

**Socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills
of junior high learners in coastal communities**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities of Roxas City, Capiz. Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 274 Grade 7 to 10 learners enrolled in three coastal public schools under the Schools Division of Roxas City, namely Cogon Integrated School, Dumolog National High School, and Culasi National High School for School Year 2025-2026. A researcher-made questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was utilized to measure the three variables. Socialization was assessed through interaction with peers, participation in activities, and communication comfort. Social awareness was measured through empathy, awareness of community issues, and respect for diversity. Interpersonal skills were evaluated through communication skills, conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork, and relationship-building. Mean, standard deviation, and Pearson r were used for data analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The study was anchored on Bandura's Social Learning Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory, which collectively explain how the unique geographic, economic, and cultural conditions of coastal communities shape the interpersonal development of adolescent learners. Findings revealed the levels of socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills among the respondents, and the study tested whether significant relationships existed among these three variables. The results are intended to provide evidence-based insights for teachers, school administrators, parents, community members, and future researchers seeking to strengthen the social and interpersonal development of Junior High School learners in coastal educational settings.

Keywords: Socialization, social awareness, interpersonal skills, coastal communities, junior high school learners.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills among adolescents has emerged as a pressing concern in educational and developmental research worldwide. As societies grow increasingly interconnected, the capacity of young individuals to

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communicate effectively, empathize with others, and navigate diverse social environments has taken on critical importance. International organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have underscored the significance of social and emotional learning (SEL) as a cornerstone of quality education, noting that students who possess strong interpersonal competencies are better positioned to participate meaningfully in civic life, sustain productive relationships, and adapt to a rapidly changing world (UNESCO, 2020). This global emphasis on SEL is reinforced by research evidence demonstrating that deficiencies in social skills during early adolescence are associated with long-term negative outcomes including academic underperformance, mental health challenges, and social exclusion (Garcia et al., 2021). These international imperatives collectively highlight the urgency of understanding how socialization processes and social awareness contribute to the interpersonal development of young learners across diverse cultural and geographic contexts, and they establish the broad justification for scholarly inquiry into these interconnected constructs.

The Philippine educational system has responded to these global imperatives by increasingly recognizing the role of socio-emotional development in shaping well-rounded learners. The K to 12 Basic Education Program explicitly emphasizes the cultivation of 21st-century skills, which include interpersonal competencies, collaborative work, and social responsibility. Despite these curricular mandates, studies conducted in the Philippine context reveal a persistent and troubling gap: while urban schools' benefit from rich and varied social environments that promote interpersonal skill development, learners in rural, indigenous, and geographically isolated communities often face conditions that limit their exposure to diverse social scenarios (Rodriguez and Kim, 2023). This urban-rural disparity is compounded by findings that adolescents in marginalized communities, particularly those dependent on fishing and subsistence livelihoods, are disproportionately affected by restricted access to extracurricular activities, social development programs, and culturally responsive educational interventions (Lopez et al., 2024). The convergence of these national findings with global concerns about SEL points to an urgent need for localized studies that examine how socialization and social awareness unfold within specific community contexts, rather than relying exclusively on generalizations derived from more privileged educational settings.

Within the Philippine landscape, coastal communities in Roxas City, Capiz present a distinct social environment that shapes the developmental experiences of Junior High School learners in ways that existing literature has not yet adequately captured. These communities are characterized by geographic proximity to the sea, economic reliance on fishing and related maritime industries, and deeply embedded cultural traditions. Learners in these settings grow up surrounded by close-knit communal practices, including collective fishing, communal celebrations, and intergenerational storytelling, which may simultaneously foster a strong sense of community belonging and limit exposure to broader social networks. As a teacher at Cogon Integrated School within the Schools Division of Roxas City, the researcher has observed firsthand that students in these coastal areas often display distinct patterns of peer interaction, community orientation, and interpersonal engagement compared to their urban counterparts, patterns that remain insufficiently examined in existing research literature. Patel and Thompson (2022) similarly noted that social awareness among adolescents in isolated communities tends to be shaped by localized environmental realities such as climate change, coastal erosion, and economic vulnerability, rather than by the broader civic and global issues to which urban learners are more frequently exposed. Taken together, these observations reveal that the social dynamics of coastal and maritime communities in the Philippine context constitute a significant gap in the literature, one that the present study directly seeks to address.

Socialization, as the first variable of interest in this study, refers to the ongoing process through which learners internalize social norms, values, and behavioral patterns necessary for effective participation in community life (Tatar, 2022). Garcia et al. (2021) established that effective socialization during adolescence significantly reduces the risk of social anxiety and promotes empathy, underscoring its foundational role in interpersonal development. The adolescent years represent a particularly pivotal period for socialization, as learners transition from childhood dependence toward greater independence and peer-oriented identity formation (Engel, 2015). In coastal communities specifically, socialization is deeply interwoven with cultural traditions including communal fishing rituals, collective responses to typhoons, and intergenerational practices, which provide rich but sometimes constrained social learning environments. For the purposes of this study, socialization is operationalized through three key dimensions: interaction with peers, participation in activities, and communication comfort. Interaction with peers refers to the collaborative engagement among students that facilitates the sharing of ideas and enhances critical thinking, creativity, and learning outcomes in educational settings (Hu and Li, 2022). Participation in activities reflects both the breadth and depth of engagement in structured and unstructured social contexts and provides opportunities for social interaction and skill development (Eccles and Barber, 2020). Communication comfort, as conceptualized by McCroskey and Richmond (1987), encompasses the level of ease and confidence that learners experience when expressing themselves, speaking in public, and using various communication channels to interact with peers. These three dimensions collectively capture the social experiences through which coastal learners develop behavioral competencies and relational habits, positioning socialization as a logical and theoretically grounded predictor of interpersonal skill outcomes.

