

A Conceptual Review of the Physical Aspect in Expressing Children's Character and Interest in Social Studies Learning in MI/SD

Susilasari

Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University

susilasari221@gmail.com

Aramudin

Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University

aramudin@uin-suska.ac.id

Abstract- This study presents a conceptual synthesis of the role of physical characteristics such as facial expressions, body gestures, voice intonation, and behavioral attitudes in children's interactions during Social Studies learning in MI/SD. The study employs a literature review approach, focusing on collecting, examining, and synthesizing relevant scholarly sources to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the topic. Rather than establishing causal relationships, this review explores how various physical indicators are interpreted within educational contexts and how they are conceptually associated with children's character expression and learning interest. The synthesis of the literature suggests that different physical cues may be understood as meaningful representations in the learning process. For instance, hand gestures are often conceptually linked to motor engagement and social interaction, while fingerprints are occasionally discussed in relation to individual cognitive tendencies in a symbolic manner. Similarly, nails and hair are sometimes interpreted as reflecting emotional states and personality-related aspects. Facial expressions and eye behavior are commonly associated with attention and motivational engagement, whereas cognitive indicators such as thought patterns are inferred through observable learning behaviors. However, these interpretations remain largely theoretical and context-dependent. This conceptual review is limited by its reliance on secondary sources and the absence of empirical validation. Therefore, the findings should be understood as interpretative frameworks rather than definitive conclusions. Overall, the study highlights the importance of considering physical and behavioral cues as part of a broader pedagogical perspective that may support more responsive and inclusive Social Studies learning in elementary education.

Keywords: Children's Physical Appearance, Character, Learning Interest

I. INTRODUCTION

Education at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) or Elementary School (SD) level plays a fundamental role in shaping children's character, skills, and developmental potential. At this stage, learners are in a critical period of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development, where learning experiences are strongly influenced by interaction, observation, and direct engagement with their environment. Teachers therefore function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators who are responsible for recognizing and nurturing students' interests and talents through responsive and meaningful learning processes.

Recent educational research emphasizes that identifying children's interests and talents should not rely solely on formal academic assessments such as test scores or written assignments. Contemporary studies in

educational psychology and classroom-based observation highlight the importance of non-verbal and observable behavioral indicators in learning contexts, including facial expressions, body gestures, participation patterns, voice intonation, and interaction styles (e.g., Fredricks et al., 2004; Hattie, 2009; Reeve, 2012). These behavioral cues are increasingly recognized as part of student engagement and can provide meaningful insights into learners' motivation, preferences, and potential strengths in specific domains.

In Social Studies (IPS) learning, which emphasizes social interaction, communication, and value-based understanding of real-life contexts, such observable behaviors become particularly relevant. For instance, active participation in discussion, willingness to express opinions, collaborative behavior in group work, and sustained attention during social problem-

solving activities may indicate underlying interpersonal, linguistic, or leadership-oriented tendencies. However, in many classroom practices, these behavioral signals are still underutilized as systematic indicators for identifying student interests and talents.

Empirical studies in Indonesia further support this issue. Research conducted in several elementary and madrasah settings shows that student participation in talent development activities often does not align with their actual interests due to limited identification strategies and lack of teacher guidance based on behavioral observation (Jannah et al., 2023; Setiawan, 2022; Lubis, 2020). These findings suggest that the gap between students' potential and its identification remains a persistent challenge in basic education, particularly when assessment practices are still dominated by cognitive and summative measures.

Theoretically, Piaget's cognitive development theory explains that children aged 7–12 years are in the concrete operational stage, where learning is strongly shaped by direct experience and observable reality rather than abstract reasoning (Piaget, 2007). In addition, Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences highlights that children possess diverse forms of intelligence that can be observed through different behavioral expressions in learning situations, such as linguistic interaction, logical reasoning, kinesthetic activity, and interpersonal engagement (Gardner, 2011). From this perspective, students' classroom behaviors can be interpreted as meaningful indicators of their learning preferences and potential intelligences, rather than as isolated physical attributes.

