

## Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Social Competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District

Reza Wulan Dari<sup>1\*</sup>, Jasrial<sup>2</sup>, Ahmad Sabandi<sup>3</sup>, Enceria Damanik<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1234</sup> Department of Educational Administration, Padang State University, Padang, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of teacher social competence as a learning motivation and student character development. This study aims to determine students' perceptions of teacher social competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District. This type of research is quantitative descriptive with a population of all active students in grades X, XI, XII in Middle Schools throughout Sangir Balai Janggo District, totaling 348 students and a sample of 78 students taken using the Proportional Random Sampling technique. The instrument used was a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 40 statement items covering indicators of the ability to communicate, socialize effectively, be objective, be empathetic and the ability to adapt to the environment, which had been tested for validity and reliability.

The results of the study indicate that: 1) teachers' social competence in communication skills can be implemented by teachers with an average score of 4.27. 2) teachers' social competence in socializing effectively can be implemented by teachers with an average score of 4.29. 3) teachers' social competence in being objective can be implemented by teachers with an average score of 4.41. 4) teachers' social competence in being empathetic can be implemented by teachers with an average score of 4.37. 5) teachers' social competence in adapting to the environment can be implemented by teachers with an average score of 4.31. All are in the capable category, thus it can be concluded that teachers' social competence at Sangir Balai Janggo District Vocational High School can be implemented by teachers with an overall average of 3.33.

### Corresponding Author:

Reza Wulan Dari

Email: [rwulandari7@gmail.com](mailto:rwulandari7@gmail.com)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education in the modern era faces increasingly complex challenges in line with technological developments, the demands of the workplace, and social dynamics. Educational institutions are no longer solely focused on academic achievement but are also required to develop students' social skills, communication skills, and character holistically. This aligns with Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which affirms that education is a conscious and planned effort to optimally develop students' potential. In this context, teachers play a strategic role as key actors determining the quality of the learning process and outcomes. As professionals, teachers are required to possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personality, professional, and social competencies, as stipulated in Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. Among these four competencies, social competency plays a crucial role because it directly relates to a teacher's ability to build effective interactions with students and the school

environment. According to Mulyasa (2019), social competency is a teacher's ability to communicate and interact effectively with students, fellow educators, and the community. Furthermore, Rahmawati and Nartani (2018) emphasized that social competency includes the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships, be empathetic, and work together harmoniously. Good social competency has been shown to create a conducive learning environment and increase student motivation and engagement in the learning process (Yuningsih et al., 2023).

In the context of learning, students' perceptions of teachers' social competence are an important indicator in assessing the quality of classroom interactions. Perception is an individual's cognitive process of receiving, organizing, and interpreting information obtained from the environment (Slameto, 2015). Robbins and Judge (in Juliasri, 2025) also stated that perception influences how individuals understand and respond to their surroundings. Thus, students' perceptions of teachers' social competence are formed from direct experiences during the learning process, thus reflecting the quality of interpersonal relationships between teachers and students and the effectiveness of learning interactions.

Although theoretically, teacher social competence plays a very important role, in practice, various problems are still found in the field. Based on the results of initial observations at Sangir Balai Janggo State Vocational High School, there are several phenomena that indicate that teacher social competence is not optimal. These problems include: (1) teacher communication skills are not yet effective, especially in delivering educational reprimands; (2) social interactions between teachers and students have not developed optimally; (3) the level of teacher empathy towards student conditions is still varied; (4) there is a tendency for treatment that is not fully objective; and (5) the ability of teachers to adapt to student characteristics and the environment is still limited. These conditions have the potential to affect student learning comfort and the effectiveness of the learning process. This finding is supported by previous research that shows that teacher social competence has a significant effect on the quality of learning interactions. Apriansyah and Jasrial (2023) found that teacher social competence is considered quite good, but still needs to be improved to create more effective interactions. Furthermore, teacher social competence has a positive effect on teaching and learning interactions. This shows that the better the teacher's social competence, the more conducive the learning process (Zuliamiranti and Fauziah, 2017). The interrelationship of these four competencies requires teachers to not only master the aspects of knowledge and teaching skills, but also have interpersonal skills and integrity that support the success of the learning process holistically (Karmila, W., 2024).