Social awareness constitutes the second independent variable and is defined as the cognitive and emotional capacity to understand the perspectives, emotions, and social realities of others, including those from different backgrounds or facing distinct challenges (Hanley-Dafoe, 2024). Patel and Thompson (2022) found that social awareness is strongly correlated with civic engagement among adolescents; however, learners in geographically isolated communities frequently develop a narrower frame of social reference due to limited exposure to diverse populations and global issues. In the coastal context of Roxas City, social awareness may be particularly shaped by environmental realities such as the impacts of typhoons, rising sea levels, and the socioeconomic consequences of overfishing, which create unique conditions for developing empathy and community consciousness. This study operationalizes social awareness through three dimensions: empathy, awareness of community issues, and respect for diversity. Empathy, as described by Riess (2017), draws individuals toward understanding the nuances of others' experiences and plays a critical role in social interaction. Awareness of community issues refers to the consciousness and understanding of social, economic, and environmental challenges affecting one's local community, along with recognition of how individual and collective actions impact community well-being (Flanagan and Levine, 2010). Respect for diversity involves the appreciation and valuing of differences among people, including cultural backgrounds, beliefs, traditions, and social identities, coupled with a commitment to treating all individuals with dignity and fairness (Banks and McGee Banks, 2019). As a cognitive-affective resource, social awareness is expected to meaningfully contribute to learners' interpersonal effectiveness, as those who are more attuned to others' feelings and community dynamics are theoretically better equipped to communicate, collaborate, and resolve conflicts.

Interpersonal skills serve as the dependent variable in this study and are understood as the behavioral competencies that enable individuals to engage effectively with others across

varied social situations (McConnell, 2004). Williams (2018) established that strong interpersonal skills are associated with superior academic performance and long-term professional success, a finding that underscores their importance not only within the school context but also for future community engagement and employability. Rodriguez and Kim (2023) specifically documented that coastal youth who lack robust interpersonal competencies are at heightened risk for social isolation, bullying, and mental health difficulties, linking the absence of these skills to concrete and serious developmental consequences. For Junior High School learners, the adolescent window represents a critical period during which these competencies must be actively cultivated. This study measures interpersonal skills through four dimensions: communication skills, conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork, and relationship-building. Communication skills refer to the transmission of messages that involve shared understanding between participants across the contexts in which communication takes place (Saunders and Mills, 1999, as cited in Khan et al., 2017). Conflict resolution involves the essential mechanisms for navigating disagreements and fostering harmonious social environments through skills aimed at resolving disputes amicably between two or more parties (Pollack, 2025). Cooperation and teamwork refer to the willingness and ability to work collaboratively with others toward shared goals, including sharing responsibilities, respecting diverse contributions, and compromising personal preferences for collective benefit (Johnson and Johnson, 2009). Relationship-building refers to cultivating mutual trust, connection, and understanding between individuals or groups across personal and professional contexts (Kalaw, 2025). Together, these four dimensions represent the specific behavioral outcomes that socialization and social awareness are hypothesized to predict, and they situate interpersonal skills as the central focus of the study's inquiry.

The theoretical architecture of this study rests on three complementary frameworks that together explain how socialization and social awareness shape interpersonal skill development among Junior High School learners in coastal communities. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) serves as the primary theoretical foundation, asserting that individuals acquire behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses through observing and modeling others within their social environment. Bandura identified four key processes in observational learning, namely attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation, which explain how Junior High School learners in coastal communities acquire interpersonal behaviors by observing family members, community elders, fishermen, and peers. The theory further introduces the principle of reciprocal determinism, which posits that behavior, personal factors, and environmental influences interact bidirectionally (Bandura, 1986). This bidirectional interaction explains why learners in coastal communities may develop distinct interpersonal skill profiles, as their behaviors are simultaneously shaped by personal characteristics and the unique socio-cultural environment of their coastal setting. Social Learning Theory is thus directly applicable to the socialization variable, providing the mechanism through which interpersonal skills are modeled and internalized within the coastal social environment.

Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979) provides the contextual framework for understanding how the nested environmental systems of coastal communities' shape learner development. Bronfenbrenner described five environmental systems, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, which collectively capture the multi-layered influences on human development. For coastal learners in Roxas City, the microsystem encompasses immediate interactions within family, school, and peer groups embedded in maritime culture; the mesosystem connects home, school, and community environments; the exosystem covers the indirect influence of parents' occupational realities in the fishing industry; and the macrosystem reflects the broader cultural values of coastal communities. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) later emphasized proximal processes,

understood as enduring daily interactions, as the primary engines of development, which in the coastal context include communal activities, family routines, and peer interactions centered on maritime life. Where Bandura's theory explains the mechanism of social learning, Bronfenbrenner's framework contextualizes that learning within the specific geographic, economic, and cultural systems that define coastal Roxas City, demonstrating that interpersonal development cannot be separated from the nested environments in which it occurs.

Daniel Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory (1995) complements both preceding frameworks by identifying the specific affective competencies that underlie social awareness and interpersonal effectiveness. Goleman describes five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Empathy, understood as the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others, constitutes the key component of the social awareness variable in this study, while social skills, defined as the ability to manage relationships and build networks, constitute the core of the interpersonal skills variable. Goleman (1995) argued that emotional intelligence is as critical as cognitive intelligence for life success and that these competencies are developable through education and experience. In coastal communities, where survival and livelihood frequently depend on mutual support and cooperation, the emotional context of family and community life may cultivate distinctive patterns of empathic awareness and interpersonal responsiveness. Goleman's theory thus provides the measurable affective dimensions of what is being developed through socialization and social awareness processes, and it bridges the gap between the two independent variables and the dependent variable by specifying the emotional competencies that link them.

The three theoretical frameworks converge into a mutually reinforcing explanatory structure. Social Learning Theory explains the mechanism through which interpersonal skills are acquired through observation and modeling within the coastal social environment. Ecological Systems Theory contextualizes this learning process within the nested environmental systems that define coastal communities in Roxas City, affirming that interpersonal development cannot be separated from the geographic, economic, and cultural realities of this specific setting. Emotional Intelligence Theory identifies the precise cognitive and affective competencies, including empathy, social skills, and emotional awareness, that are shaped by socialization and that in turn constitute interpersonal effectiveness. The interdependent nature of coastal communities creates rich opportunities for observational learning within unique nested environmental systems that foster distinctive emotional awareness and interpersonal responsiveness, making all three theoretical lenses not only individually relevant but collectively necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Informed by these theoretical foundations and guided by the identified gaps in existing literature, the conceptual framework of this study positions socialization and social awareness as independent variables and interpersonal skills as the dependent variable. Socialization, operationalized through interaction with peers, participation in activities, and communication comfort, represents the experiential and behavioral processes through which learners develop social competencies within their coastal community. Social awareness, measured through empathy, awareness of community issues, and respect for diversity, represents the cognitive and affective understanding of the social world that learners construct through these socialization experiences. Interpersonal skills, encompassing communication skills, conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork, and relationship-building, represent the behavioral outcomes predicted by the two independent variables. The framework proposes that learners who actively engage in socialization processes and demonstrate higher levels of social awareness will exhibit stronger interpersonal competencies. While global and national studies

have established the general importance of SEL for adolescent development, and while theoretical frameworks offer robust explanations of how social learning, ecological context, and emotional intelligence contribute to interpersonal growth, the specific intersection of these dynamics within the coastal communities of Roxas City remains unexamined. The present study therefore addresses this gap by generating contextually grounded and practically useful insights for educators, school administrators, parents, community members, and policymakers seeking to enhance the interpersonal development of Junior High School learners in coastal educational settings.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities of Cogon Integrated School, Dumolog National High School, and Culasi National High School for the school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of socialization of Junior High School learners in coastal communities as a whole and in terms of interaction with peers, participation in activities, and communication comfort?
2. What is the level of social awareness of Junior High School learners in coastal communities as a whole and in terms of empathy, awareness of community issues, and respect for diversity?
3. What is the level of interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities as a whole and in terms of communication skills, conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork, and relationship-building?
4. Is there a significant relationship among the socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities?

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted to determine the current level of socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners living in coastal communities. Specifically, it aimed to assess how these three factors manifest among students and to identify whether significant relationships exist among them. By doing so, the study sought to provide insights that may help teachers, school administrators, and community leaders strengthen programs that support learners' social development within coastal environments.

The study employed a survey-correlational research design. The descriptive component was used to determine and describe the current levels of socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of the respondents, while the correlational component examined whether these variables are significantly related to one another. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to measure existing conditions objectively and analyze possible connections among the variables without manipulating any factors. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research focuses on measuring variables objectively and analyzing patterns through statistical procedures, making it suitable for studies that aim to determine levels, frequencies, and relationships. As described by Fraenkel and Wallen (2012), descriptive correlational studies allow the researcher to observe and measure variables as they naturally occur and then use correlational analysis to determine whether associations exist among them. This design is widely used in social science research because it enables researchers to both

describe phenomena and explore potential connections among variables in a systematic and objective manner.

