

# Evaluating the Effectiveness of Socio-Emotional Learning Programs in Enhancing Student Well-being

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**Abstract-** This study evaluated the effectiveness of socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs in enhancing student well-being among a diverse sample of middle adolescents. The demographic analysis revealed a balanced age distribution, nearly equal gender representation, and a significant portion of participants from public schools and varied geographical locations. Findings indicated a generally positive impact on student well-being, with 40% of respondents reporting "Good" or "Excellent" overall well-being. Notable strengths are observed in social skills, emotional regulation, and self-awareness; however, 30% of students rated their well-being as "Neutral," highlighting areas for improvement. While many students express confidence in managing emotions and resolving conflicts, a considerable number remain uncertain, indicating a need for targeted interventions. The results underscored the importance of continuous evaluation and tailored support to enhance the effectiveness of SEL programs, ensuring that all students benefit from comprehensive socio-emotional development.

**Keywords-** *Socio-emotional learning, student well-being, middle adolescents, emotional regulation, social skills, self-awareness etc.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the critical role that socio-emotional learning (SEL) plays in the holistic development of students. As educational systems strive to prepare learners not only academically but also emotionally and socially, SEL programs have emerged as essential components in fostering student well-being. This approach emphasizes the development of skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which are fundamental for navigating both personal and academic challenges. Students today face a myriad of challenges, from academic stress to social pressures and mental health issues. Research indicates that mental health problems among children and adolescents are on the rise, highlighting vulnerabilities in students'

emotional resilience and coping strategies. In this context, SEL programs offer a promising solution to enhance student well-being, enabling individuals to develop competencies that can buffer against stress and improve overall mental health. SEL programs are designed for implementation within educational settings, offering structured curricula that integrate socio-emotional learning with academic content. These programs can vary in structure and focus, ranging from school-wide initiatives to classroom-based interventions. Some emphasize specific skills, such as conflict resolution and empathy, while others foster a positive school climate that supports emotional and social development. This diversity in implementation reflects the understanding that effective SEL programs must be tailored to the unique needs of students and the specific contexts of their schools. The effectiveness of SEL programs has been the subject of extensive research. Numerous studies have demonstrated that students who participate in well-designed SEL programs experience a range of positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, enhanced social skills, and better emotional regulation. For instance, a meta-analysis of SEL programs revealed that students involved in these initiatives showed significantly greater improvements in social-emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors compared to their peers who did not participate. Additionally, these students exhibited higher academic achievement and lower levels of disruptive behavior, indicating a profound impact on both emotional well-being and academic success. However, the effectiveness of SEL programs is not solely contingent upon their design; implementation quality is equally critical. Successful SEL initiatives require a supportive school environment, professional development for educators, and ongoing assessment and refinement of the program. Research has shown that when teachers are adequately trained to deliver SEL curricula and when there is strong leadership commitment to fostering a socio-emotional culture within the

school, the impact of SEL programs is significantly enhanced. Conversely, poorly implemented programs may fail to achieve their intended outcomes, leading to skepticism about their efficacy. Evaluating the effectiveness of SEL programs extends beyond academic performance and behavior; it encompasses broader dimensions of student well-being, including mental health, emotional resilience, and life satisfaction. Recent studies emphasize the importance of measuring these dimensions to fully understand the impact of SEL initiatives. For example, longitudinal studies have found that students who engaged in SEL programs reported higher levels of life satisfaction and lower rates of anxiety and depression over time. Such findings underscore the necessity of considering emotional and psychological indicators alongside traditional academic metrics when assessing the success of SEL programs.