Based on these issues, an effort is needed to obtain an empirical picture of teachers' social competence from the students' perspective. One approach is to analyze students' perceptions of teachers' social competence. The results of this analysis are expected to form the basis for formulating strategies to improve teachers' social competence, whether through training, professional development, or the development of more communicative, inclusive, and adaptive learning practices to meet students' needs. Thus, this study aims to analyze students' perceptions of teachers' social competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District, which includes the ability to communicate, socialize effectively, be objective, be empathetic, and adapt to the environment. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions in the development of teacher competency studies and practical contributions as evaluation material for teachers and schools in improving the quality of learning interactions.

## **2. METHOD, DATA, ANALYSIS**

This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive type that aims to describe students' perceptions of teacher social competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District. The study population consisted of 348 students consisting of grades X, XI, and XII, with a sample of 78 students determined through proportional random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a five-level Likert scale questionnaire that included indicators of teacher social competence, namely the ability to communicate, socialize effectively, be objective, be empathetic, and the ability to adapt to the environment. A questionnaire trial was conducted involving 20 students outside the research sample. The results of the questionnaire trial were then analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 27 to determine its validity and reliability. The instrument was declared valid because most items had a calculated *r* value greater than the *r* table (0.444), while the results of the reliability test showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.936, which means the instrument has a very high level of reliability (Arikunto, 2014).

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistical techniques by calculating the average score (mean) for each indicator studied. The obtained average scores were then categorized into specific criteria to determine the level of teacher social competence based on student perceptions. The results of the analysis were presented in tabular form and descriptive descriptions, providing a clear picture of the condition of teacher social competence at the research location. This approach allowed researchers to interpret the data objectively and systematically in accordance with the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019).

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

The results of data processing regarding Student Perceptions of Teachers' Social Competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District. In this study, aspects of communication skills, socializing effectively, being objective, being empathetic, and the ability to adapt to the environment were reviewed. Based on the results that researchers have conducted to obtain information related to Student Perceptions of Teachers' Social Competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Summary of Average Scores of Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Social Competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District

NO	INDICATOR	TOTAL	
		Average	Category
1	Communication skills	4,27	capable
2	Socializing effectively	4,29	capable
3	Being purposeful	4,41	capable
4	Being empathetic	4,37	capable
5	Ability to adapt to the environment	4,31	capable
<b>Average score</b>		<b>4,33</b>	<b>capable</b>

Based on the table above, the first indicator, communication skills, obtained an average score of 4.27, which falls into the "capable" category. This indicates that teachers are able to communicate well with students during the learning process. Teachers are assessed as being able to use clear and polite language, respond to student questions, and create effective communication during learning activities. With good communication skills, the relationship between teachers and students becomes more harmonious, thus supporting a conducive learning environment.

The second indicator, socializing effectively, obtained an average score of 4.29, which falls into the "capable" category. This result indicates that teachers are able to establish good social relationships with students, colleagues, and the school environment. Teachers are able to build harmonious relationships, respect students, and collaborate effectively within the educational environment, thus enabling effective social interactions at school.

The third indicator, being objective, obtained an average score of 4.41, which falls into the "capable" category. This result indicates that teachers are able to act fairly and non-discriminatory towards all students. Teachers treat students equally without distinction of background, academic ability, or personal affinities, so that students feel they are treated fairly during the learning process.

The fourth indicator, empathy, obtained an average score of 4.37, which falls within the "capable" category. This demonstrates that teachers show concern for students' well-being, both academically and emotionally. Teachers are deemed capable of understanding students' difficulties and providing positive attention, motivation, and support throughout the learning process.