The participants of this study were 274 Junior High School learners enrolled in three coastal public schools in Roxas City, namely Cogon Integrated School, Dumolog National High School, and Culasi National High School, during School Year 2025 to 2026. The study focused on Grade 7 to Grade 10 learners, who are in the developmental stage where peer interaction, social understanding, and relationship-building are highly observable. The sample of 274 was drawn from a total population of 867 Junior High School learners across the three schools using the Taro Yamane formula and stratified random sampling by school. Cogon Integrated School contributed 26 participants out of its total population of 81, representing 9.50% of the total sample. Dumolog National High School contributed 106 participants from a population of 336, representing 38.70% of the total sample. Culasi National High School contributed 142 participants from a population of 450, accounting for the largest proportion at 51.80% of the total sample.

Data were gathered using three researcher-made questionnaires, each designed to measure one of the three main variables: socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills. The Socialization Skills Questionnaire was developed to assess the level of social engagement and interaction among Junior High School learners in coastal communities across three dimensions: interaction with peers, participation in activities, and communication comfort. The instrument consisted of 23 items and was subjected to pilot testing with 30 participants prior to actual data collection. The pilot test yielded a Cronbach's alpha score of .705, indicating good internal consistency and reliability among the questionnaire items. Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale in which a score of 5 corresponded to Always, 4 to Often, 3 to Sometimes, 2 to Rarely, and 1 to Never. For the interpretation of mean scores, the following scale was applied: a mean range of 4.50 to 5.00 was described as Very High, 3.50 to 4.49 as High, 2.50 to 3.49 as Moderate, 1.50 to 2.49 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.49 as Very Low.

The Social Awareness Questionnaire was designed to measure the level of social awareness of Junior High School learners in coastal communities in terms of empathy, awareness of community issues, and respect for diversity. The instrument consisted of 22 items and underwent content validation by a panel of experts, after which modifications were made in response to their advice and recommendations. Pilot testing was conducted with 30 participants and yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .815, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability. The same 5-point Likert scale was used, where 5 corresponded to Always, 4 to Often, 3 to Sometimes, 2 to Rarely, and 1 to Never. The descriptive interpretation of mean scores followed the same scale: 4.50 to 5.00 as Very High, 3.50 to 4.49 as High, 2.50 to 3.49 as Moderate, 1.50 to 2.49 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.49 as Very Low.

The Interpersonal Skills Questionnaire was developed to measure the level of interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities across four dimensions: communication skills, conflict resolution, cooperation and teamwork, and relationship-building. The instrument consisted of 34 items and likewise underwent content validation by a panel of experts, with modifications incorporated based on their recommendations. Prior to actual data collection, the instrument was pilot tested with 30 participants and yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .926, which confirms a high level of internal consistency and reliability among the questionnaire items. Responses were measured using the same 5-point Likert scale assigning values of 5 for Always, 4 for Often, 3 for Sometimes, 2 for Rarely, and 1 for Never. The descriptive interpretation of mean scores applied

the same range: 4.50 to 5.00 as Very High, 3.50 to 4.49 as High, 2.50 to 3.49 as Moderate, 1.50 to 2.49 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.49 as Very Low.

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant school authorities. The consent of parents and guardians and the assent of learner participants were likewise secured before any data gathering activity was undertaken. The validated questionnaires were administered to the participants during class hours or at a scheduled time convenient to the school. The researcher personally collected all accomplished questionnaires to ensure a high retrieval rate. All collected data were subsequently organized and encoded for statistical analysis. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed throughout the entire data gathering process.

The data gathered were analyzed using two statistical tools. Mean and standard deviation were used to determine the levels of socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills among the respondents. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient, referred to as Pearson r , was employed to determine whether significant relationships exist among the three variables, namely socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills. All inferential tests were conducted at a 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to facilitate data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and discussion of the study examining the socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities. A total of 274 respondents were drawn from three coastal public schools in Roxas City, namely Cogon Integrated School, Dumolog National High School, and Culasi National High School, for School Year 2025 to 2026, using the Taro Yamane formula and stratified random sampling by school. The study employed a survey-correlational research design, utilizing three researcher-made questionnaires with established reliability coefficients to gather data on the three variables. Mean and standard deviation were used for descriptive analysis, while the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson r) was employed for inferential analysis at the 0.05 level of significance. The discussion that follows presents and interprets the findings in direct relation to the objectives of the study, integrating relevant scholarly literature to contextualize and deepen the analysis of the data gathered.

Socialization skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities

The overall level of socialization skills of Junior High School learners enrolled in schools located in coastal communities was found to be high ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.50$). This high standing was consistently observed across all three dimensions of socialization: interaction with peers ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.53$), participation in activities ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.50$), and communication comfort ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.50$), each of which was likewise described as high. Among the three indicators, interaction with peers obtained the highest mean, a result that is attributable to the close-knit and communal nature of coastal community living, where children naturally engage with one another through shared activities such as fishing-related tasks, communal gatherings, and outdoor play, thereby building robust peer relationships that carry over into the school setting. Communication comfort was equally described as high, reflecting the learners' ease in expressing themselves socially, a competence cultivated through daily exposure to oral communication practices deeply embedded in coastal livelihoods, from coordinating fishing activities to participating in community trade and events. Participation in activities, while also described as high, recorded a slightly lower standing among the three

indicators, which may be attributed to contextual challenges such as economic constraints or the need to assist families in livelihood tasks, potentially limiting learners' access to organized activities outside of school hours.

