

# Urgency Of Emotional Literacy For Elementary School Students

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**Abstract.** This research begins with the problems faced by elementary school students, namely difficulties in managing and expressing their emotions. This condition encourages the importance of developing emotional literacy among students. The main aim of this research is to examine in depth the urgency and importance of emotional literacy in improving elementary school students' ability to manage their feelings and emotions. This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis methods. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature studies, which referred to various relevant sources related to emotional literacy. The data obtained is then analyzed by grouping information based on certain categories to facilitate understanding. The results of this research provide useful insight into how emotional literacy can be used as a solution to help students express and manage their emotions more effectively in the elementary school environment. It is hoped that these findings can become a reference in developing educational programs that are more inclusive and responsive to students' emotional needs.

**Keywords:** Emotional Literacy, Elementary School

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## INTRODUCTION

Education in the modern era has developed rapidly and on its way education must be able to carry out SDGs number 16 regarding peace and justice. In practice, education must be able to offer comprehensive solutions in solving various problems regarding social justice and inequality. This raises a new paradigm in the world of educators where academic achievement is not the main goal of education, but there are things that are far more important, namely character and personality. This paradigm leads to a discussion of the importance of emotional literacy.

Emotional literacy is increasingly considered a crucial skill in the context of 21st century education. The concept was first introduced by Claude (1997) in his famous book, *Achieving Emotional Literacy*. Claude (1997) explains that emotional literacy is the ability to understand and manage emotions, both in oneself and others. A deep understanding of emotions allows individuals to more effectively manage their feelings. Moreover, amidst rapid changes in technology and social dynamics, The ability to be conscious of and in control of one's own emotional states and others-is key to building healthy and productive relationships. In this regard, emotional literacy is highly relevant to the concept of 21st century education that emphasizes not only the mastery of technical knowledge and skills, but also effective interpersonal abilities and conflict reduction, in order to create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Therefore, it is imperative to integrate emotional literacy in the education system as a step towards achieving learners' well-being (D. Bernard, 2023). Emotional literacy in elementary school is very important, given its role in supporting children's social and

emotional development. Emotional literacy refers to an individual's ability to recognize, understand and manage emotions, both their own and those of others. In the educational environment, especially in primary schools, the development of emotional literacy can help students build healthy relationships, improve communication skills, and reduce aggressive behavior and bullying in schools (Muttaqin & Rizkiyah, 2022; Rifqi, 2024),

Primary school education is a very important phase in the formation of children's character and social skills. Various studies have shown that students who have good emotional literacy tend to have better academic performance, as well as stronger interpersonal skills. (Fayza et al., 2021; Juliana, 2023). This is in line with the goals of the School Literacy Movement (GLS) which not only emphasizes reading and writing literacy, but also develops students' character and social skills. (Widodo, 2020). Therefore, the integration of emotional literacy in the primary school curriculum will have a positive impact on students' overall development.

In the context of education, emotional literacy has been recognized as an important component in students' social and emotional development, contributing to their academic success and mental well-being (Öztekin, 2024). Claude (1997) It even reveals that someone who has emotional literacy tends to be able to create a harmonious and well-being-oriented atmosphere. Various studies have shown that emotional intelligence plays an important role in learning achievement and overall student development. For example, research by Acoci et al., (2022) concluded that emotional intelligence is an important factor affecting children's academic achievement and future career success. Ashdown & Bernard (2011) research also concluded that explicit instruction in social and emotional learning (PSE) can improve children's social-emotional development, well-being, and academic outcomes.. Research by Stella, et al. (2023) showed that low emotional literacy can result in low motivation to learn and positive social interactions among students.

Other research shows that teachers who have high emotional intelligence tend to be more effective in managing the classroom and supporting student development (Küçüktepe et al., 2017). So it is important to integrate emotional literacy in every aspect of learning, as described in research by Yudha et al. (2023) showed that education that integrates social-emotional aspects can help students building the competencies necessary for lifelong learning. Furthermore, a study by Molina-Muñoz et al., (2023) showed that social-emotional skills developed in early childhood can improve children's academic and behavioral functioning later in life. This suggests that interventions that focus on developing emotional literacy are not only beneficial for mental health, but also for better academic achievement.

According to the results of a survey conducted by the Center for Policy Research in collaboration with the Indonesian Clinical Psychologists Association in the period November

2-13, 2020, involving 15,840 students with a sampling technique using the random sampling method, as well as a population of students aged 9 to 17 years from 24 districts / cities in 12 provinces, it was found that 16.61% of students experienced mental emotional difficulties (Pratiwi et al., 2020). This finding suggests that during the pandemic, mental emotional disorders among school-aged children are likely to increase. In addition, a survey conducted by Wahana Visi Indonesia on 3,000 children in 30 provinces also revealed a significant influence on the condition.

