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Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Academic Outcomes: Teacher Support during Classroom Interactions

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) is crucial for children's development of social and emotional skills, including relationships, communication, decision-making, self-esteem, and behavior. It can help reduce the attainment gap between slow-learners and their peers. The study examines the relationship between social-emotional learning (SEL), Academic Outcome and the social dimensions of teacher support during classroom interactions, based on Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory. Vygotsky's theory suggests that empathy and the ability to articulate thoughts are crucial for deep learning. The study aims to understand the perceived levels of social dimensions in terms of belongingness at school, social learning experiences, and relationships with teachers, peers, and parents. The study also seeks to determine if there is a significant relationship between SEL and academic outcomes and teacher support during classroom interactions. It comes to light that by actively scaffolding classroom interactions and integrating social-emotional learning into the regular academic schedule, teachers can support their students.

Keywords: Social Emotional Learning, Scaffolding, Self Awareness, Social Skills, Pandemic**Introduction**

The pandemic has led to a loss of learning and missed opportunities for children and young people, with school closures causing learning loss and missing out on in-person interactions. Studies reveal that during the pandemic, the prevalence of learning disabilities, issues with academic performance, and mental illness increased significantly. To overcome these challenges, students require a great deal of support from their parents, teachers, and peers. Social emotional learning (SEL) is a crucial process for children, enabling them to manage their emotions, develop problem-solving skills, and impulse control, thus enhancing their ability to cope with daily challenges (Smith et. al.). In short, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the urgent need for social emotional learning to promote positive mental health in children who have lost their ability to socialize and interact, highlighting the importance of emotional management.

Background of the Study

2020 sees the temporary closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which forces a change in the curricula for social-emotional learning. Stress from the pandemic, social isolation, a lack of face-to-face interaction in the classroom, technology-driven online learning, disruption of routines, and restricted access to public interactions led to a decrease in regular socio-cognitive exercises in the teaching-learning process and to peripheral learning. Given that over half of

public school students reported having anxiety or depression, social-emotional learning (SEL) is an essential component of the post-COVID teaching and learning process. This is according to school councillors. It is challenging for students to make progress in behaviour, self-control, self-awareness, and other interpersonal skills after COVID-19 because they are still suffering from the loss of socialization, education, and other experiences. Teachers may need to reconsider their current methods in order to guarantee that students continue to develop SEL and teach them how to navigate new social skills needed for life after the pandemic.

The objective of the study is to comprehend how social dimensions are perceived in terms of relationships with parents, teachers, and peers as well as belongingness at school and social learning experiences. Additionally, the study aims to ascertain whether SEL and academic outcomes as well as teacher support during classroom interactions are significantly correlated.

Review of Literature

The literature review comprised selected studies, utilizing qualitative methodology to understand how settings initiate and scaffold students which SEL skills and learn through their experiences. These studies has shown that personal characteristics among children, such as perseverance, sociability, curiosity, and self-discipline, contribute to long-term outcomes such as academic completion, adult interaction and participation, earnings, and self-reported physical and mental health. However, researchers now prefer the label social and emotional skills as an umbrella term to define the personal characteristics that allow individuals to understand and control their emotions, manage their behavior, interact positively with others, and make responsible decisions (Jones et al.).

Theoretical works includes Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory emphasizes the importance of empathy and self-articulation in students' learning experiences (Moore). This foundation links children's language, thoughts to their peers, forming the basis for social interaction and learning. Socio-cultural learning emphasizes the role of social experiences in learning and acquiring literacy ideas, affecting students' motivation, engagement in learning tasks.

Motivational Systems Theory is Lichtenberg's path breaking conceptualization of what makes us behave and think the way we do moment-to-moment, based on empirical, scientific, observational research with mothers and infants. The systems theory approach in developmental psychology focuses on understanding psychological functions through the interactions between individuals and their contexts (Sameroff). The quality of the context is crucial for long-term consequences. Adverse environments can disrupt stress response systems, impacting self-regulation abilities (Blair and Raver). Researchers are now studying social and emotional skills and finding effective teaching methods through school-based programs.

Classrooms and schools offer an environment that can either support or hinder kids' growth (Roeser et al.). Children's behaviour can change based on the features of their classrooms and the teachers they interact with. According to earlier research, for example, when at-risk students are assigned teachers who are understanding of their individual needs and skilled at focusing their attention on educational tasks, their academic performance is comparable to that of low-risk students. In a similar vein, children who were socially confident but had indifferent teachers demonstrated less off-task behaviour and greater self-reliance than did socially confident but indifferent teachers.

