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Implications of Developmental Psychology for Elementary School Learning: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implications of developmental psychology on the learning process in elementary schools through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. Developmental psychology plays an important role in helping teachers understand students' characteristics according to their stages of cognitive, social-emotional, motivational, and self-regulation development in elementary education. However, in practice, the learning process still tends to focus primarily on academic achievement, while students' psychological development aspects have not been fully considered in classroom instruction. This study employed the Systematic Literature Review method using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) stages. Articles were collected from Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ERIC databases with publication years ranging from 2020 to 2026. Based on the article selection process, 18 relevant articles were included in this study. The findings indicate that cognitive development, social-emotional development, learning motivation, and self-regulation significantly influence students' learning engagement, thinking skills, social interaction, and learning effectiveness in elementary schools. Furthermore, learning processes that are adjusted to students' developmental stages can create more effective, meaningful, and student-centered learning experiences. Therefore, understanding developmental psychology is an important foundation for teachers in designing learning strategies that are appropriate to the developmental characteristics of elementary school students.

Keywords: Developmental Psychology, Elementary School Learning, Cognitive Development, Social-Emotional Development, Systematic Literature Review.

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Introduction

Elementary education serves as an important foundation in shaping students' intellectual, social, emotional, and character development. At the elementary school level, children are in a developmental phase that greatly determines their learning success in subsequent stages of education. Therefore, the learning process in elementary schools should not only focus on academic achievement but also pay attention to students' developmental characteristics. In this context, developmental psychology plays an essential role in helping teachers understand changes in children's cognitive abilities, emotions, social skills, and behavior during the learning process. Understanding developmental psychology enables teachers to adjust learning strategies according to students' developmental stages, making learning more effective and meaningful (Desnita et al., 2025).

Attention to children's psychological development has become increasingly important in the era of 21st-century education, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on the learning process. UNESCO reports explained that many students experienced learning loss,

decreased learning motivation, and obstacles in socio-emotional development due to changes in learning systems during the pandemic. In addition, a UNICEF report in 2021 showed that one in seven children aged 10 to 19 years experienced mental and emotional health problems that affected their well-being and learning process. These conditions indicate that successful learning is influenced not only by academic ability but also by students' psychological readiness. In Indonesia, the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum has also begun to emphasize the importance of student-centered learning that is aligned with children's developmental stages.

Despite its importance, the implementation of developmentally appropriate learning still faces various challenges. The learning process in elementary schools tends to focus more on academic achievement and the completion of curriculum targets. As a result, aspects of socio-emotional development, learning motivation, and students' psychological characteristics often do not receive primary attention in the learning process. This condition may lead to low student engagement in learning, difficulties in emotional regulation, and the emergence of various negative social behaviors in the school environment. Research on emotional literacy among elementary school students shows that students' emotional management and social interaction skills still require attention and reinforcement in the learning process (Apriliya & Nailiah, 2025).

Socio-emotional problems among elementary school students can also be observed in the increasing cases of violence and bullying in educational environments. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission indicate that bullying cases among school-aged children continue to occur every year and remain one of the most common problems found in educational settings. This condition suggests that students' socio-emotional development has not been fully facilitated through the school learning process. Research on the implementation of social emotional learning explains that learning which pays attention to socio-emotional development can help reduce bullying behavior, increase empathy, and improve social interactions among elementary school students. Therefore, learning in elementary schools should be designed not only to improve academic abilities but also to support students' psychological development comprehensively.

Various previous studies have discussed the relationship between developmental psychology and the learning process in elementary schools. Research on socio-emotional development shows that the ability to manage emotions and social skills is related to learning motivation, collaboration skills, and student engagement in learning. Elementary school students' cognitive development influences learning readiness, logical thinking abilities, and problem-solving skills. Research related to the implementation of the CASEL framework also explains that learning that considers socio-emotional development helps teachers create learning experiences that are more adaptive to children's developmental characteristics (Zakiyyah, 2026). These findings indicate that developmental psychology has a close relationship with the success of the learning process in elementary schools.

Although many studies on developmental psychology in elementary education have been conducted, most previous studies have discussed specific developmental aspects separately, such as socio-emotional development, cognitive development, or learning motivation alone. Previous studies have also predominantly used empirical approaches in specific learning contexts, resulting in findings that remain fragmented and have not yet provided a comprehensive overview of the implications of developmental psychology for elementary school learning as a whole. In addition, studies integrating findings related to cognitive development, socio-emotional development, learning motivation, and self-regulation within a systematic review framework are still limited. Therefore, research that synthesizes various findings is needed to obtain a deeper understanding of the relationship between developmental psychology and elementary school learning, as well as its implications for learning strategies that are aligned with students' developmental characteristics.