Previous relevant research on emotional literacy includes important findings. For example, research conducted by Perry et al. (2014) revealed that teachers' perceptions of emotional literacy had a significant influence. Meanwhile, Kliueva & Tsagari, (2018) found that emotional literacy plays a very important role in the development of teacher professionalism. Another study by Fitrianiingsih et al., (2020) showed that the application of emotional literacy strategies can improve students' skills in managing angry emotions, especially at the junior high school level. However, although there are many studies that discuss emotional literacy, no one has specifically examined the importance of emotional literacy for learners in elementary schools. Therefore, the author feels the need to discuss how emotional literacy can play a role in overcoming the problem of expression and management of emotions in elementary school learners. This issue is considered very important to discuss because it is directly related to the quality of learners' personality and their interaction with the environment in the future.

Furthermore, in today's digital era, children are also faced with various challenges, including the negative influence of social media that can affect their mental health. Research shows that unhealthy interactions on social media can trigger self-harm behavior among students (Rifqi, 2024). Therefore, it is important for schools to teach emotional literacy as part of digital literacy, so that students can be wiser in using social media and managing their emotions when interacting online (Widiastuti et al., 2022).

A series of facts about the urgency and usefulness of emotional literacy still does not seem to be a priority in the implementation of learning. We are still faced with a learning pattern that is oriented towards academic mastery, even though the government is promoting the Merdeka curriculum as an inclusive and student-centered curriculum. Research shows that students often have difficulty understanding subject matter when the lecture method is used exclusively, especially in lessons that require a deeper understanding of concepts (Setiawan et al., 2023). This causes teachers' perception of emotional literacy to be low. Research shows that low emotional literacy can negatively impact teachers' performance and their interactions with students (Rasam, 2023). Teachers who have good emotional literacy tend to be better able to create a positive and supportive learning environment, whereas teachers with low emotional

literacy may have difficulty in managing the classroom and communicating with students effectively (Lestari, 2023). Of course, this will have an impact on children's low emotional literacy. As a result of children's low emotional literacy, we are often presented with news about bullying, violence, harassment, and so on. Data from KPAI which received 141 complaints of child abuse throughout the beginning of 2024, 35% occurred in schools. This illustrates that children in Indonesia are experiencing an emotional literacy crisis. This is what the Ministry calls the three cardinal sins of education, and the highest factor causing the three cardinal sins is the low understanding of emotional literacy.

Thus, strengthening emotional literacy in primary schools not only supports students' academic development but also prepares them to face future social and emotional challenges. Schools need to develop programs that support emotional literacy learning, including providing training to teachers and providing adequate resources for the implementation of these programs (Juanda, 2023). Therefore, this research through the literature study method examines how urgent emotional literacy is for elementary school children in the 21st century.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature study method. Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data that provides an in-depth explanation of the problem under study. The method used in this research is literature study, which means that the data obtained comes from various literatures relevant to the research topic. Literature study is a type of research that collects various sources, such as books, magazines, or other literature related to the problem being discussed or the research objectives. The collected literature sources will then be processed and analyzed in accordance with the research objectives. this research, the literature used is mainly in the form of journals. The process of searching and collecting journals was done electronically through Google Scholar by using a combination of certain keywords, namely: literacy, emotion, emotional literacy, elementary school children. Based on the search results, the researcher then classified the journals found according to the predetermined categories. After that, the researcher read the texts and conducted an analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Literally, the word "literacy" comes from English literacy, which means the ability to recognize characters. Etymologically, literacy comes from the Latin *litteratus*, which refers to a person who is educated or a person who learns. The process of developing literacy in children is a

continuous and dynamic series, starting from the emergence of curiosity, critical thinking skills, oral language skills, to the ability to read and write (Setiawati & Novitasari, 2019). Literacy is often understood only as the activity of reading, even though its meaning is broader. Literacy can be defined as the ability and desire of individuals to access, manage and utilize texts, both in manual and digital form, especially through reading and writing activities for specific purposes that have an impact on improving their skills and quality of life (Apriliya & Cyntia, 2023). Meanwhile, emotional literacy is defined as the awareness and ability to recognize, understand, express, and manage one's own feelings, with the aim of improving the quality of self and the quality of life, both for oneself and those around one. Emotional literacy also involves the ability to understand the feelings of others after understanding one's own feelings (Mohorić et al., 2021). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize one's own and others' feelings, the ability to motivate oneself, and the ability to manage emotions well, both in oneself and in relationships with others (Goleman, 2001: 512). Salovey and Mayer (in Goleman, 2001: 513) define emotional intelligence as the ability to monitor and control one's own feelings and the feelings of others, and to use these emotions to harmonize thoughts and actions. Emotional intelligence also includes a person's basic ability to recognize and use emotions. According to Cherniss (2001: 85), emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and express emotions, assimilate emotions in thinking, understand and reason with emotions, and manage emotions both in oneself and others.