According to (Durlak et al.) schools and classrooms are significant environments that, when designed well, can offer the nurturing experiences children need to organise and understand their own and others' emotions, behaviour, and thoughts and succeed in their personal, social, academic, and professional domains. While some of these skills like temperament and conscientiousness, for example are probably hard to teach and mostly stable personality traits, other skills can be taught and acquired. Social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions and programmes, in general, encompass interventions that teach methods and strategies to support students in understanding and managing their emotions, interacting positively with others, and making responsible decisions (Blair and Raver).

SEL interventions are intentional programs designed to promote children's learning and

application of social, emotional, and character skills required for success in school, workplace settings, relationships, and citizenship. They are grounded in the positive youth development approach, which focuses on transforming environments to promote desirable outcomes like school achievement, nurturing relationships, problem-solving, and civic engagement. SEL programs aim to strengthen the assets individuals need to succeed and prevent potential problems in populations considered at-risk. SEL interventions aim to teach students specific social and emotional skills and create caring and supportive environments where these skills flourish, providing rich experiences for healthy development (Jones et al.; Weissberg et al.; Bailey et al.).

When compared to controls, kids and young people in SEL programmes exhibit improvements in their social and emotional competencies, positive attitudes towards themselves and others, positive social behaviour, fewer behavioural issues, less emotional distress, and average academic achievement scores that are 11 percentile points higher (Durlak et al.; Taylor et al.). Programmes with elements that were Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit were found to be effective SEL interventions. SAFE SEL interventions have been tested in large samples (over 1000 students) across multiple sites (schools) using randomised control trials (RCTs). The results of these studies have shown positive effects on children's social and emotional functioning as well as their academic performance.

The effectiveness of SEL programs should be analyzed from a developmental systems perspective, considering changes in the school and classroom environment, interactions with children and teachers, and the organization of children's social and emotional skills. Social and emotional skills are most effective in caring, supportive, and well-managed learning environments (Jones et al.; Durlak et al.; Taylor et al.). Teachers' social and emotional skills are often overlooked in impact evaluations of SEL programs. The quality of classroom interactions, organized into three domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support, is crucial for promoting students' learning and social development (Jones et al.; Hamre et al.).

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs are school-based interventions aimed at improving children's social-emotional skills and behavioral development. While short-term studies show SEL programs can improve academic skills, long-term impacts are less understood. A recent meta-analysis found that only six studies considered effects 4 or more year's post-intervention, highlighting the need for more comprehensive studies (Durlak et al.; Bierman et al.; Reyes et al.; Taylor et al.).

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to characterize social and emotional learning (SEL) practices in schools following the pandemic. The study uses both direct and indirect assessment techniques to evaluate the social and emotional competencies of schoolchildren (post-pandemic). Students' self-reported behaviours are used in direct assessment, whereas parent and teacher reports are used in indirect assessment. The identical questions will be asked of all three respondents, enabling direct measure comparability. In a controlled environment, parents, teachers, and students will have to fill out questionnaires as part of this online study. The study design known as triangulation is used to estimate the measures from three distinct sources: teachers, parents, and students. This methodology guarantees the direct comparability of measures and facilitates a more thorough comprehension of students' socio-emotional abilities.

Random sampling was used to choose the participants from ten schools in the Alappuzha district of the state of Kerala. Three hundred high school students, fifty subject-matter teachers, and fifty parents from varying socioeconomic backgrounds made up the sample. Each exemplary offering was the subject of a thorough case study that was produced as a result of the qualitative data collection, which included questionnaires, in-person discussions through field surveys and participant feedback loops. A key component of social science research study designs is triangulation, in which students' socio-emotional skills are evaluated directly by them, indirectly by one of their parents, and by the teacher who knows them the best.

The participants were selected using random sampling from 10 selected schools of Alappuzha district of Kerala state. The sample comprised 300 high school students, 50 teachers from various subjects and 50 parents from different socio-economic background. The qualitative data collection includes questionnaire, in-person discussions through field survey and participant feedback loops, and produced a detailed case study for each exemplary offering. Triangulation is a crucial study design aspect of social science research, where students' socio-emotional skills are assessed by students themselves (direct assessment), one of their parents, and a teacher that knows them the best (indirect assessment). A five-point Likert agree/disagree scale was used in the study to gauge teachers' opinions on how to scaffold social and emotional learning in the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

Kinship biases are to be predicted with regard to the parent's report, and as of right now, no mechanism has been implemented to validate the weakness. Additionally, in self-reported statistics, a small portion of respondents may have treated the questionnaire lightly and marked the answers without applying much thought. Furthermore, because the study's scope is restricted to Kerala's Alappuzha district, generalization errors may occur.