The fifth indicator, adaptability to the environment, obtained an average score of 4.31, which falls within the "capable" category. This result demonstrates that teachers are able to adapt to school conditions, student characteristics, and changing learning situations. This adaptability helps create a comfortable, conducive, and inclusive learning environment for all students.

Based on the summary of all indicators, an overall average score of 4.33 was obtained, which falls within the "capable" category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social competence of teachers at the Sangir Balai Janggo District Vocational High School has been effectively implemented, based on student perceptions.

## Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, students' perceptions of teachers' social competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District obtained an overall average score of 4.33 and were categorized as capable. These results indicate that teachers have generally been able to demonstrate good social competence in the learning process and in their interactions within the school environment. Teachers who possess strong social competence are better able to create harmonious relationships with students, build effective communication, and foster a conducive learning atmosphere. This finding is in line with the opinion of Mulyasa (2019), who states that social competence enables teachers to establish positive relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and the wider community, thereby supporting effective educational processes. Furthermore, Hanipa (2024) explains that teachers with strong social competence are able to collaborate effectively, manage emotions appropriately, and develop inclusive learning environments that encourage student participation and comfort in learning.

The communication skills indicator obtained an average score of 4.27 and was categorized as capable. This finding shows that teachers are able to communicate clearly, politely, and effectively with students during classroom learning. Effective communication between teachers and students plays a significant role in helping students understand learning materials more easily and increasing student engagement during lessons. Teachers who communicate effectively are also able to create a more open and interactive classroom atmosphere. This result supports Wahyudi's (2012) opinion that communication skills are an essential component of teachers' social competence because effective communication helps teachers create conducive learning environments and improve student participation. In addition, Rahmawati and Nartani (2018) explain that effective teacher communication reflects the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships with students, thereby strengthening emotional bonds and improving students' confidence in the learning process. Teachers who communicate respectfully and openly can also reduce misunderstandings and encourage students to express their ideas more confidently during classroom activities.

The indicator of socializing effectively obtained an average score of 4.29 and was categorized as capable. This result indicates that teachers are able to establish positive social relationships with students, colleagues, and other members of the school community. Teachers who are socially competent can create harmonious interactions and collaborate effectively in educational environments. These findings reinforce the opinion of Sagala in Apriansyah (2023), which states that effective social interaction skills include the ability to build positive interpersonal relationships, cooperate with the school community, and create a comfortable learning atmosphere. Moreover, Amin (2019) explains that teachers as social beings are required to communicate and interact effectively not only within the classroom but also in the broader school and community environment. Through positive social interaction, teachers become role models for students in developing social attitudes, cooperation, and mutual respect. Effective social interaction also helps teachers better understand students' social conditions and emotional needs, thereby improving the quality of classroom management and student engagement.

The objective attitude indicator obtained the highest average score of 4.41 and was categorized as capable. This finding indicates that teachers are perceived as being fair and non-discriminatory toward students regardless of background, academic achievement, or personal characteristics. Teachers' objective attitudes contribute significantly to students' trust and comfort in the learning process because students feel treated equally and respected. This finding supports Janawi's (2019) theory, which states that objective teachers are able to provide fair assessments and equal treatment to all students, thereby creating a harmonious and inclusive learning environment. In addition, Silalahi and Naibaho (2023) argue that fairness and objectivity in teacher behavior are essential for creating inclusive classrooms where every student has equal opportunities to participate and develop their potential. Teachers who demonstrate fairness are more likely to gain students' respect and strengthen positive classroom relationships. This finding also suggests that objectivity is one of the most influential aspects shaping positive student perceptions of teachers' social competence.