Based on this theoretical and empirical foundation, it is increasingly important to conceptualize the analysis of students' observable behaviors as a holistic approach for identifying interests and talents in elementary Social Studies learning. Rather than focusing on physical characteristics in a literal or anatomical sense, this study emphasizes behavioral observation as a pedagogical lens to support more inclusive, responsive, and student-centered learning. Such an approach enables teachers to develop more adaptive instructional strategies and to better facilitate the development of students' potential in a comprehensive manner.

II. METHOD

This study employs a structured literature review approach using a qualitative thematic synthesis framework, adapted from the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guideline. The use of this framework aims to ensure a transparent, systematic, and replicable process in identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant literature related to children's observable behaviors, character development, and learning interest in Social Studies (IPS) at the MI/SD level. This approach does not involve primary empirical data collection, but focuses on synthesizing existing scientific knowledge to construct a conceptual understanding of the topic (Cahyono et al., 2019; Asyari, 2021).

The literature review process was conducted through four main stages. The first stage was identification, where relevant literature was collected from academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals (when available), national journals, educational books, and official publications from the Ministry of Education and Culture. Keywords used in the search process included combinations of terms such as "children's learning behavior," "student engagement," "character education," "learning interest," "social studies learning," and "elementary education."

The second stage was screening, in which duplicate publications were removed and titles and abstracts were reviewed to ensure relevance to the research focus. At this stage, studies that did not specifically discuss observable student behaviors or learning interest in elementary education contexts were excluded.

The third stage was eligibility assessment, where full-text articles were evaluated based on inclusion criteria, including: (1) relevance to children's behavior, character, or learning interest; (2) focus on elementary or madrasah ibtidaiyah education; (3) publication in credible academic sources; and (4) clarity of theoretical or empirical contribution. Studies with limited methodological explanation or weak conceptual relevance were excluded.

The final stage was data synthesis and thematic analysis. The selected literature was analyzed using a qualitative thematic synthesis approach to identify recurring patterns and

conceptual relationships. The analysis focused on how previous studies conceptualize students' observable behaviors—such as facial expressions, gestures, participation, attention, and interaction patterns—as indicators of learning interest and character development in Social Studies learning. The synthesis process followed the principles of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation to construct an integrated conceptual framework (Sugiyono, 2013).

Through this structured literature review process, the study aims to develop a comprehensive and systematic understanding of how students' observable classroom behaviors can be interpreted as meaningful indicators in identifying character and learning interests in MI/SD Social Studies education.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The concept of detecting the characteristics, interests and talents of children in learning from 5 fingers, fingernails, face, hair, eyes, lines of thought or lines of concentration

Elementary school students are generally children aged 7 to 12 years old and how many are at the concrete operational stage. Based on the theory of cognitive development according to Piaget, at this stage the child will experience a phase in which the child understands the world through direct experience, observation, and manipulation of real objects. Thus, physical behaviors such as facial expressions, body movements, and motor habits can be important clues in detecting their interests and talents (Piaget, 2007).

Gardner proposed the concept of multiple intelligences which includes linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic intelligence. Every intelligence is often reflected through physical indicators. For example, children with kinesthetic intelligence tend to be active and agile using their fingers, while children with interpersonal intelligence show more vivid facial expressions and eye contact. The concept of detecting children's characteristics, interests and talents from physical indicators is as follows:

1. Five Fingers of the Hand (Rukmana, 2010)

(a) Thumb

Symbolizes personality, courage, and the desire to lead. Children who often use their thumbs when pointing or emphasizing activities usually have high leadership potential and confidence

b) Telunjuk

Symbolizes concentration, direction, and academic inclination. Children who often use their index finger when studying, pointing to writing, or directing friends usually have a talent in academics or organizations

(c) Middle finger

It is related to balance and responsibility. Children who show good control of the middle finger movements tend to be meticulous and diligent

(d) Ring finger

It is often associated with creativity, art, and aesthetics. Children with fine motor skills on the ring finger often have a predisposition to music, painting, or other creative skills

(e) Little finger

It symbolizes communication, language, and self-expression. Children who are fluent in using the little finger (for example, when writing or holding small objects) are usually quick to respond to language and communication

2. Fingernails (Rukmana, 2010)

(a) Clean, neat, and healthy nails: Shows the child has a disciplined character and attention to detail.