Emotional literacy as described by Claude Steiner (1997), includes the ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions, both in oneself and others. In his book "Achieving Emotional Literacy," Steiner identifies five essential skills: awareness of one's own feelings, empathy, emotion management, repairing emotional damage, and developing emotional interactions (D. M. Bernard, 2023). These skills are the foundation of emotional literacy and are essential for effective communication and interpersonal relationships. Emotional literacy is the ability to respond to our emotions to ongoing situations, as well as an understanding of our responses to ourselves and how our thoughts and actions are influenced by emotions. Meanwhile, Brackett and Rivers in Hughes, et al (2009) state that emotional literacy is the ability to recognize, understand, express, and regulate emotions, both at the personal, social, and intellectual levels. From the explanation of these experts, it can be concluded that emotional literacy is the ability to understand and express emotions. Emotional literacy includes awareness and recognition of one's own emotions and knowledge of how to manage those emotions, as well as the ability to recognize and understand emotions expressed by others. For some people, emotional literacy is often not understood or even rarely learned. In fact, emotional literacy should be introduced to children from an early age, so that they can recognize various types of emotions that can affect their behavior. Many parents, teachers and

related parties in schools consider emotions as normal, and are often considered easy to express by children and adolescents. This trivial view can actually have a negative impact on both parents and teachers. If children or adolescents are not taught how to express emotions appropriately, as well as how to understand the emotions of others, they can face serious problems due to their lack of understanding of the importance of emotional literacy. Such problems can include behaviors such as brawls, bullying, and other antisocial acts (Utamimah et al., 2024).

Research has shown that emotional literacy has a significant correlation with academic achievement. A meta-analysis conducted by MacCann et al., (2020) Manichander revealed that students with higher emotional literacy tend to achieve better academic results, indicating that emotional skills can enhance cognitive ability and engagement in the learning environment. This relationship is particularly relevant in primary education, where foundational skills are being formed. Manichander emphasizes that emotional intelligence makes a positive contribution to academic achievement and underscores the need for an educational framework that integrates emotional literacy into the curriculum. Steiner's framework has been widely adopted in various fields, including education and psychology. Emotional literacy is now increasingly recognized as an important element in personal development and social competence. Research shows that emotional literacy can have a significant effect on students' academic performance and social interactions (Wossenie, 2014). In educational settings, the integration of emotional literacy in the curriculum has been linked to improved student learning outcomes, as it creates a supportive learning environment and strengthens students' ability to face social challenges. Indicators of emotional literacy according to Claude Steiner (1997)

**Tabel 1.** Indicators Of Emotional Literacy

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Sub-Indicators</b>
Self-Awareness	Ability to recognize and express one's own emotions
Empathy	The ability to understand and feel the emotions of others
Emotion Management	Ability to regulate and control emotions
Repairing Emotional Damage	Ability to resolve emotional conflicts and improve relationships
Emotional Interaction	Ability to build and maintain healthy relationships

This shows that emotional literacy not only includes an understanding of one's own emotions, but also involves social aspects. It is this social aspect that distinguishes emotional literacy from emotional intelligence. According to Birdy dan Mahmudah (2022), being aware of one's emotions means having the ability to recognize the world of feelings and emotions, such as knowing the name of the emotion, its intensity, the reason, body language, the message it conveys, and the underlying emotional needs. By being more sensitive to feelings, one's



emotional literacy will develop. Furthermore, the ability to empathize genuinely is also part of emotional literacy, which means the ability to empathize affectively, cognitively and compassionately, so as to understand the world of other people's feelings and emotions. The stronger one's empathy, the higher the level of emotional literacy.

Managing emotions is also an important dimension of emotional literacy, which is the ability to manage emotional life in a healthy and beneficial, rather than destructive way. In this case, managing emotions is geared towards ensuring that feelings that arise can be managed in a rational way, without ignoring the emotional experience associated with the event. Another dimension is the ability to repair emotional damage, which means the ability to handle and repair emotional damage with responsibility, apologize, and be accompanied by sincere forgiveness from the heart. This dimension is easier to live with spontaneously if the child has successfully gone through the process in the previous three dimensions. Finally, the ability to develop social interactions is part of emotional literacy, which includes the ability to integrate the previous four dimensions in handling emotional moments in social environments, with the aim of creating harmonious relationships in the long run. Therefore, the ability to understand emotions and feelings is an important cornerstone of emotional literacy.

## **CONCLUSION**

Emotional literacy is an important aspect of child development, especially at the primary school level. Previous studies have shown that emotional literacy is not only related to understanding one's own emotions, but also involves the ability to empathize, manage emotions healthily, repair emotional damage and build harmonious social interactions. Each dimension of emotional literacy, such as emotional self-awareness, empathy, emotional management, emotional recovery, and social interaction skills, is interconnected and contributes to the healthy emotional development of learners. Emotional literacy has a broad positive impact on learners, both in academic, social and mental health aspects. By developing emotional literacy from an early age, it is expected that children can overcome emotional problems that arise, build healthy relationships with the environment, and prepare themselves for future social challenges. Therefore, it is important for schools to integrate emotional literacy in their curriculum to support the holistic development of students who are not only academically, but also emotionally and socially intelligent.

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