Conceptualizing SEL

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a teaching approach that focuses on improving students' ability to access and use five essential core competencies. These competencies are designed to help students succeed in various life situations, such as school, work, and family. The five core competencies are Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision Making, Social Awareness, and Relationship Skills. Self-Awareness helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses, improve decision-making, and establish healthy relationships. The philosophy of Positive Action teaches self-awareness through a Thoughts-Actions-Feelings about Self-Circle, where students learn to be honest with themselves and assess their strengths and limitations. By nurturing these competencies within individual students, SEL can positively impact

their groups and contribute to a healthier and more fulfilling life.



Figure 1 SEL Framework

Self-management is a core competency that focuses on an individual's ability to regulate and control their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. It can lead to improved academic performance, work productivity, and relationships. Responsible decision-making involves making positive and constructive choices based on individual and social factors. This includes understanding one's strengths and limitations, making positive decisions. Social awareness involves improving skills like empathy, taking the perspective of others, and treating others fairly. This can help establish and maintain healthy relationships and social interactions, positively impacting family, school, and community. SEL teaches the students to relate to others and take perspective, promoting competencies like empathy, respect, kindness, listening actively, cooperation, and fairness. Overall, SEL teaching frameworks aim to help students develop self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, and empathy skills for a positive impact on their lives.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) - Self Identification (Student)

Respondent	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Self Awareness	3.69	0.31	Strongly Agree
Self Management	3.46	0.41	Strongly Agree
Social Awareness	3.59	0.39	Strongly Agree
Relationship Skill	3.61	0.36	Strongly Agree
Decision Making	3.55	0.41	Strongly Agree

According to the analysis, high school students recognize the importance of social-emotional

learning in terms of their high level of competence in self-awareness. This suggests that they are aware of how one's emotions, values, and beliefs affect behaviour in different contexts. For students to recognize themselves and advance academically, self-awareness is essential to their academic lives. Additionally, it promotes students' self-belief and facilitates their successful participation in school and community activities (Vygotsky).

High school students are embracing high levels of social-emotional learning in terms of self-management, as the above table shows. They are aware of the necessity and significance of controlling their emotions, ideas, and behaviour in order to accomplish objectives. Effective teaching and learning require self-management skills because they reduce stress and impulsive behaviour.

In terms of social awareness, the table displays the respondents' high aspirations for their level of social-emotional learning. It shows a remarkable capacity for perceiving and understanding the viewpoints of others. For students to successfully absorb the linguistic and cultural diversity in the classroom, they must acquire new knowledge and abilities. Because it tackles social issues and enables students to positively impact their surroundings, social awareness is essential.

Students exhibit high levels of aspiration when it comes to relationship skills, suggesting that they hope to build and sustain healthy relationships. These abilities are essential for both professional and personal success because they enable students to connect with a wide range of people, establish and maintain solid relationships, and communicate clearly. The results confirm the significance of relationship skills for students' and adults' successful growth, involvement in school, and positive development.

The table also demonstrates how eager high school students are to learn about social and emotional aspects of making responsible decisions. While this is partially true in the case of academics, they are well-developed and make sensible decisions in a variety of situations. In order for students to make wise decisions and overcome obstacles on their own, teachers must help them develop effective decision-making skills. Teachers play a critical role

in teaching students the decision-making process.

Students' aspirations and keen interests are included in their 'self-reports' in all areas of social and emotional learning, but they do not show these in actual classroom settings. This situation is probably caused by the pandemic period online classes and the absence of an in-person learning environment with peers and teachers. Now, let's look into the indirect reports, which are the accounts from educators and parents about the post-pandemic social emotional learning environment.

Table 2 Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) - Reported (Teachers)

Respondent	Boys (+ve)	Girls (+ve)	Average
Self Awareness	39%	43%	41%
Self Management	24%	39%	26.5%
Social Awareness	53%	43%	48%
Relationship Skill	56%	41%	48.5%
Decision Making	29%	43%	36%
Average	40.2%	41.8%	40%

Teacher's report that, in contrast to students' self-reports, high school students exhibit an average level of social emotional learning components in the classroom during the post-pandemic academic session. In the classroom, girls demonstrate superior social emotional learning skills, aside from social awareness and relationship skills. The age-appropriate social emotional learning skills that both boys and girls demonstrate on average are 40.2 for boys and 41.8 for girls. The overall average is 40%, indicating a 60% magnitude deficiency in all elements. The importance of the teacher scaffold in the teaching process is demanded by this circumstance. Teachers use temporary structures called instructional scaffolds to assist students in learning new tasks and concepts. Once mastered, the responsibility of learning shifts from the instructor to the student.

