

Adolescents Emotional Health, Social Competence, and Academic Achievement via Social-Emotional Learning: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract-- Changes in thinking, feeling, socializing, and behaving occur rapidly throughout adolescence, making it a pivotal developmental period. The ways in which young people think, feel, interact with others, learn, and make decisions during this time have long-lasting effects on their health, happiness, and academic success. A new educational strategy that aims to foster these interrelated aspects of growth is social-emotional learning (SEL). It stresses the need of developing and using skills in areas such as self-awareness, emotional control, empathy, relationship building, responsible decision-making, and successful social interaction. This study offers a theoretical overview of the function of socio-emotional learning in supporting adolescents' all-around development, with a focus on their mental health, social skills, and performance in the classroom. The theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and international frameworks for education and development are all drew upon in this study. Recent research has shown that students' social and emotional competence, school engagement, behavior, mental health, and academic performance may all benefit from well-planned SEL programs. While the efficacy of programs can differ dependent on implementation and contextual circumstances, a large meta-analysis of school-based SEL programs including over a million kids found consistent beneficial benefits across various student outcomes. The research contends that social and emotional learning (SEL) is more of a method that may fortify the behavioral, relational, cognitive, and emotional bases of learning than an extra activity that competes with academic teaching. In order to foster social-emotional development, it delves further into the responsibilities of educational policymakers, families, schools, and instructors. Also taken into account are issues with cultural relevance, teacher training, curriculum integration, resources, evaluation, and program execution. Emotional well-being, social competence, resilience, responsible behavior, and strong connections are all components of educational success, according to the research, which suggests that SEL integration into educational institutions might help fill this gap.

Keywords-- Social-emotional learning, adolescents, emotional well-being, social competence, academic success, holistic development, school education, social-emotional competencies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence shapes us. Our body, ideas, emotions, and social circles evolve, making us more independent and responsible. Quick social, emotional, and cognitive growth between 10 and 19 has substantial short- and long-term health repercussions, says the WHO. They are still developing as individuals, but they are also beginning to forge deeper connections, form ideas, respond to academic expectations, and make decisions that will influence their school and life chances. Higher education is essential to maturity. Most believe students should be academically prepared for life beyond high school. Modern schooling realizes intellectual achievement isn't enough for success. Students require emotional intelligence, self-awareness, relationships, teamwork, resilience, decision-making, and mental health.

This broader educational view has expanded social-emotional learning. UNESCO defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as activities that help students become self-aware, emotionally intelligent, relationally competent, decision-making competent, and resilient. UNESCO defines SEL as cognitive, social, emotional, and relational learning that improves well-being, academic achievement, and social involvement. The emergence of SEL reflects the move from academic education to comprehensive student development. From this approach, intellectual education includes emotional and social growth. They may instill focus, motivation, teamwork, persistence, and academic success.

This is well-supported by research. A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 school-based universal SEL programs by Durlak et al. indicated that students' academic achievement, social and emotional skills, attitudes, and conduct improved by 11 percentage points compared to control groups. Results-driven short- and long-term research. Universal school-based SEL programs boost numerous student outcomes, according to 12 meta-analyses of around a million youngsters. Fundamental questions remain about when certain programs work best.



Teens value SEL more. Young people face rapid technology and social changes, higher academic obligations, variable peer connections, identity worries, parental expectations, and career insecurity. These events need emotional and interpersonal skills that textbooks can't teach. To grow, teens require emotional wellness. Youth need opportunities to learn about themselves, handle stress, overcome problems, gain self-confidence, and seek for help. For youth to thrive, the WHO recommends supporting adults, self-confidence, resources, and secure, healthy relationships. SEL helps youngsters understand themselves, control emotions, empathize, form healthy relationships, and make responsible choices.

Social skills matter. Teens interact more with classmates, instructors, family, and neighbors. Communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, empathy, and relationship-building impact school and socialization. These talents may be developed with organized SEL. Also important: academic performance. Academic achievement goes beyond intelligence and teaching. Motivation, self-regulation, persistence, school belonging, classroom conduct, teacher-student connections, and self-confidence might impact youngsters' educational involvement. Research relates well-planned SEL programs to academic success. Current studies on SEL's academic value caution that effects may vary by intervention design and school location.