These findings affirm that the communal and interdependent character of coastal community life serves as a natural training ground for socialization, equipping Junior High School learners with the social confidence, peer engagement skills, and communicative ease that meaningfully shape their development within and beyond the school environment. The close-knit community structures, shared marine-based livelihood practices, and collectivist cultural dispositions appear to offer adolescents rich, real-world opportunities to develop their socialization skills not merely through school but through the communities themselves. This interpretation is supported by Pollnac et al. (2018) and Cohen et al. (2019), who found that children in fishing communities are exposed to marine-based work from an early age, participating and observing in ways that equip them with social skills, community cooperation, and communication. Aswani et al. (2018) and Berkes (2018) similarly affirm that collectivist values, community solidarity, and service orientation are hallmarks of coastal macrosystems, and that these values directly reinforce socialization as community members cooperate and participate in activities from an early age. Taken together, these findings suggest that the unique socio-ecological environment of coastal communities acts as a powerful incubator for adolescent social development. However, Peterson et al. (2020) caution that coastal youth tend to experience disconnections between school curricula and the community-based value placed on practical, experiential learning, implying that the high socialization skills observed may be more attributable to community life than to formal schooling and may not necessarily be sustained within school settings without intentional integration. Educators and school administrators in coastal schools should therefore tap into these community strengths by integrating maritime culture and knowledge into the curriculum, not only to enhance the identity coherence of learners but also to make schooling more relevant to their lived experiences. Since learners have already demonstrated strong socialization tendencies, social-emotional learning programs may be implemented as enhancement rather than remedial interventions, capitalizing on existing strengths to develop even more advanced competencies. These findings also underscore the importance of supporting and preserving the family-school-community alignment that coastal settings naturally provide, as disruptions to this ecosystem, whether through economic volatility, climate change, or curricula that are unresponsive to coastal knowledge, could potentially dismantle the very conditions that produced these favorable socialization outcomes.

Social awareness skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities

The overall level of social awareness skills among Junior High School learners in coastal communities was found to be high ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.44$). This high standing was consistently observed across all three dimensions: empathy ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.47$), awareness of community issues ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.45$), and respect for diversity ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.43$), each of which was likewise described as high. Among the three indicators, respect for diversity obtained the highest mean, suggesting that learners in coastal communities have developed a notable appreciation for differences among people, a disposition that may be rooted in their daily exposure to diverse community members, including fisherfolk of varying backgrounds, visiting traders, and seasonal workers, whose interactions teach young people to value and accommodate difference. Empathy also registered a high level, affirming that these learners are capable of recognizing and sharing the feelings of others, a competence naturally cultivated in

coastal settings where shared hardships such as the impact of storms, poor fishing seasons, and economic uncertainty foster a deep sense of mutual understanding and compassion within the community. Awareness of community issues, while also high, recorded a comparatively lower standing among the three indicators, which may reflect the fact that while learners are emotionally attuned to their immediate social environment, their understanding of broader community concerns and systemic issues may still be developing given their age and limited exposure to formal civic discourse.

These findings underscore that the lived experiences of Junior High School learners in coastal communities, shaped by interdependence, shared vulnerability, and cultural diversity, serve as powerful informal influences that nurture a high level of social awareness. This interpretation is supported by Coulthard et al. (2017), who noted that in coastal communities, when a fishing boat is lost or a family faces hardship, the entire community feels the impact, creating natural opportunities for empathic development. The shared vulnerability and interdependence of marine-based livelihoods thus constitute fertile ground for the development of empathic potential among youth. The finding is further consonant with Portela-Pino et al. (2021), who found that learners who participate in extracurricular and community activities tend to be more socially aware, likely because such participation exposes them to situations where they interact with others, experience the feelings of different people, and identify with various social groups. The implication for education policy is significant: these children already possess a high social-emotional base that can serve as a springboard for further development. Schools in coastal communities may capitalize on the social-emotional strengths of their students by designing learning programs that incorporate maritime culture, community issues, and collaborative learning, as these are likely to carry great meaning for students while enhancing their inherent empathic and community-oriented tendencies. Social-emotional learning programs aligned with the frameworks of collaborative work and environmental management that these students are already familiar with are likely to yield particularly meaningful outcomes in this context.

Interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities

The overall level of interpersonal skills among Junior High School learners in coastal communities was found to be high ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.48$). This high standing was consistently observed across all four dimensions: communication skills ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.52$), conflict resolution ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.49$), cooperation and teamwork ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.48$), and relationship-building ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.47$), each of which was likewise described as high. Among the four indicators, communication skills obtained the highest mean, suggesting that the coastal youth have acquired considerable communicative competence, both verbally and non-verbally, likely due to the need for coordination in fishing activities, community gatherings, and cooperative engagements that are characteristic of maritime life. Relationship-building registered the second highest mean, a result that may be related to the relational embeddedness of the coastal community, where the formation and maintenance of stable peer groups and intergenerational community relationships naturally provide opportunities for developing significant interpersonal connections. Cooperation and teamwork obtained a mean equal to the overall mean for interpersonal skills, a finding that may be linked to the collectivistic orientation of marine-based activities, where coordination among crew members, cooperative fishing, and shared risk management are essential rather than optional. Conflict resolution, while also described as high, recorded the lowest mean among the four indicators, suggesting that although learners are effective in cooperation, the skill of resolving conflicts in

a more formalized manner and in emotionally charged situations may still require additional instructional attention.