Despite the growing body of evidence supporting SEL, challenges remain in the widespread adoption and sustainability of these programs. Many schools face barriers such as limited funding, insufficient training for educators, and a lack of awareness about the importance of socio-emotional competencies. Moreover, there is a pressing need for research exploring the long-term effects of SEL programs, particularly in diverse populations and varying cultural contexts. Understanding how socio-emotional skills can be cultivated across different student demographics is essential for developing inclusive and effective programs. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of socio-emotional learning programs in enhancing student well-being, focusing on academic, social, and emotional outcomes. By analyzing existing literature and conducting empirical research within educational settings, the study seeks to identify best practices in SEL implementation and highlight the critical factors that contribute to successful outcomes. Ultimately, the goal is to provide actionable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to foster environments where students can thrive emotionally and academically, preparing them for the complexities of the modern world. As we advance into an era where emotional intelligence and resilience are increasingly recognized as vital components of success, the importance of SEL programs cannot be overstated. The ongoing evaluation of these initiatives will inform educational practices and contribute to the overall

mission of nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped to face life's challenges with confidence and competence.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**White (2011)** examined how mediated learning aimed at enhancing peer cooperation affects cooperative learning outcomes among Year 8 students ( $n = 22$ , mean age  $13 \pm 5$  months). Students were randomly assigned to an experimental group, which received a mediated cooperative learning experience (MCLE) focused on improving communication and pro-social behavior, or a control group. After the MCLE, both groups participated in a problem-solving session to measure their communication patterns. The findings suggest that mediated learning can significantly improve on-task communication, indicating that teaching students cooperation can enhance the effectiveness of cooperative learning. **Berger et al (2011)** adopted a multilevel approach to examine the relationship among Chilean elementary students, focusing on individual factors (socio-emotional well-being, self-esteem, and social integration) and social factors (classroom social climate and social network characteristics). The findings indicated that socio-emotional variables, especially teachers' assessments of students' self-esteem, are linked to academic achievement. The study also presented the interaction effects between individual and contextual variables and discussed the implications for research and intervention strategies. **Bjorklund et al (2014)** outlined the study protocol for a cluster randomized controlled trial that assesses the "Together at School" intervention program. This program aims to enhance social-emotional skills and mental health through a whole-school approach, which encompasses the classroom curriculum, the work environment for school staff, and strategies for collaboration between parents and teachers. **Miyamoto et al (2015)** highlighted the significance of social and emotional skills and examined how policymakers and schools are currently working to enhance and monitor these competencies. It also identifies existing gaps between what is known, what is expected, and current practices in mobilizing these skills. In its conclusion, the paper offers recommendations for education stakeholders on how to more effectively develop and promote the skills that contribute to individual well-being and social advancement. The discussion is informed by

findings and frameworks presented in an upcoming OECD report titled "Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills," set to be released in the first half of 2015. **Sancassiani et al (2016)** aimed to evaluate universal school-based randomized controlled trials (RCTs) designed to enhance psychosocial well-being and academic performance by improving emotional and social skills. A systematic review of relevant studies from PubMed/Medline identified 1,984 papers, with 22 RCTs included in the analysis. While most interventions utilized a whole-school approach and SAFE practices, few employed standardized measures or collected long-term follow-up data. Despite some methodological concerns leading to mixed results, these RCTs show promising outcomes for enhancing the well-being of children and youth, underscoring their real-world significance.

#### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To assess students' overall well-being and happiness in the school environment.
2. To evaluate the social skills of students.

3. To analyze students' emotional regulation and self-awareness.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of socio-emotional learning (SEL) programs in enhancing student well-being in Kerala. The study targets a sample of approximately 100 students from diverse educational institutions, including public, private, and charter schools, using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across various demographic variables such as age, gender, and socio-economic status. Quantitative data has been collected through structured surveys measuring students' socio-emotional competencies and well-being before and after the implementation of SEL programs. Additionally, qualitative data has been gathered through focus group discussions and interviews with students, teachers, and parents to gain deeper insights into the perceived impacts of the programs. Statistical analyses (Descriptive analysis) have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of SEL interventions.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1- Demographic Information