The relationship between SEL and academic success is not linear. Students who can control their emotions and actions may focus better and finish harder assignments. Competence, belonging, and strong connections may motivate kids to study and participate in school. Self-esteem and motivation increase with academic success. Thus, this conceptual research analyzes SEL as a tool for teens to build emotional health, social competence, and academic performance. The research analyzes how these goals relate to school growth rather than simply instructional objectives.

The report also examines SEL implementation issues. The research reveals that adding extracurriculars to the school schedule doesn't make a program effective. Program quality, instructor preparation, class sequencing, study time, supportive schools, and active learning may impact results. CASEL's evidence-based approach stresses sequential, active, focused, and explicit SEL.

This study stresses that SEL should be a core component of a well-rounded education, not an extracurricular. A good education should teach youngsters self-awareness, social skills, resilience, decision-making, and civic engagement, not simply test-taking. The test doesn't have to cover your teen's emotions. The school system does.

II. CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND HOLISTIC ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

An increasingly popular method of teaching that emphasizes the interconnected nature of learning, emotional growth, interpersonal connections, and responsible conduct is known as social-emotional learning (SEL). Instead of seeing academic learning as a discrete cognitive process, SEL places an emphasis on the holistic development of students' capacities for self-awareness, social competence, problem-solving, and ethical decision-making. Being self-conscious, being able to regulate one's own emotions and behaviors, being socially aware, having strong interpersonal skills, and making responsible decisions are the five interrelated competencies identified by the CASEL framework. These skills are malleable, meaning they may be honed in response to varied learning environments and cultural backgrounds. Being self-aware is being cognizant of one's feelings, ideas, values, abilities, and weaknesses. This skill is especially crucial for teenagers to have since they are coming into their own as individuals and developing a sense of self-awareness in regard to their talents, relationships, expectations, and goals for the future. When faced with adversity, a young person who is in tune with their feelings and can appropriately assess them may be better able to behave constructively and rationally. As a result, being self-aware may lay the groundwork for managing emotions, having self-assurance, being motivated, and acting responsibly.

The capacity to control one's own feelings, ideas, and actions in a way that advances one's own and others' objectives is at the heart of self-management. Stress management, impulse control, drive, tenacity, and responding positively to failure are all part of it. These skills are very applicable to the academic world, where students often face tests, due dates, rivalry, criticism, failure, and shifting expectations. Both academic engagement and individual growth can be impacted by the capacity to control frustration and persevere in the face of adversity. By shifting one's attention from oneself to one's connections and communities, social awareness broadens one's perspective. Acquiring this skill requires one to put themselves in another person's shoes, show empathy, value diversity, and react correctly in a variety of social contexts. Perspective taking and empathy are crucial components of healthy development for adolescents because of the increased interaction with varied peer groups and social surroundings. These skills can help in building positive connections with peers, communicating respectfully, working together, and resolving conflicts. A person with strong connection skills is able to form and sustain bonds with others that are mutually beneficial.



Essential components of this skill include the following: the capacity to communicate, listen attentively, cooperate, resolve conflicts, ask for assistance when needed, and work well with people. Having these abilities can help kids get along better with their professors and classmates, which in turn can improve the atmosphere in the classroom. Classrooms, schools, families, and communities should all work together to promote students' social and emotional learning (SEL), according to the California Alliance for Supportive Education (CASEL). The ability to make good and ethical decisions while taking into account potential outcomes, societal norms, personal and public safety, and the welfare of one's community is what we mean when we talk about responsible decision-making. As they develop their sense of autonomy and face more nuanced decision-making opportunities, this ability is crucial for adolescents. Adolescents can benefit from learning to make responsible decisions by practicing to weigh their options, assess potential outcomes, control potential dangers, and accept responsibility for their own acts.

These skills show that SEL is more than just emotional education in the traditional sense. Emotional, behavioral, interpersonal, and ethical growth are all a part of it. As a result, the model works well with a more all-encompassing view of education, which holds that pupils should try to improve their social and emotional skills in addition to their academic knowledge. Instead of concentrating on just one result, holistic adolescent development takes into account the individual's growth across a number of interrelated domains. An adolescent's holistic development can be influenced by their academic performance, emotional stability, social competence, physical health, sense of self, relationships, resilience, and level of responsible engagement. From this vantage point, schooling ought to facilitate pupils' emotional and social development in addition to their academic capacity. Since the competences of social and emotional learning (SEL) impact many facets of adolescent development, it is an ideal fit for this holistic view. Academic focus may be enhanced thru emotional regulation, peer connections can be strengthened thru empathy, perseverance can be fostered thru self-management, collaboration can be enhanced thru social awareness, and hazardous behaviors can be reduced thru responsible decision-making. Therefore, the competences are useful in and out of the classroom.