These findings carry far-reaching implications for education and community development policy. The communal nature of coastal life, characterized by collective labor, shared environmental risks, close-knit community networks, and intergenerational knowledge sharing, appears to serve as a strong and informal training ground for the development of interpersonal skills, affirming that learners are acquiring these competencies not only in classrooms but through the very rhythms of community life. This interpretation is supported by Klinkosz et al. (2021) and Lubis et al. (2019), who established that interpersonal skills are an important driving force behind social achievement and that interpersonal competence actively develops and increases during adolescence, validating that the Junior High School stage is precisely when such skills are expected to flourish, particularly in highly social environments such as coastal communities. Nonetheless, Lubis et al. (2019) also identified problems faced by students during this developmental period, including experiences of being ostracized, making fun of one another, encountering unpleasant classroom atmospheres, feelings of isolation, and selfish behavior, which present a counterpoint to the high ratings obtained and raise the possibility that self-report instruments may have captured idealized rather than actual behaviors. Despite this caveat, the overall pattern of findings is consistent with the theoretical proposition that interpersonal skills are deeply nurtured by the social ecology of coastal communities. Educators in these schools may capitalize on this strong foundation by employing learning strategies that emulate cooperative community behaviors, such as project-based group work, peer mentoring, and community service, rather than individualistic learning methods. Social-emotional learning interventions aimed at strengthening conflict resolution skills should be designed with cultural sensitivity, emphasizing group harmony and community well-being in ways that resonate with the collectivist values already present in these communities.

Relationship among socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities

The Pearson r analysis conducted at the 0.05 level of significance yielded differentiated patterns of association among the three variables. The correlation between socialization skills and social awareness skills was found to be nonsignificant ($r = 0.012$, $p = 0.850$), indicating that the level of socialization among the learners does not significantly predict or relate to their level of social awareness. Similarly, the correlation between socialization skills and interpersonal skills was likewise nonsignificant ($r = -0.020$, $p = 0.759$), indicating that participation in social activities does not significantly contribute to the development of communication, conflict resolution, and other interpersonal competencies among this population. In contrast, the correlation between social awareness skills and interpersonal skills yielded a strong and statistically significant relationship ($r = 0.801$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that learners who demonstrate higher levels of social awareness also tend to exhibit stronger interpersonal skills. Based on these results, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship among the variables is accepted with respect to the pairing of socialization skills and social awareness skills, as well as socialization skills and interpersonal skills, but is rejected with respect to the pairing of social awareness skills and interpersonal skills.

The nonsignificant relationships involving socialization skills suggest that the organic and community-based socialization experiences of these learners, while rich and meaningful in their cultural context, have not yet been translated into measurable gains in social awareness or

interpersonal competence within the school setting. This finding points to the important realization that even amid the rich and informal socialization experiences available in the fishing barangays of Roxas City, such experiences may not automatically lead to the development of more formalized interpersonal or social-emotional competencies. The informal socialization process occurring at home, in the barangay, and within the coastal community, as culturally rich as it is, may not yet be adequately bridged into the formal school environment, resulting in a gap between lived social experience and measurable developmental outcomes. There is thus a need to strengthen the link between families, schools, and communities in coastal schools, transforming the passive socialization experiences of learners into more active, reflective, and socially engaged processes. By inviting community elders, fishing experts, and cooperative leaders into schools as mentors and resource persons, the everyday socialization of learners can be consciously integrated into the educational process, creating the conditions for social awareness to develop more systematically and, in turn, for interpersonal skills to be further strengthened.

The strong and significant relationship between social awareness and interpersonal skills ($r = 0.801$, $p = 0.000$) is the most substantively important finding of this study and carries clear and actionable implications. Individuals who are sensitive to the emotional states, perspectives, and social behaviors of others are better equipped to manage interpersonal relationships effectively, and social awareness thus functions as a prerequisite for the effective development of interpersonal competence. This finding is strongly supported by Lin et al. (2024), who demonstrated that social awareness and relationship skills fully mediated the relationship between boys' parent-child and teacher-student relationships, reinforcing the centrality of social awareness as a link to successful interpersonal outcomes. Bishop (2023), drawing on data from nearly 2,000 young adolescents across 42 countries, similarly established that social awareness, particularly in relation to respect for differences and the development of empathy, was most central to students' interpersonal concerns, affirming the cross-cultural relevance of social awareness as a foundation for interpersonal competence. Goleman and Boyatzis, as cited in the reviewed literature, further provide theoretical grounding for this finding by establishing that social awareness, encompassing empathy, organizational awareness, and service orientation, constitutes an integral foundation for effective social interaction, which is essentially what interpersonal competence entails. Coulthard et al. (2017) additionally found that the shared risks and interdependent nature of coastal living provide natural opportunities for the development of empathic competencies, suggesting that the coastal setting of Roxas City may itself be fertile ground for deepening social awareness, which this study has demonstrated to be significantly and strongly associated with interpersonal skill development. Programs aimed at enhancing interpersonal skills in coastal schools should therefore begin by cultivating social awareness, as the data clearly indicate that it is this variable, rather than socialization alone, that is most directly and powerfully linked to interpersonal competence among Junior High School learners in these communities.