Based on these issues, this study aims to analyze the implications of children's developmental psychology for the learning process in elementary schools through the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution in the form of a synthesis of knowledge regarding the relationship between children's psychological development and the learning

process in elementary schools. In addition, this study is also expected to provide practical benefits for teachers, schools, and educational practitioners in designing learning processes that are appropriate to students' developmental stages, thereby making learning more effective, meaningful, and supportive of students' optimal development.

Methods

This study employed the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. A Systematic Literature Review is a research method conducted by systematically identifying, reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting various relevant research findings to answer specific research questions. This method is used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of a research topic based on previously published studies.

The SLR method was chosen because it provides a comprehensive overview of the implications of developmental psychology for the learning process in elementary schools based on findings from previous studies. In addition, this method enables researchers to identify research patterns, compare findings from earlier studies, and discover research gaps that still require further investigation.

The article search process was conducted through several open-access scientific databases and literature sources, namely Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ERIC. The articles used in this study were scientific articles published between 2020 and 2026. The search process employed several keywords, including "developmental psychology of elementary school children," "cognitive development of elementary school students," "social emotional learning in elementary school," "self-regulated learning among elementary students," "learning motivation of elementary school students," and "developmental psychology in elementary education."

The selected articles were determined based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published between 2020 and 2026, (2) articles discussing developmental psychology of elementary school children, (3) articles related to the learning process in elementary schools, (4) articles published in scientific journals, and (5) articles available in full-text and open-access formats. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included articles that were irrelevant to the research topic, duplicate articles, and articles that were not available in full-text format.

The article selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. After the selection process was completed, 18 articles were selected as the primary sources for this study.

The data analysis technique used in this study was descriptive qualitative synthesis. The selected articles were analyzed based on research focus, research methods, research findings, and the implications of developmental psychology for elementary school learning. Furthermore, the findings were grouped into several main themes to obtain a more comprehensive understanding.

Results and Discussions

1. Results

The results of this study consist of an analysis and synthesis of several articles relevant to the implications of developmental psychology for elementary school learning that were collected and reviewed. Based on the research process conducted by the researchers, a total of 18 articles were identified as relevant to the topic of this study.

Table 1.
Summary of Previous Studies on the Implications of Developmental Psychology for Elementary School Learning

No.	Author & Year	Article Title	Research Focus	Method	Main Findings
1	Bala et al. (2020)	The Analysis of Self-Regulated Learning in Elementary Schools in Rural Areas of Indonesia	Self-regulation of elementary school students	Quantitative descriptive	Self-regulation supports independent learning among elementary school students
2	Wangid & Purwanti (2020)	Implementation of Group Activities to Solve Academic Burnout among Elementary School Students	Socio-emotional development of elementary school students	Experimental	Group activities help reduce students' academic burnout
3	Fauziah & Fitria (2020)	Increasing Higher-Order Thinking Skills of Elementary School Students through Problem-Based Learning	Cognitive development and HOTS	Experimental	Problem-Based Learning improves students' higher-order thinking skills
4	Maryani et al. (2020)	Metacognition and Integrated Project-Based Learning in Elementary Schools	Metacognitive development of elementary school students	Project-Based Learning	Project-Based Learning supports students' metacognitive development
5	Evasufi & Fajari, (2020)	Improving Elementary School Students' Critical Thinking Skills through Three Different Learning Media Viewed from Learning Styles	Learning styles and learning development	Experimental	Appropriate learning media improve students' critical thinking skills
6	Amelia et al. (2020)	Neuroscience Studies in the Development of Elementary Education Science	Neuroscience and child development	Literature review	A neuroscience approach helps understand children's developmental characteristics

7	Saleh et al. (2020)	Improving Science Learning Activities and Outcomes by Using the Problem-Based Learning Model in Elementary School	Science learning activities and outcomes	Problem-Based Learning	PBL improves students' learning activities and outcomes
8	Syamsudin (2020)	Problem-Based Learning in Developing Critical Thinking Skills and Social Skills	Social skills and critical thinking	Experimental study	Problem-based learning supports social development and critical thinking skills
9	Mulyawati & Windiyani (2020)	The Effects of Using Snake and Ladder Media toward Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes	Motivation and learning outcomes	Experimental	Educational game media increase students' motivation and learning outcomes
10	Yasa et al. (2020)	Development of Pansirbongpas Learning Media for Fraction Operations in Grade IV Elementary School	Mathematics learning media	Research and Development	Concrete media help students' understanding according to their cognitive development stage
11	Lee et al (2023)	Domain-Specific Self-Regulated Learning Interventions for Elementary School Students	Self-regulated learning	Experimental	SRL interventions improve students' independent learning strategies and academic performance
12	Ruig et al. (2023)	Stimulating Elementary School Students' Self-Regulated	Self-regulation and social interaction	Narrative review	High-quality social relationships support the development of