Particularly noteworthy is the systemic character of SEL. Instead of focusing on lessons in isolation, the CASEL paradigm highlights the importance of interactions across classrooms, schools, families, and communities in shaping students' social-emotional development.

This indicates that schools that are serious about SEL should make it a point to continuously model and practice social-emotional competence. If the school climate promotes and encourages aggressiveness, anger, and emotional quiet, then a weekly session on emotional control is not going to have much of an impact. The abilities being taught must be reinforced by the environment around.

The conceptual relationship can therefore be understood as a developmental pathway:

SEL competencies → improved emotional regulation and social competence → stronger relationships and engagement → improved well-being and learning → holistic adolescent development.

This route in no way implies that SEL always results in favorable developmental outcomes. Instead, it lays out a plan for how young people might learn skills that will help them adjust to new environments. Developmental appropriateness, program quality, execution, teacher training, school environment, family engagement, and cultural context are the factors that determine the efficacy of social and emotional learning (SEL). This knowledge has several dimensions, and the data is mounting to back it up. According to CASEL's study synthesis, there are favorable correlations between SEL and several student outcomes, including social-emotional skills, academic achievement, mental wellbeing, relationships, and school atmosphere. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that every SEL program will have the same benefits just because there is favorable data. Programs vary greatly in terms of substance, length, mode of communication, intended audience, and circumstances of execution. Therefore, SEL is best viewed as an educational process and framework for development rather than a curriculum in and of itself. The bigger picture is that it's important for kids and teens to have social and emotional skills ingrained in their daily lives. Academic achievement, emotional health, and social development do not have to be at odds with one another at school when SEL is well-planned and executed.

III. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING, EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Adolescence is a pivotal time for social-emotional development since it is at this time that academic and social responsibilities begin to grow, and when emotional health and social competence are also developing.



Adolescents must learn to control their emotions, navigate complicated peer interactions, deal with academic pressure, make their own choices, and solidify their sense of self. Social and emotional learning (SEL) offers a framework for meeting these developmental needs in the classroom. Being emotionally well-adjusted entails more than just not having any mental health issues. Emotional intelligence encompasses a wide range of skills, such as self-awareness, regulation, resilience, and the capacity to cope with stress. The capacity for self-awareness and self-management can be enhanced by the practice of SEL. Adolescents face many problems, including test pressure, interpersonal conflict, disappointment, and frustration; students who learn to understand their emotional reactions and find appropriate coping mechanisms may be better equipped to handle these and other difficulties. This link is supported by research. Research synthesized by CASEL shows that SEL program participation is linked to less emotional distress, better self-and other-perception, more resilience, and less behavioral issues. Because emotional issues can impact focus, drive, engagement, interpersonal skills, and overall academic performance, these consequences are significant.

Social competence is another area that SEL may help with. Adolescents need to learn to communicate, work together, resolve conflicts, appreciate other viewpoints, and set healthy boundaries with others since they rely on their peer connections more and more. To build these qualities, one has to be socially aware and have strong connection skills. With the ability to empathize, students can understand and respond to the feelings and perspectives of others, and with the ability to communicate and resolve conflicts, they can keep arguments from becoming major issues in their relationships. In a school setting, the social component of SEL is paramount. Education is a social process. Students interact with instructors, take part in class discussions, divide up tasks, and respond to differing viewpoints while working in groups. Therefore, a student with greater social skills may have a better chance of contributing positively to these events. The CASEL paradigm stresses that social and emotional learning (SEL) does not occur in a vacuum but rather in contexts that are well-coordinated and inclusive of students' homes, schools, and communities.

A person's social skills and emotional health are inversely related. Adolescents can benefit from having positive connections because they provide them a sense of belonging, help them develop their interpersonal skills, and offer emotional support.