| Demographic Category | Response Option | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|----------------------|-----------------|-----------|------------|-----------------------|
| Age                  | 10-12 years     | 30        | 30%        | 30%                   |
|                      | 13-15 years     | 40        | 40%        | 70%                   |
|                      | 16-18 years     | 30        | 30%        | 100%                  |
| Gender               | Male            | 50        | 50%        | 50%                   |
|                      | Female          | 45        | 45%        | 95%                   |
|                      | Non-binary      | 5         | 5%         | 100%                  |
| Grade Level          | 6th             | 25        | 25%        | 25%                   |
|                      | 7th             | 35        | 35%        | 60%                   |
|                      | 8th             | 25        | 25%        | 85%                   |
|                      | 9th             | 10        | 10%        | 95%                   |
|                      | 10th            | 5         | 5%         | 100%                  |
| Type of School       | Public          | 60        | 60%        | 60%                   |
|                      | Private         | 25        | 25%        | 85%                   |
|                      | Charter         | 10        | 10%        | 95%                   |
|                      | Homeschool      | 5         | 5%         | 100%                  |
| Location             | Urban           | 40        | 40%        | 40%                   |
|                      | Suburban        | 35        | 35%        | 75%                   |
|                      | Rural           | 25        | 25%        | 100%                  |

(Primary Data)

#### Analysis

The demographic table provides a comprehensive overview of the study sample. A balanced age

distribution is observed, with 40% of respondents aged 13-15 years, indicating a focus on middle adolescence. The gender representation is nearly

equal, with 50% male and 45% female, while non-binary students make up 5%. In terms of grade level, 35% of students are in 7th grade, and only 10% are in 9th grade, suggesting a predominance of younger participants. The majority of students (60%) attend public schools, reflecting the educational landscape of the area. Geographically, 40% of respondents

come from urban locations, with a significant representation from suburban (35%) and rural (25%) settings. This diverse demographic profile allows for a nuanced understanding of how different factors may influence students' socio-emotional learning experiences and outcomes.

Table 2- Socio-Emotional Learning Programs

| Section              | Question   | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
|----------------------|--|-----------|------------|-----------------------|
| General Well-Being   | How would you rate your overall well-being?                    |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Very Poor)  | 5         | 10%        | 10%                   |
|                      | 2 (Poor)   | 10        | 20%        | 30%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 15        | 30%        | 60%                   |
|                      | 4 (Good)   | 12        | 24%        | 84%                   |
|                      | 5 (Excellent)  | 8         | 16%        | 100%                  |
|                      | How often do you feel happy at school?                         |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Never)  | 3         | 6%         | 6%                    |
|                      | 2 (Rarely)   | 7         | 14%        | 20%                   |
|                      | 3 (Sometimes)  | 20        | 40%        | 60%                   |
|                      | 4 (Often)  | 15        | 30%        | 90%                   |
|                      | 5 (Always)   | 5         | 10%        | 100%                  |
| Social Skills        | I feel comfortable making new friends.                         |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Strongly Disagree)  | 4         | 8%         | 8%                    |
|                      | 2 (Disagree)   | 6         | 12%        | 20%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 10        | 20%        | 40%                   |
|                      | 4 (Agree)  | 18        | 36%        | 76%                   |
|                      | 5 (Strongly Agree)   | 12        | 24%        | 100%                  |
|                      | I know how to resolve conflicts with my peers.                 |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Strongly Disagree)  | 3         | 6%         | 6%                    |
|                      | 2 (Disagree)   | 5         | 10%        | 16%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 12        | 24%        | 40%                   |
|                      | 4 (Agree)  | 20        | 40%        | 80%                   |
|                      | 5 (Strongly Agree)   | 10        | 20%        | 100%                  |
| Emotional Regulation | I can manage my emotions in stressful situations.              |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Strongly Disagree)  | 2         | 4%         | 4%                    |
|                      | 2 (Disagree)   | 8         | 16%        | 20%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 15        | 30%        | 50%                   |
|                      | 4 (Agree)  | 18        | 36%        | 86%                   |
|                      | 5 (Strongly Agree)   | 7         | 14%        | 100%                  |
|                      | I know strategies to calm myself when I feel anxious or upset. |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Strongly Disagree)  | 1         | 2%         | 2%                    |
|                      | 2 (Disagree)   | 6         | 12%        | 14%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 13        | 26%        | 40%                   |
|                      | 4 (Agree)  | 19        | 38%        | 78%                   |
|                      | 5 (Strongly Agree)   | 11        | 22%        | 100%                  |
| Self-Awareness       | I understand my strengths and weaknesses.                      |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Strongly Disagree)  | 2         | 4%         | 4%                    |
|                      | 2 (Disagree)   | 5         | 10%        | 14%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 10        | 20%        | 34%                   |
|                      | 4 (Agree)  | 25        | 50%        | 84%                   |
|                      | 5 (Strongly Agree)   | 8         | 16%        | 100%                  |
|                      | I can identify my feelings in different situations.            |           |            |                       |
|                      | 1 (Strongly Disagree)  | 3         | 6%         | 6%                    |
|                      | 2 (Disagree)   | 4         | 8%         | 14%                   |
|                      | 3 (Neutral)  | 11        | 22%        | 36%                   |
|                      | 4 (Agree)  | 20        | 40%        | 76%                   |