The empathy indicator obtained an average score of 4.37 and was categorized as capable. These results indicate that teachers show concern for students' conditions and are able to understand the difficulties students experience in learning. Teacher empathy allows students to feel appreciated, supported, and emotionally secure during the learning process. This finding aligns

with Erika et al. (2023), who found that teacher empathy can increase student motivation and engagement in learning activities. Likewise, Ilena Dwika (2021) emphasized that empathetic teachers create more inclusive and harmonious classroom environments because students feel valued and emotionally supported. Empathy also helps teachers better understand students' emotional and academic needs, allowing them to provide more appropriate guidance and support. Through empathy, teachers can foster stronger emotional relationships with students, which positively influence student participation, confidence, and willingness to learn. In addition, empathetic attitudes help students develop positive social and emotional skills, such as mutual respect, tolerance, and cooperation.

The indicator of adaptability to the environment obtained an average score of 4.31 and was categorized as capable. This result indicates that teachers are able to adjust to school conditions, student characteristics, and changing learning situations. Teachers who are adaptive can modify their communication styles, teaching approaches, and classroom management strategies according to students' needs and environmental conditions. This finding supports the opinion of Habibullah et al. (2024), who state that adaptability is an important aspect of teachers' social competence because adaptive teachers are better prepared to face educational changes and create effective learning environments. Furthermore, Nengseh and Fauzi (2026) explain that teachers who can adapt to students' social and cultural diversity are more capable of creating inclusive and student-centered classrooms. Adaptability also enables teachers to overcome challenges more effectively, maintain classroom stability, and ensure that all students can participate actively in learning regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

Overall, the results of this study strengthen previous theories and findings regarding the importance of teachers' social competence in the educational process. Teachers' social competence not only functions as a social interaction skill but also contributes significantly to creating a conducive learning environment, increasing students' learning motivation, and building positive interpersonal relationships in schools. These findings are consistent with Sepriyanti et al. (2023), who explain that teachers' social competence plays an important role in increasing students' motivation and creating supportive learning environments. In addition, Aisha et al. (2025) state that teachers' social competence helps establish effective communication and collaboration between teachers, students, parents, and school communities, thereby supporting the success of educational activities.

This study also demonstrates that the objective attitude indicator is the most dominant aspect shaping students' positive perceptions of teachers' social competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District. This finding suggests that students highly value fairness, equal treatment, and non-discriminatory attitudes from teachers. Therefore, teacher social competence should not only focus on communication skills but also on the ability to demonstrate fairness, empathy, adaptability, and positive social interaction. These aspects collectively contribute to the development of a harmonious, inclusive, and effective learning environment.

Based on the overall findings, it can be concluded that teachers' social competence at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District has been implemented well according to students' perceptions. Good social competence enables teachers to establish harmonious relationships, create conducive learning environments, and improve students' comfort and motivation in learning. Therefore, teachers' social competence should continue to be maintained and enhanced through professional development, communication training, and reflective teaching practices in order to improve the quality of education and social interaction within the school environment.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that students' perceptions of the social competence of teachers at Vocational High Schools in Sangir Balai Janggo District fall within the "capable" category, with an overall average score of 4.33. These findings address the research question, which states that teachers are capable of implementing social competence effectively in the learning process and social interactions within the school environment. Indicators of communication skills, effective social interaction, objectivity, empathy, and adaptability to the environment all fall within the "capable" category. Among these indicators, objectivity received the highest score, indicating that teachers' fairness and non-discrimination are the aspects most

perceived by students in establishing positive learning relationships. These findings demonstrate that teachers' social competence plays a crucial role in creating harmonious relationships between teachers and students, fostering a conducive learning environment, and enhancing student comfort and motivation.

Based on these research findings, teachers are expected to continue maintaining and improving their social competence, particularly in strengthening communication skills, empathy, and adaptability to student characteristics and needs. Schools are also expected to provide support through ongoing training, coaching, and evaluation of teachers' social competence to improve the quality of learning interactions within the school. In addition, future researchers are expected to be able to develop research on teachers' social competence by linking it to other aspects such as learning motivation, learning outcomes, and classroom climate so that studies on teachers' social competence become broader and deeper in accordance with the development of educational needs.

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