Taken together, the findings of this study paint a coherent and contextually grounded portrait of adolescent social development in the coastal communities of Roxas City. Junior High School learners demonstrated high levels across all three variables, with overall means of 3.75 for socialization skills, 3.79 for social awareness skills, and 3.86 for interpersonal skills, all falling within the high descriptive range. The correlational analysis revealed that while socialization skills were not significantly associated with either social awareness skills ($r = 0.012$, $p = 0.850$) or interpersonal skills ($r = -0.020$, $p = 0.759$), social awareness skills were strongly and significantly correlated with interpersonal skills ($r = 0.801$, $p = 0.000$). These findings collectively affirm the unique developmental influence of the coastal community environment, validate the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study, and highlight social

awareness as the critical variable that bridges community-based experience with formal interpersonal competence. The results contribute empirical evidence specific to coastal community contexts in the Philippine setting, addressing a gap in the existing literature and offering practical direction for school-based social-emotional learning interventions. The subsequent chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations drawn from these findings, alongside proposed strategic directions for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to strengthen the social and interpersonal development of Junior High School learners in coastal educational communities.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the socialization skills, social awareness skills, and interpersonal skills of Junior High School learners in coastal communities, specifically those enrolled at Cogon Integrated School, Dumolog National High School, and Culasi National High School for the school year 2025-2026. The study sought to determine the level of each variable, examine the relationships among them, and generate recommendations for improving social competencies among coastal learners. A sample of 274 respondents was drawn from a total population of 867 Junior High School learners using the Taro Yamane formula with stratified random sampling. Data were gathered through three sets of researcher-made questionnaires: a 23-item Socialization Skills Questionnaire, a 22-item Social Awareness Questionnaire, and a 26-item Interpersonal Skills Questionnaire, all of which underwent pilot testing for validity and reliability. The mean, standard deviation, and Pearson r were used as statistical tools, with the level of significance set at 0.05 alpha level. The independent variables were socialization skills and social awareness skills, while interpersonal skills served as the dependent variable.

The results of the study revealed that the Junior High School learners in the three participating coastal schools demonstrated a high level of socialization skills, a high level of social awareness skills, and a high level of interpersonal skills. With respect to the relationships among these variables, the findings showed no significant relationship between socialization skills and social awareness skills, and no significant relationship between socialization skills and interpersonal skills. However, a significant and positive relationship was established between social awareness skills and interpersonal skills.

The high level of socialization skills observed among the respondents indicates that Junior High School learners in coastal communities possess a well-developed capacity for meaningful social engagement. When socialization reaches a high level, learners are more likely to develop a strong sense of belonging, cultural identity, and social responsibility, which are foundational attributes for positive adolescent development. Learners with strong socialization skills may consequently become more cooperative, respectful, and socially competent individuals who are capable of contributing meaningfully to their communities. The high socialization observed may further result in reduced incidences of social withdrawal, peer conflict, and behavioral disengagement in school, as learners who are well-socialized tend to navigate social situations with greater ease and confidence. In the long term, this high level of socialization may serve as a protective factor against social maladjustment, fostering a generation of young people in coastal communities who are not only academically engaged but also socially grounded and community-oriented.

Similarly, the high level of social awareness skills among the respondents signifies that these learners possess a well-developed capacity to perceive, understand, and respond to the emotions, needs, and social dynamics around them. When social awareness is high, learners

are better positioned to engage empathetically with others, recognize the impact of community issues on people's lives, and demonstrate genuine respect for diversity, which are competencies that are increasingly vital in a multicultural and interconnected world. As a result, learners with elevated social awareness may become more inclusive, emotionally intelligent, and civically responsible individuals who are sensitive to the experiences of others and motivated to contribute to the common good. The consequences of this high level are far-reaching, as learners are likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors such as volunteerism, peer support, and conflict avoidance, while also developing a stronger sense of social justice and community stewardship. In essence, high social awareness among these coastal learners may lay the groundwork for a socially conscious generation capable of addressing the unique challenges faced by their communities with empathy and informed action.

The high level of interpersonal skills further indicates that these learners are well-equipped to initiate and sustain meaningful relationships, express themselves clearly and assertively, and navigate disagreements constructively, all of which are competencies essential for both academic success and personal well-being. Learners with strong interpersonal skills may become effective collaborators, empathetic communicators, and resilient problem-solvers who are capable of thriving in diverse social and professional environments in the future. The consequences of this high level extend beyond the individual, as learners who possess strong interpersonal competencies are more likely to contribute positively to group dynamics in the classroom, foster a supportive peer culture, and serve as agents of harmony within their communities. Over time, these learners may develop into community leaders, cooperative workers, and socially adept adults whose interpersonal strengths are shaped and reinforced by the communal values inherent in coastal community life.