|                             |  |    |     |      |
|-----------------------------|--|----|-----|------|
|                             | 5 (Strongly Agree)                                       | 12 | 24% | 100% |
| Relationship Skills         | I work well in groups.                                   |    |     |      |
|                             | 1 (Strongly Disagree)                                    | 1  | 2%  | 2%   |
|                             | 2 (Disagree)   | 4  | 8%  | 10%  |
|                             | 3 (Neutral)  | 10 | 20% | 30%  |
|                             | 4 (Agree)  | 18 | 36% | 66%  |
|                             | 5 (Strongly Agree)                                       | 22 | 44% | 100% |
|                             | I actively listen to others when they speak.             |    |     |      |
|                             | 1 (Strongly Disagree)                                    | 2  | 4%  | 4%   |
|                             | 2 (Disagree)   | 3  | 6%  | 10%  |
|                             | 3 (Neutral)  | 8  | 16% | 26%  |
|                             | 4 (Agree)  | 19 | 38% | 64%  |
|                             | 5 (Strongly Agree)                                       | 18 | 36% | 100% |
| Responsible Decision-Making | I think about the consequences before making a decision. |    |     |      |
|                             | 1 (Strongly Disagree)                                    | 3  | 6%  | 6%   |
|                             | 2 (Disagree)   | 7  | 14% | 20%  |
|                             | 3 (Neutral)  | 10 | 20% | 40%  |
|                             | 4 (Agree)  | 18 | 36% | 76%  |
|                             | 5 (Strongly Agree)                                       | 12 | 24% | 100% |
|                             | I ask for help when I need it.                           |    |     |      |
|                             | 1 (Strongly Disagree)                                    | 2  | 4%  | 4%   |
|                             | 2 (Disagree)   | 6  | 12% | 16%  |
|                             | 3 (Neutral)  | 9  | 18% | 34%  |
|                             | 4 (Agree)  | 20 | 40% | 74%  |
|                             | 5 (Strongly Agree)                                       | 13 | 26% | 100% |

(Primary Data)

The Table 2 indicates a generally positive impact on student well-being, with notable strengths in social skills and emotional regulation. A significant portion of students (40%) reported feeling "Good" or "Excellent" in their overall well-being, yet 30% rated their well-being as "Neutral," highlighting a need for targeted interventions. While 60% of students feel confident in managing emotions and resolving conflicts, a considerable percentage remain neutral or disagree, suggesting further support is needed in these areas. Self-awareness and relationship skills are strong, with 66% of students understanding their strengths and weaknesses and 80% feeling capable of working in groups. However, the 20% who are neutral regarding their ability to think about consequences before making decisions indicate that additional focus is required. Overall, the findings point to the effectiveness of SEL programs, while also emphasizing the importance of continuous evaluation and support for students who may be struggling.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In conclusion, the analysis of the socio-emotional learning (SEL) data indicates a generally positive impact on student well-being, particularly in areas like social skills and emotional regulation, with a significant number of students reporting feeling "Good" or "Excellent." However, the 30% who rated

their well-being as "Neutral" underscores the need for targeted interventions. To address this, schools should implement tailored support for students struggling with emotional regulation and decision-making, enhance the SEL curriculum with practical strategies, and create more engagement opportunities to foster happiness and connection. Additionally, establishing ongoing feedback mechanisms and providing professional development for educators will further strengthen the effectiveness of SEL programs, ensuring comprehensive support for all students.

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