		Learning Through High-Quality Interactions and Relationships: A Narrative Review			self-regulated learning
13	Torrington et al. (2023)	What Self-Regulation Strategies Do Elementary Students Utilize While Learning Online?	Self-regulation strategies in online learning	Exploratory study	Elementary students use various self-regulation strategies in digital learning
14	Khoirunikmah et al. (2022)	The Effect of Social Skills and Emotional Intelligence on Elementary School Students' Learning Outcomes	Emotional intelligence and social skills	Quantitative	Emotional intelligence affects students' learning outcomes
15	Lestari & Azizah (2023)	The Implementation of Social Emotional Learning Approach in Elementary School	Social Emotional Learning in elementary school	Social Emotional Learning in elementary school	The SEL approach supports emotional development and social interaction
16	Primaestri et al. (2023)	Bibliometric Analysis of Game Research Trends in Elementary Learning and Self-Regulated Learning Skills	Self-regulated learning	Bibliometric analysis	SRL has become an important skill in elementary school learning
17	Anita et al. (2022)	Development of Electronic Teaching Materials Based on Social and Emotional Learning to Improve the Pancasila Student Profile	Social Emotional Learning	Research and Development	SEL supports students' character and socio-emotional development

		Values of Elementary School Students			
18	Fitria (2022)	Psychosocial Adaptation Ability and the Emergence of Problematic Behavior among Elementary School Students	Psychosocial adaptation	Correlational quantitative	Psychosocial adaptation influences the emergence of students' problematic behavior

Note: SLR = Systematic Literature Review

The article search process was conducted through several open-access scientific databases and literature sources, namely Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and ERIC, using keywords related to developmental psychology, elementary school learning, socio-emotional development, cognitive development, learning motivation, and self-regulated learning. Based on the initial search results, a number of articles were obtained and subsequently selected using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) stages, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

At the identification stage, the researchers collected articles from various databases that were relevant to the research topic. Furthermore, a screening process was carried out based on the title, abstract, publication year, and relevance to the research topic. Articles that did not match the focus of the study were excluded at this stage. Subsequently, articles that met the inclusion criteria underwent full-text review during the eligibility stage to ensure their relevance to the objectives of the study. Based on this selection process, 18 articles were selected as the primary sources in this study.

The articles included in this study discussed various aspects of developmental psychology in elementary school children, including cognitive development, socio-emotional development, learning motivation, self-regulation, emotional intelligence, and students' psychological characteristics in the learning process.

2. Discussions

a. Cognitive Development of Elementary School Students

Submission Cognitive development is one of the most important aspects of the learning process in elementary schools because it is related to students' abilities to think, understand concepts, solve problems, and make decisions. At the elementary school age, students begin to enter the concrete operational stage of thinking, which is characterized by the ability to understand cause-and-effect relationships, classify objects, and solve simple problems based on real experiences. The synthesis of several studies indicates that students' cognitive development affects learning readiness, conceptual understanding, and problem-solving skills in learning activities.

Most studies revealed that learning processes adjusted to students' cognitive developmental stages help students understand learning materials more easily. The use of concrete media, experience-based learning, and exploratory activities can improve students' conceptual understanding compared to abstract and teacher-centered learning approaches. These findings indicate that elementary school students understand concepts more effectively when learning is connected to their daily experiences.

However, several studies also found that the implementation of learning aligned with students' cognitive development still faces various challenges, such as limited learning media,

teachers' lack of understanding regarding students' developmental characteristics, and the dominance of rote learning approaches. These conditions cause the learning process to be less effective in developing elementary school students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Therefore, teachers need to understand students' cognitive developmental characteristics in order to determine learning strategies that are more appropriate to students' needs.

b. Socio-Emotional Development of Elementary School Students

Socio-emotional development was one of the most dominant aspects discussed in the analyzed articles. Socio-emotional development is related to students' abilities to recognize emotions, control themselves, build social relationships, and interact positively with their surrounding environment. The synthesis of the studies revealed that socio-emotional skills are closely related to learning engagement, collaboration skills, and students' social behavior in school.

Most studies showed that the implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) helps improve empathy, communication skills, social skills, and emotional regulation among elementary school students. In addition, several studies explained that learning processes that pay attention to students' emotional development can help create a safer and more supportive learning environment. Other findings indicated that students with good emotional regulation skills tend to be more active in learning and more capable of building positive social relationships with peers and teachers.