(b) Nails are often dirty/neglected: It can be an indicator of a lack of attention, self-control, or a tendency for children to prefer physical/outdoor activities to academics.

(c) Nail-biting habits: May indicate anxiety, high concentration, or excessive curiosity. Children with this habit often have an interest in analytical activities or problem solving, although they need to be directed not to overdo it

3. Face (Rukmana, 2010)

(a) Square Face: has a strong and dashing personality. They are work-loving people who rely on strength and physicality, as a protective figure, and are able to provide a sense of security and comfort to everyone who is nearby.

(b) Round face: has a cheerful, friendly and pleasant personality. Its presence will bring a more lively atmosphere to every condition. It's easier to be close to anyone and easy to get along with anyone

(c) Rectangular Face: Synonymous with an ambitious, active personality and having good self-control. In addition, he has an introverted nature with high initiative and above-average intelligence.

(d) Triangle Face: is a relative and active character, but it is a character that is sensitive and able to recognize changes that occur in the surrounding environment. He has a moody characteristic, known as an irritable figure but has a friendly and open nature.

(e) Oval Face: has a good mental balance and is able to think clearly and is not easily controlled by emotions in him. This person has a firm character towards the principles of life that fascinates people with his own charisma. Full of positive aura and high intelligence in diplomacy. He has a high perspective in assessing a job and can quickly learn from others. His ability is what makes him an excellent duplicator. In addition, he is also a hard worker, intelligent, and applies high discipline.

(f) Inverted Triangle Face: Although he has an ambitious nature, he is still able to see things realistically and adapt them to his abilities. He can work under pressure and has an excellent memory. This ability to remember is what makes him quick to learn new things in his work.

(g) Rhombus Face: Perfectionist is the main character in him and this is evident in his facial line. Naturally, he has a high sense of confidence and a strong stance. He was born with the talent to be a great leader. have a strong personality. He has a charisma that emanates from his work behavior. Others can easily follow the rules he sets.

4. Hair (Hurlock and Elizabeth, 2013)

(a) Straight/neat hair: Usually associated with a systematic, orderly, and rule-abiding character

(b) Curly/wavy hair: Tends to be creative, full of ideas, and expressive.

(c) Thin hair and infrequent growth: is an imaginative, intelligent and slightly critical figure and is able to accommodate his own critical thinking.

(d) Front bald hair: is a person of deep thinking. Have good concentration and be able to come up with brilliant ideas

(e) Thick black hair: shows a passionate character – fluffy and passionate. A person who has a high spirit in any matter. He is also a quiet but very disgusting figure.

(f) Short and climactic hair: is a neat, simple, and parientent person. This figure is busy and his mobility is quite high with a forward-oriented mind and meticulous in his work.

(g) Short hair: describes a practical, agile and dexterous person. This soso needs recognition of his existence and always wants to appear dominant.

(h) Plontos hair: is an independent figure who likes freedom and independence

5. Eyes

(a) Wide eyes: is an authoritative and charismatic person. His sharp and focused eyes indicate a person who is very focused and loves honesty

(b) Narrow eyes: describes a person who is focused on achieving something. Hardworking in realizing his desires and very totality in his work

(c) Ball eyes: describes a person with a friendly, polite, and affectionate character. A figure who is easily touched and very close to family.

(d) Oval eyes: shows a person who likes to excess, especially in the way of thinking. He is a figure full of imagination and sometimes his thoughts and ways of looking are carried away by his imagination.