Instructional Scaffolding: Scaffold instruction is a supportive learning approach that encourages students to ask questions, provide feedback, and support their peers in learning new material (Hogan and Pressley). This teaching style encourages students to take a more active role in their own learning, as they share the responsibility of teaching

and learning through scaffolds that require them to move beyond their current skill and knowledge levels. Scaffolds can be used for an entire class, with the instructor modeling how to perform a new or difficult task, the class working together, the group working together, and the individual doing it. This approach helps student’s master complex content and takes ownership of the learning event. It can be used between instructors and students, or for entire classes.

In the post-pandemic learning environment, where classroom academic work appears to be more complex or difficult tasks for students, scaffolds should support and enhance social-emotional learning. Through the use of social emotional learning strategies, it can assist students in mastering complex content and improving their comprehension of complex topics. To guarantee efficient scaffolding, instructors should choose appropriate assignments that align with course learning objectives and curriculum goals.

Table 3 Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) – Parent’s Report

Respondent	Boys (+ve)	Girls (+ve)	Average
Self Awareness	48%	48%	48%
Self Management	42%	55%	48.5%
Social Awareness	59%	51%	55%
Relationship Skill	68%	51%	59.5%
Decision Making	48%	61 %	54.5%
Average	53	53.2	53.1%

Parents report that during the post-pandemic academic activities, high school students demonstrate an average high level of social emotional learning

components at home, which contrasts with teacher reports. It might have been because of the parents’ influence and presence at home, as well as the fact that academic activities do not encourage group work at home. Both boys and girls show better social emotional learning abilities in every aspect of social emotional learning. On average, boys and girls exhibit age-appropriate social emotional learning skills of 53 for boys and 53.2 for girls. With an overall average of 53.1%, all aspects of the performance at home are above average.

The relationship between high school student’s social and emotional learning and their social dimensions is shown in Table 4. All correlations are significant at the level of 0.01 (2-tailed), according to the computed r-coefficient for each research variable, and the strength of the correlations ranges from moderate to strong positive association. The findings indicate a noteworthy correlation between social-emotional learning and social dimensions. It suggests that people who excel at socio-emotional learning may also excel at the social aspects of wellbeing, or the other way around. Thus high school education is significantly correlated with their capacity to learn and comprehend how to manage their emotions, create and accomplish constructive goals, feel and demonstrate empathy for others, maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Additionally, when social emotional learning vitality is strengthened through scaffolding, it will have a positive impact on the social aspects of interactions among high school students. Thus, instructional scaffolding provides multiple benefits for learners, teachers, and their social and intellectual exchanges both inside and outside of the classroom.

Table 4 Test of the Social Dimensions and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Respondent	Relations with Teachers		Relations with Peers		Relations with Parents		Belongingness at School		Social Learning	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Self Awareness	.351	.359	.468	.469	.461	.463	.349	.345	.374	.364
Self Management	.462	.466	.488	.498	.544	.598	.377	.376	.378	.379
Social Awareness	.512	.543	.559	.512	.331	.333	.572	.571	.641	.643
Relationship Skill	.458	.481	.462	.463	.348	.341	.476	.491	.471	.466
Decision Making	.591	.599	.519	.523	.583	.581	.535	.541	.543	.547

Conclusion

SEL is the process of developing healthy identities, managing emotions, showing empathy, establishing supportive relationships, and making responsible decisions. During the pandemic, SEL was challenging for educators due to physical isolation and mental health concerns. The study reveals that high school student's social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies significantly impact their social well-being. These skills are impaired due to social isolation and online academic session during the pandemic period. For the purpose of enhancing social emotional learning abilities, scaffold instruction can be applied to entire classes or to interactions between teachers and students. Scaffolds can improve students' social-emotional learning and aid in their mastery of challenging material in the post-pandemic learning environment. For effective scaffolding, educators should select assignments that are in line with the curriculum's objectives and the learning objectives of the course. Suggestions: Subsequent research on social emotional learning in senior secondary or undergraduate students is warranted, since it has a favorable effect on social interactions and benefits students, teachers, and intellectual exchanges within and outside the classroom.

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