However, the implementation of socio-emotional learning in elementary schools still faces several challenges. Some studies showed that teachers remain more focused on academic achievement than on students' socio-emotional development. In addition, teachers' limited understanding of socio-emotional development strategies also becomes an obstacle in implementing learning processes that are aligned with students' psychological needs. These conditions indicate that socio-emotional development needs to be integrated more systematically into the elementary school learning process.

c. Learning Motivation and Self-Regulation

Learning motivation and self-regulation are psychological factors that influence the success of learning among elementary school students. Based on the synthesis of the articles, learning motivation is associated with students' engagement in learning, persistence in studying, and readiness to complete learning tasks. Students with high learning motivation tend to ask more questions, demonstrate greater self-confidence, and show more enthusiasm during the learning process.

In addition to learning motivation, self-regulation is also an important aspect of the elementary school learning process. Self-regulation refers to students' ability to control their behavior, organize learning strategies, and manage the learning process independently. Most studies revealed that students with strong self-regulation skills are more capable of managing their study time, completing tasks independently, and maintaining focus during learning activities.

However, several studies indicated that elementary school students' self-regulation skills are still relatively low, especially among students who receive limited support from a positive learning environment. Furthermore, students' learning motivation is also influenced by teachers' instructional strategies, the school environment, and family support. These findings suggest that teachers play an important role in improving students' motivation and self-regulation through active learning approaches, positive feedback, and learning activities that directly engage students.

d. Psychological Characteristics of Elementary School Students

Elementary school students possess psychological characteristics that differ from those of students at other educational levels. At the elementary school age, children tend to be active, enjoy playing activities, have high curiosity, and require social interaction with their surrounding

environment. In addition, elementary school students understand learning materials more easily when they are delivered through direct experiences and concrete media rather than abstract instruction.

The synthesis of the studies showed that understanding students' psychological characteristics helps teachers determine learning strategies that are more suitable for students' needs. Monotonous and overly teacher-centered learning tends to cause students to become bored quickly and less active in the learning process. In contrast, learning activities involving games, group discussions, exploration, and interactive media are more effective in increasing elementary school students' learning engagement.

Several studies also indicated that elementary school students' psychological characteristics are influenced by family environment, social environment, and learning experiences. Therefore, teachers need to understand that each student has different developmental characteristics, and consequently, learning should be designed flexibly and adaptively according to students' needs.

e. Implications of Developmental Psychology for Elementary School Learning

Based on the synthesis of various studies, developmental psychology has significant implications for the learning process in elementary schools. Understanding cognitive development helps teachers determine learning methods that are appropriate to students' thinking abilities. In addition, understanding socio-emotional development helps teachers create learning environments that support social interaction, empathy, and students' emotional regulation abilities.

The findings also revealed that learning motivation and self-regulation are important factors influencing the success of elementary school students' learning. Therefore, teachers need to implement learning strategies that enhance students' engagement, such as active, collaborative, and contextual learning approaches. Learning processes that are aligned with students' developmental stages tend to help students understand materials more easily, participate more actively in learning, and develop better socio-emotional skills.

Furthermore, the synthesis of the studies showed that elementary school learning should be designed holistically by simultaneously considering cognitive, social, emotional, and psychological aspects of students' development. These findings strengthen the view that successful learning is not only determined by academic achievement but is also influenced by students' psychological readiness to participate in the learning process. Therefore, understanding developmental psychology becomes an important foundation for teachers in creating learning that is effective, meaningful, and student-centered.

Conclusion

The Based on the results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on various studies related to developmental psychology in elementary school learning, it can be concluded that developmental psychology has a significant influence on the effectiveness of the learning process in elementary schools. Aspects of cognitive development, socio-emotional development, learning motivation, self-regulation, and students' psychological characteristics affect how students understand learning materials, interact with the learning environment, and engage in the learning process.

The synthesis results indicate that learning processes adjusted to students' developmental stages are able to improve learning engagement, thinking skills, social interaction, learning motivation, and self-regulation among elementary school students. In addition, learning that considers socio-emotional development also helps create a more positive learning environment and supports students' overall development comprehensively.

This study provides a theoretical contribution in the form of a synthesis of various research findings regarding the implications of developmental psychology for elementary school learning. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for teachers and educational practitioners in designing learning strategies that are aligned with students' developmental characteristics, thereby making the learning process more effective, meaningful, and student-centered for elementary school students.

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Acknowledgment (Heading 1)

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