Concurrently, it may be simpler for students to build and sustain good relationships if they are able to control their emotions and see things from other people's points of view. This means that emotional intelligence and social competence are not mutually exclusive. The atmosphere of the school is crucial to this procedure. When students feel psychologically comfortable, have positive relationships with their peers, have opportunities to participate, and have clear expectations set for them, they are more likely to develop social-emotional skills in the classroom. When schools offer students regular chances to apply the skills they are learning and create supportive learning environments, evidence-based SEL initiatives have a better chance of being effective. The actions of educators have a significant impact. Educators play a dual role as role models and teachers, demonstrating responsible decision-making, emotional management, communication, empathy, and teamwork. Teachers model the precise abilities that social and emotional learning (SEL) aims to cultivate when they listen to students, respond constructively when they make a mistake, handle disagreements equitably, and build respectful connections with their students. Therefore, a key component of effective implementation is teacher preparation.

An other important factor is relationships with one's peers. Peer connections have a significant impact on adolescents' mental health; favorable ones can help them feel supported and included, while poor ones can lead to feelings of isolation, rejection, or conflict. Students may learn to work together, appreciate diversity, settle conflicts, and react correctly in social settings thru SEL, which focuses on developing students' interpersonal abilities. Still, it's important to fully grasp SEL's advantages. When teenagers are dealing with serious mental health issues, SEL should not be used in place of professional mental health assistance. However, it may assist schools in establishing environments that are protective of and conducive to well-being, and it can also offer universal support for development and prevention. CASEL acknowledges that SEL may enhance protective variables including supportive relationships, emotional skills, and pleasant school settings, while also differentiating SEL from professional mental-health therapy. Cultural and contextual relevance are other key factors to consider. Emotional expression, communication, authority, family dynamics, and interactions with peers are all areas where societal norms differ from one culture to another. Therefore, SEL should not be used in a strict, one-size-fits-all fashion.



One of the main tenets of the current CASEL framework is the need of tailoring SEL strategies to meet the unique requirements of each community. Language variety, family dynamics, community dynamics, educational expectations, and local conceptions of social and emotional development are all factors that SEL programs in countries like India should take into account.

Adolescents can benefit from SEL in many ways, including improved self-awareness and emotional regulation, greater capacity for empathy, the ability to form positive connections, and more resilient problem-solving skills. The educational setting where these abilities are consistently taught, exhibited, practiced, and reinforced has more promise than just adding another isolated topic to an overcrowded curriculum.

IV. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Common measures of academic success include performance on standardized tests, letter grades, engagement in class, and progress toward a degree. Academic motivation, self-discipline, persistence, classroom engagement, self-confidence, and the ability to manage academic challenges are all components of a broader picture. A person's capacity for self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relational skill development can be bolstered through social-emotional learning. Students who can manage their emotions, tune out noise, establish realistic goals, and bounce back from failures may have a better chance of succeeding academically and staying the course when things go tough.

A large body of research indicates that SEL is positively correlated with improved academic outcomes. In a comprehensive review of 213 school-based SEL programs, Durlak et al. (2011) discovered that students' academic performance and social-emotional competence both improved. Cipriano et al. (2023) compiled data from 424 research involving more than 575,000 youngsters from 53 distinct nations. Students' social-emotional competencies, conduct, academic achievement, and school functioning were all enhanced by the results of the school-based SEL therapies that were implemented across the board. Results varied greatly according on program characteristics, implementation, and educational context, indicating that SEL is not a panacea.

SEL may influence students' performance in the classroom through a web of interconnected mechanisms. Cooperation with teachers and peers may be improved with relationship skills; concentration and persistence can be bolstered with self-management; and the detrimental effects of stress can be mitigated with emotional regulation. Further involvement may be achieved by school connection and good teacher-student interactions by creating a secure space for kids to speak out, ask questions, receive and apply feedback, and seek clarification. There may be a multiplier effect on mental health from academic success, as higher grades increase motivation and self-esteem. The relationship between social and emotional learning (SEL) and academic success is more accurately seen as dynamic and mutually beneficial than as a static correlation. Instead of replacing traditional classroom instruction, the evidence suggests that SEL should work in tandem with it. Its purpose is to assist children in acquiring the behavioral, emotional, and social competencies essential to their academic achievement. To put social-emotional skills into practice in the context of classroom activities, school regulations, and relationships, both students and instructors require frequent opportunities to practice and enhance these talents; workshops alone will not be sufficient. A well-rounded education should include social and emotional learning (SEL) since it improves students' drive, resiliency, social competence, and emotional stability.

V. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES, EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite growing support for social-emotional learning, its successful implementation in schools remains a challenge. Overcrowding in the curriculum, a lack of time, insufficient funding, and inadequate institutional resources are some of the typical challenges to integrating SEL into existing academic programs. Another issue is the absence of appropriate evaluation methodologies. Teacher training, curriculum acceptance, financing, cultural relevance, and evaluation are some of the important implementation difficulties highlighted by UNESCO. Therefore, SEL requires rigorous planning if it is to be effective; it is not something you can wing it or attend an occasional class. School policies and practices as a whole support implementation research that aims to create learning environments that are active, focused, explicit, and age-appropriate.



In order to ensure that kids are well-prepared to become socially and emotionally competent adults, it is crucial that teachers undergo extensive training. Educators need ample professional development opportunities to understand social and emotional learning concepts, exhibit appropriate social and emotional conduct, determine their students' developmental needs, and integrate SEL into classroom interactions. Leadership at the school level is essential in providing the necessary resources, including time, money, coordination, and institutional backing. Over time, SEL will have a higher chance of survival when implemented as part of a whole-school plan rather than an isolated classroom initiative. Relationships, regulations, procedures, and the overall atmosphere of the school all fall under this category. Some time ago, UNESCO pushed for SEL to be included into all parts of education rather than kept in separate programs. Consideration of cultural and environmental factors is also crucial. It is not possible to simply transfer social and emotional learning frameworks from one context to another. Cultural norms and expectations about the expression of emotion, interpersonal dynamics, delegation of authority, the role of families, and personal accountability may vary. Culturally contextualized approaches are important, but UNESCO's most recent global mapping has shown that there are many challenges to implementing them. These include teachers' resistance, inadequate funding, inconsistent implementation, and problems with integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) among different stakeholders in education. Test pressures, socioeconomic gaps, the realities of public and private schools, and the country's rich linguistic and cultural variation are all factors that must be considered while implementing SEL in India. The country also has different communities and families.

Classroom education will be profoundly impacted. Every aspect of a school, from administration to extracurriculars to classroom practices to teacher training to lesson planning, must incorporate SEL. Strengthening social-emotional competencies occurs when the same concepts are reinforced outside of the classroom. Families and communities should, therefore, be part of it as well. Efficacious strategies for inclusive classrooms, SEL mediated via digital and technological means, professional development for educators, SEL models that take cultural factors into account, and the outcomes in the long run should all be the subject of future research. Additionally, it is important to take adolescents' perspectives into account while designing and evaluating programs.

Research on the relationships between students' emotional and social development and their academic achievement should form the basis of future SEL programs, which should be better incorporated into schools overall.

VI. CONCLUSION

Understanding adolescent development holistically requires first establishing the importance of social-emotional learning. Adolescents' brains, hearts, and social networks undergo rapid changes, so it's important for them to have places where they can feel comfortable enough to work thru their emotions, make smart decisions, connect with others, and concentrate on their schoolwork. Adolescents can't realize their full developmental potential without a supportive environment, high self-esteem, enough resources, and meaningful relationships, according to the World Health Organization. This notion is supported by SEL, which links emotional and social competencies to learning and development. Students' mental well-being, social skills, and academic achievement may all benefit from SEL in different but complementary ways, as shown in the conceptual research. In order to strengthen emotional regulation and resilience, it is important to be self-aware and regulate one's emotions. Thru developing one's social awareness and connection abilities, one may enhance their interpersonal interactions, motivation, engagement, perseverance, and communication. In a similar vein, SEL is defined by UNESCO as an approach to education that integrates students' cognitive, emotional, social, and relational development in order to promote success in school, more participation in extracurricular activities, and improved health and happiness. But, SEL is not a silver bullet for every student's emotional or academic problems. Excellence in the program, preparedness of educators, school climate, cultural suitability, support from institutions, involvement of parents, and implementation over the long term are all essential for its success. Integrating SEL into the school environment rather than offering it as an isolated activity is the most successful technique. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes school-based socio-emotional learning as an essential component of programs aimed at enhancing the mental health and wellness of adolescents. Finally, socio-emotional learning may help teenagers succeed in school, be socially competent, and have healthy emotional lives, all of which are necessary for their holistic development.

Recognizing these connections might lead schools to abandon an exam-centric paradigm in favor of one that teaches kids to manage stress, build relationships, become decent citizens, and learn. Rather than putting an emphasis on one or the other, we should recognize that adolescents do best when provided with the tools they need to succeed in both their academic performance and their emotional well-being. Humanity occasionally discovers this before devising more tests.

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