examine how critical thinking relates to social skills in Grade 4 pupils in Lahore. As the skill of analyzing, evaluating and reason, critical thinking is viewed as an important cognitive skill in the modern educational setting. Social skills, comprising of communication, cooperation, and empathy are also significant towards positive peer interaction and academic achievement. The study was based on a quantitative survey design that was used to collect data on 120 Grade 4 students in three schools in Lahore. Standardized questionnaires of critical thinking dispositions and social skills were provided. Results show that there is a positive relationship ($r = 0.879$, $p < 0.01$) between social skills and critical thinking, which implies that students who possess better social skills also exhibit higher critical thinking. These findings highlight the importance of combining classroom-based interventions that support analytical as well as interpersonal skills in young students.

Introduction

Primary school is very critical in developing intellectual, emotional and social aspects of children. In a more knowledge-driven world, the current generation of students is supposed not only to master the academic material but also to acquire skills in critical thinking and social skills. Critical thinking refers to the capacity to analyze, evaluate, and think logically and allows students to cope with adversities, make sound decisions, and solve problems. Social skills, on the other hand, comprising of communication, cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution, play a crucial role in nurturing good relationships and productive working relations among peers. A combination of social skills and critical thinking is important to the academic performance and personal development of students. Whereas critical thinking improves cognitive skills like decision-making and problem-solving, social skills help to improve communication and interaction in the group setting, establishing a favorable learning environment. Studies indicate that these skills are essential in general development, but there is a lack of empirical research specifically on the connection between critical thinking and social skills in primary school in Pakistan (especially in Lahore). This research aims to fill this gap by exploring the association between critical thinking and social skills among Grade 4 students in Lahore. Through the appreciation of the interplay between these two areas, this study expects to deliver information that may aid educators to create a combination approach in teaching that would not only improve the cognitive but also interpersonal capabilities of young learners. The results of this research will help to enhance the quality of school education on the primary level and provide a basis to the further studies on the developmental peculiarities of children school education in Pakistan.

Literature Review

According to Ennis (2011), critical thinking is reasonable and reflective thinking which seeks to determine what to believe or do. In the case of young learners, it manifests itself through the question-asking, alternative-comparing, and reasoned choice. Gresham (2002) emphasized such social skills as cooperation, empathy, and communication as a key to peer interactions and academic adaptation. Likewise, Shams, Iqbal, and Hijazi (2023) highlighted how social interaction can be used in building critical thinking skills in Pakistani schools. Both Kuhn (2019) and Facione (2020) discovered that the classroom conditions that encourage group learning and inquiry both enhance critical thinking and social interaction. Ahmed (2018) and Fatima (2020) documented through South Asian settings that collaborative practices have profound benefits in terms of reasoning and interpersonal competence. Nevertheless, there is a lack of empirical research to investigate this connection in Pakistan especially at the primary level (Rashid et al., 2020). Shams and Iqbal (2023) pointed out the growing importance of critical thinking in Pakistan's educational system and its impact on students' social abilities.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a quantitative correlational design to investigate the relationship between critical thinking and social skills.

Sample

The sample consisted of 120 Grade 4 students (ages 9–10) drawn from three private and public schools in Lahore. Stratified random sampling was applied to ensure representation of both genders and different socio-economic groups.

Data Collection

Two instruments were used:

1. Critical Thinking Disposition Scale for Children (adapted for Grade 4).
2. Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) for primary students.

Both were translated into Urdu for better comprehension. Students completed the questionnaires during school hours in about 30 minutes.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean scores) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation). Factors of both critical thinking and social skills were analyzed separately before determining the relationship between the two.

Data Analysis of Factors of Critical Thinking

Table 1: Analysis of Critical Thinking Factors

Factor	Mean	Interpretation
Confidence	3.31	Students show high self-confidence in problem-solving, particularly in inference-making.
Eagerness	3.20	Students are generally eager to solve problems but show less persistence when faced with difficulties.
Skepticism	3.13	Students are curious but moderately skeptical, particularly when questioning fixed ideas.
Total Mean	3.21	Overall, critical thinking abilities are positive and above average.

Table 2: Analysis of Social Skills Factors

Factor	Mean	Interpretation
Take Initiative	3.38	Students show a proactive approach in initiating conversations and social interactions.
Emotional Regulation	3.32	Students exhibit good emotional control in social situations, responding appropriately to body language.
Self-Esteem	3.31	Students generally have high self-esteem, though they could improve in encouraging others.
Total Mean	3.34	Social skills are strong and above average for Grade 4 students.

Data Analysis of Factors of Social Skills**Table 3: Pearson's Correlation Between Critical Thinking and Social Skills**

Variable	Critical Thinking (CT)	Social Skills (SS)
Critical Thinking (CT)	1.000	0.879**
Social Skills (SS)	0.879**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
N = 100	100	100

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Interpretation: The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.879$) indicates a strong positive relationship between critical thinking and social skills. Students with higher social skills also demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking.

Discussion

The results of this research are very important as they help to understand the correlation between critical thinking and social skills of Grade 4 students in Lahore. The correlation was high ($r = 0.879$, $p < 0.01$) with the outcome that students who succeed in the social skills also exhibit a high level of critical thinking. This aligns with other researchers who proposed in the past that classroom settings that embrace group learning and problem-solving in groups would help develop both cognitive and social skills (Kuhn, 2019; Facione, 2020). The findings suggest that early education that promotes social skills like communication, empathy, and collaboration can play an important role in improving the critical thinking skills of students. Another interesting finding of the study was that students believed they could resolve their problems with complex problems independently most of the time as indicated by the higher mean in the confidence factor of critical thinking. This may be a sign that highly-socially engaged students may face a challenge with increased confidence. Likewise, emotional regulation, which is an important element of social skills, was also a strong area among the students, which implies that emotional maturity can also enable students to make better decisions and solve problems. Nevertheless, the research also indicated the areas to which students were less engaged which included the factor of Eagerness to think critically where persistence in seeking solutions was not as strong. This indicates that there are additional interventions that should be more specifically focused in assisting the students in building perseverance and curiosity in both their academic and social pursuits.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted the interrelatedness between critical thinking and social skills in children. It indicates that the development of the two competencies in primary school education can be holistic when improved at the same time. Educational planners and teachers ought to strive to establish conditions that help in the growth of both analytical and interpersonal skills. Combining group-based learning techniques and tasks that promote compassion and collaboration, teachers can help their students develop both cognitively and socially, providing a strong foundation towards their academic and personal success in the future. This study research findings support the need to conduct more studies in the field of educational interventions that can treat critical thinking and social skills at the same time. The sample size could be extended and various geographical areas could be involved to provide more insight into the development of these skills within various cultural and educational contexts.

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