6. Thought Line

(a) Forehead line formed when serious: Indicates the child is exerting full concentration; usually has academic potential or logical interest

7. Concentration lines on the eyebrows

Characters based on the shape of the eyebrows can be seen as follows:

(a) Meeting Eyebrows: People with eyebrow shapes that fall into the category of meeting eyebrows or eyebrows meeting are people who never stop thinking. He always thinks about anything in his life. Sometimes, he is considered slow in making decisions because he thinks too much and takes too long. He is rarely seen relaxing and relaxed. He spent his life thinking and evaluating whatever was going on around him.

(b) Straight eyebrows: People with straight eyebrows are known as people who always think logically, are able to analyze all problems, and always act based on logic that they have thought through. He also likes to judge and analyze others with the data he has.

(c) Angled Eyebrows: a person with slanted eyebrows is a person who has good authority, purpose, interests and self-control. That is why he always controls himself.

(d) Curved Eyebrows: known as a friendly, supplicant, fun and nature-loving figure. Living life like flowing water with a relaxed demeanor.

(e) Thin eyebrows: people with these eyebrows are people with very sensitive nature and easily feel hurt and sensitive feelings.

How to detect and analyze children's characteristics, interests and talents in learning through 5 fingers, fingerprints, fingernails, face, hair, eyes, thought lines or concentration lines

Detecting children's characteristics, interests, and talents can be done through physical and behavioral observation approaches. This is important because elementary school-age children are at the stage of concrete operational development, which is a period when their thinking ability

is manifested through real actions, physical expression, and interaction with the environment (Peaget, 2007).

1. Five fingers can be a symbolic as well as a motor indicator. The thumb that children often use to point or sign can show confidence and courage in making decisions. An active index finger usually indicates a direction of attention and concentration, so it can be associated with leadership ability. The middle finger symbolizes balance, while the ring finger tends to be associated with creativity, for example in the art of drawing or music. The little finger, which is related to communication, reflects the child's activeness in social interaction. (Tadkiroatun, 2016)

2. Fingerprints or dermatoglyphics provide a unique picture of the child's innate potential. Kanchan's (2013) research shows that fingerprint patterns can be associated with certain intelligence tendencies, for example logical-mathematical or kinesthetic intelligence. Singh (2012) also found a significant correlation between fingerprint patterns and children's critical thinking skills. Some forms of fingerprints based on their fingerprints can be seen as follows:

(a) Loop pattern: Fingerprint flow in from one side, circular, and then exit on the same side. The general character is flexible, adaptable, and not rigid. Prefer a safe and comfortable atmosphere. Tends to be friendly, communicative and has high empathy. Easy to work together in a group and sometimes a bit slow in making decisions because of caution.

(b) Whorl Pattern (Spiral or circular): The line of fingerprints forms a circle or spiral in the center. With a general character who is analytically and logically-minded, likes to be challenging, independent, and has a strong stance. Creative, imaginative and usually have original ideas, confident, sometimes stubborn and suitable to be a leader or innovator.

(c) Arch (mountain/wave) pattern: A simple fingerprint line, flowing from one side to the other forming a hill or wave without being circular. The general character is simple, honest and realistic, hardworking, diligent and consistent, seems quiet, careful and disciplined, sometimes takes a long time to adjust and does not like to be sudden.

3. The condition of fingernails is often a sign of emotional and psychological behavior. Children who have neat nails are usually more disciplined, while children who often bite their nails tend to experience anxiety or are actually trying to focus on an activity. Hurlock emphasized that this kind of small habit can be used as an indicator of the emotional state of children (Hurlock, 2013). Here are the characteristics of children based on the shape of the nails:

(a) Nail flower on the right hand (Index finger, middle or sweet): a child with a nail flower on the right hand is considered cheerful, optimistic, easy to please others, and brings good luck to himself and his surroundings. Often considered a clean-hearted child who is loved by many people (Merdeka.com, 2024).