The finding that socialization skills and social awareness skills were not significantly correlated suggests that, while both are highly developed among the learners, they operate through relatively independent developmental pathways. Being well-socialized does not automatically translate into heightened social awareness, and the reverse is equally true. Similarly, the non-significant relationship between socialization skills and interpersonal skills implies that socialization alone, though important, may not be a sufficient predictor of how effectively learners engage in interpersonal interactions, pointing to the influence of other factors such as emotional maturity, family dynamics, or formal social-emotional learning. In sharp contrast, the significant and strong positive correlation between social awareness skills and interpersonal skills affirms that learners who are more attuned to the feelings, needs, and perspectives of others are also more capable of communicating effectively, resolving conflicts, building relationships, and working cooperatively with their peers. This consequential finding suggests that enhancing social awareness among Junior High School learners in coastal communities may directly lead to improvements in their interpersonal competence, and that interventions targeting empathy, community awareness, and respect for diversity are likely to yield the most meaningful gains in the learners' overall social development.

In view of these conclusions, the study advances a set of recommendations directed at school heads, teachers, and parents across the three participating schools, organized around the four research findings and oriented toward practical, sustainable improvement of learners' social competencies. With respect to socialization, school heads may consider scheduling at least one inter-section or inter-grade socialization activity per quarter, such as a Coastal Community Day, where learners collaborate in group tasks inspired by local livelihood and coastal culture, and may also consider allocating a specific slot in the school calendar, preferably every second Friday of the month, for structured peer interaction activities within the school premises. Teachers may incorporate at least two group-based, interactive learning tasks per week in their subject areas, such as think-pair-share, jigsaw reading, or collaborative

problem-solving activities, and at least once per grading period may organize a community-based collaborative project, such as coastal clean-up planning or a fisherfolk interview project. Parents may be encouraged through homeroom meetings to allow and actively support their children's participation in at least one community-based activity per month and to create a designated family communication time at home of at least ten minutes nightly to strengthen socialization habits, while maintaining coordination with class advisers through existing parent-teacher channels.

Regarding social awareness, school heads may consider formally including a Social Awareness strand in the annual School Improvement Plan with specific, measurable targets reviewed at the end of each school year, and may initiate a formal partnership with at least one local government unit, coastal barangay council, or non-government organization per school year to provide meaningful community immersion experiences. Teachers may use experiential and reflective learning strategies such as case studies on local coastal issues, role-playing activities on diversity and inclusion, and Socratic discussions on community problems in at least one subject lesson per week, and may conduct structured empathy-building activities at least once per quarter. Parents may consider initiating at least one guided family discussion per week on relevant community issues and encouraging their children to join at least one community service activity per semester to cultivate a concrete sense of social responsibility.

With regard to interpersonal skills, school heads may consider developing and approving a school-based Interpersonal Skills Program to be integrated into homeroom guidance sessions, Values Education classes, and co-curricular activities, and may organize at least one professional development seminar per year for teachers on facilitating communication skills building, peer conflict resolution, and cooperative learning, with a corresponding budget allocation from the school Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses. Teachers may use cooperative learning structures such as numbered heads together, reciprocal teaching, and group investigation in at least three subject areas per week, and may conduct a quarterly workshop focused on interpersonal skills. Parents may consciously model constructive interpersonal behaviors at home and may consider attending at least one school-organized Parent Effectiveness Seminar per year.

Given the significant and positive association between social awareness and interpersonal skills, all stakeholders are encouraged to adopt an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses the development of both competencies. School heads may consider creating a Technical Working Group composed of selected teachers, guidance counselors, and parent representatives tasked with designing an integrated Social Awareness and Interpersonal Skills module, and may support at least one action research per school annually on variables associated with these competencies in the coastal community context. Teachers may develop integrated lesson plans that incorporate both social awareness themes and interpersonal skills practice within a single learning activity, contextualized to the realities of coastal learners using local situations such as fishing community challenges, typhoon preparedness, or marine resource management as anchors for learning. Parents may actively participate in at least one school program per quarter designed to build empathy and cooperation, and may maintain regular communication with class advisers and guidance counselors at minimum once per grading period to ensure consistent reinforcement at home.

The findings of this study may also serve as a foundational reference for further investigation into the social competencies of Junior High School learners in coastal communities. Future researchers may consider replicating this study in other coastal schools within the division or region to determine whether the high levels of socialization, social awareness, and interpersonal skills observed here are consistent across different coastal

community contexts in the Philippines. They may also explore other variables not covered in this study, such as family structure, socioeconomic status, digital media exposure, or cultural identity, that may further explain the development of these social competencies among coastal learners. Given the significant and positive relationship found between social awareness and interpersonal skills, future researchers may likewise conduct experimental or quasi-experimental studies to test the effectiveness of intervention programs that simultaneously target both constructs. Furthermore, researchers may consider developing and validating a context-specific measurement tool designed for coastal community learners, as the instruments used in this study were researcher-made and may benefit from further standardization and norming for broader application in similar educational settings.

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