(b) Flower nails on the left hand : Considered sensitive, sensitive, and emotionally sensitive children. However, it is also full of intuition and high empathy, easy to read other people's moods (IDN Times, 2023)

(c) Nail flowers appear on many fingers at once: Children are believed to have a great aura of luck, are liked by many people, and often bring unexpected sustenance to their families. However, it must also be kept from being arrogant or excessive.

(d) Nail flowers appear occasionally and then disappear: A sign that the child is easily changed, sometimes cheerful, sometimes moody, but has strong inner sensitivity and often has the right premonition.

(e) Nail flowers are only on certain fingers for example thumb: A sign of a child who is talented or has natural abilities in certain things.

4. Faces are the easiest emotional reflection to read. According to Paul Ekman, facial expressions are a universal language for human emotions (Ekman, 2003). A genuine smile, a sparkling gaze, or a frown are clues to whether the child is happy, interested, confused, or depressed in learning

5. Hair can be used as a symbol of self-expression. Children who are used to

styling neat hair tend to be systematic and like order, while children who often play with their hair show a need for comfort or imaginative expression. Santrock (2018) added that this kind of physical habit can describe aspects of a child's personality and learning style.

6. The eyes function as a window of concentration. Intense eye contact indicates interest and focus, while a distracted gaze can indicate active imagination or interest in other things outside of the lesson. Gardner (2011) attributes this to interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence, where eye expressions help teachers understand children's learning motivations.

7. The line of thought or concentration line that appears on the forehead when the child focuses on reading or working on a problem can reflect the level of concentration. Piaget states that in the concrete operational stage, the child's mental effort is often reflected through body language and facial expressions as he tries to understand new concepts.

Thus, the detection of children's interests and talents through physical indicators is not intended to be rigid labels, but as an observation tool for teachers. This approach allows MI/SD teachers to recognize each child's unique potential and adjust learning strategies to be more humanistic and developmentally needed.

How To Improve Students' Learning Ability By Considering 5 Fingers, Fingerprints, Fingernails, Face, Hair, Eyes, Lines Of Mind Or Lines Of Concentration

Improving students' abilities can not only be done through formal teaching methods, but also through the observation and utilization of their physical indicators and body expressions. Teachers who are sensitive to 5 fingers, fingerprints, fingernails, face, hair, eyes, and lines of thought or concentration will find it easier to adjust learning strategies according to children's interests and talents. First, through five fingers, teachers can optimize children's fine motor skills. Writing, drawing, folding paper, or playing music help develop creativity and logic. Gardner (2011) explains that kinesthetic and musical intelligence develop rapidly through hand-finger coordination. Teachers

can design project-based learning to further hone these skills.

Second, by considering fingerprints, teachers can use the results of dermatoglyphics analysis to direct students to areas that match their potential. For example, certain fingerprint patterns that tend to be logical can be directed to problem-solving-based learning. Singh (2012) emphasized that knowledge about fingerprints can be used as a basis for developing personal learning strategies. Third, through fingernails, teachers can understand the emotional state of students. Children who like to bite their nails while studying may need a more relaxed, creative, and interactive method to be free from anxiety. Hurlock (2013) emphasizes the importance of teachers to create a pleasant learning atmosphere so that physical habits that reflect anxiety can be minimized. Fourth, faces can be an indicator of learning motivation. Teachers need to strengthen interactions by utilizing children's facial expressions: giving appreciation with smiles, eye contact, and verbal reinforcement. Ekman (2003) explained that facial expressions can increase positive emotional communication in the learning process.

Fifth, hair can reflect self-expression. Teachers can provide space for creativity, for example in art or skills, so that children who like to play with hair can channel their imagination into productive activities. Santrock (2018) said that learning that gives space for self-expression is able to strengthen children's self-concept. Sixth, the eyes are the window of concentration. Teachers can use eye contact to maintain students' focus, for example by question and answer methods, group discussions, or the use of visual media. Gardner emphasizes that face-to-face interactions help strengthen interpersonal intelligence while building students' confidence. Seventh, the line of thought or line of concentration seen on the forehead when the child thinks loudly indicates cognitive involvement. Teachers can improve students' abilities by providing academic challenges that are appropriate to the child's level of cognitive development. Piaget (2007) said that at the concrete operational stage, children learn effectively through exploratory activities and problem

solving. Thus, improving students' abilities by considering these physical indicators means that teachers read nonverbal signs as the basis for designing learning that is personalized, humanistic, and according to the needs of children's development.

IV. CONCLUSION

Social Studies learning in SD/MI requires teachers to go beyond a sole emphasis on academic achievement and instead develop a more comprehensive understanding of students' characteristics, learning interests, and developmental tendencies. In this regard, classroom-based observation of students' visible behaviors—such as gestures, facial expressions, participation patterns, attention, and interaction styles—may serve as one of several complementary sources of insight into how learners engage with learning activities. However, these behavioral cues should be interpreted cautiously and contextually, rather than being treated as fixed or definitive indicators of specific talents or personality traits.

The literature suggests that students' observable behaviors in learning situations can provide meaningful information about engagement and learning preferences. For example, active participation in discussions may reflect communicative tendencies, while sustained attention during tasks may indicate cognitive engagement. Nevertheless, such interpretations are not absolute and should be understood as part of a broader, dynamic, and context-dependent learning process. Therefore, no single indicator should be used in isolation to determine a child's interests or talents.

In the context of Social Studies learning, integrating behavioral observation with other forms of assessment can help teachers design more adaptive, inclusive, and student-centered instructional strategies, such as collaborative learning, role-playing activities, project-based learning, and the use of visual and contextual media. These approaches enable teachers to respond more effectively to diverse student needs without reducing learners to simplified behavioral classifications.

Overall, this conceptual review emphasizes that the success of Social Studies learning in SD/MI is not only reflected in cognitive achievement, but also in the extent to which learning environments accommodate

student diversity and encourage meaningful participation. A balanced and reflective approach to interpreting students' observable behaviors is therefore essential to ensure that learning remains humanistic, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate.

REFERENCES

- Asyari, H. (2021). *Teknik membuat literature review bidang kajian ekonomi*. Sleman: Deepublish Publisher.
- Cahyono, E., Sutomo, & Aris, H. (2019). Literature review: Panduan penulisan dan penyusunan. *Jurnal Keperawatan*.
- Ekman, P. (2003). *Emotions revealed: Recognizing faces and feelings to improve communication and emotional life*. New York: Times Books.
- Fakhrudin, A.-R. (2015). *Kitab firasat: Ilmu membaca sifat dan karakter orang dari bentuk tubuhnya*. Jakarta Selatan: Tuross Pustaka.
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hattie, J. (2015). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2016). School engagement: Potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(3), 751–786.
- Hurlock, E. B. (2013). *Psikologi perkembangan: Suatu pendekatan sepanjang rentang kehidupan*. Jakarta: Erlangga.
- Kanchan, T., & Krishan, K. (2013). Dermatoglyphics: A review on fingerprint patterns and their clinical applications. *International Journal of Anatomy and Research*, 1(3), 100–102.
- Mulyasa, E. (2017). *Menjadi guru profesional*. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Musfiroh, T. (2016). *Perkembangan peserta didik*. Jakarta: Universitas Terbuka.
- Piaget, J. (2007). *The child's conception of the world*. New York: Routledge.
- Reeve, J. (2018). *Understanding motivation and emotion* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Santrock, J. W. (2018). *Child development*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Scherer, K. R. (2017). Emotional expression in humans: Evidence, mechanisms, and consequences. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 68, 1–27.
- Sugiyono. (2013). *Metode penelitian pendidikan: Pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.
- UNESCO. (2021). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Zembylas, M. (2019). Affect and emotion in education. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 49(4), 459–475.