

RESEARCH PAPER

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) for Academically Backward and SEN Students: A Practical Model for Inclusive Schools - Enhancing Socio- Emotional Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

Today's classrooms highlights the complexity of increasing diverse learners, projecting the urgent need for research-driven wellbeing framework for inclusive educational setting, targeting SEN and Academically backward students. This abstract proposes a strength-based Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) model, drawing inspiration based on inclusive education theory, positive-mind programming psychology, energy 'word' medicine, to support an inclusive framework, aligned with global SEL competencies standards such as CASEL and OECD Learning Compass 2030. The implementation of proposed model progress from deficit-oriented perspectives to learners strength integrating guided vocabulary-building tasks, real-life problem solving, strength identification, circle-time discussions, scaffolded behaviour-modelling activities overall building skills, focusing on five major domains self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making. By adopting a quasi-experimental mixed-methods, research reveals, in inclusive education the significant gains in self-awareness, classroom engagement, and emotional resilience. Students demonstrate improved confidence and reduced behavioral disruptions. Adopting SEL principles, educators can bridge the gap between clinical SEN support and mainstream SEL curricula. SEL is the crucial element for fostering holistic wellbeing in inclusive education system, creating safe learning space, minimizing conduct issues and building supportive academic environment. The research study enriches entire education system aligning with international standards offering universal analysis, forecasting allround academic and holistic development.

Keywords: Social-Emotional Learning, Special Educational Need students (SEN), Academic Backwardness, Emotional Wellbeing, Learning Readiness, Holistic Development

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Background to the Study

The modern education system is taking a drastic turn due to increased proportions of types of students in today's world. Education is no more about teaching one type of student; education consists of many different students with different ability levels, many different cultures, and many different needs, including socio-emotional needs^[21]. Many of the academically failed students and students with special educational needs have tremendous barriers towards achieving academic success and social/emotional health^[14]. The challenges they face is not peculiar to learning only as it also includes being able to express themselves, interact with their peers, and controlling their emotion when face with problems. Such, in turn, may result in poor academic achievement, withdrawal, and exclusion of children from school, which again falls short of the very notion of inclusive education^[42]. Social-Emotional Learning is an ideal initiative to tackle the challenges most teachers and trainers faced in contemporary times. It is a strategic process of learning to be conversant with one's emotion, thereby being able to develop positive relationship and making the right decisions. Social-emotional learning, from the perspective of^[17] is an indispensable education model globally, which highlighted self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making as the five areas that help student to build desirable learning competencies. In these respects, it offers a structured method whereby students who are under-performing academically, or those with special educational needs, might build self-esteem, reduce behaviour problems and increase student participation^[49].

Historically, interventions designed to support struggling learners have focused on what a learner lacks, rather than focusing on the potential contributions of an individual learner. Such programs often lead to feelings of inadequacy or to an experience of being outside the mainstream of education^[11]. In contrast, strength-based social-emotional learning models look at the existing competencies of a student so that they can be developed and expanded. This corroborates with inclusive education theory, which emphasizes that embedded in learning are acceptance of differences, access, equity, and participation^[50]. Teachers and trainers can develop a repetitive verbal trail that equip student with communication skills to express their feelings through real-life problem-solving activities and flexible vocabulary-building exercises. This will enable them cope with impulses for adapting seamlessly to demanding classroom requirements^[14].

Supports^[10] the transformative ability of SEL in inclusive classrooms, whereby embedding principles of social and emotional learning into classrooms provides a number of important advantages to students. According to^[43], this is related to student self-awareness, articulation of their emotions, peer relationships, and levels of engagement in educational tasks. This increases a student's intrinsic motivation to learn, his level of classroom engagement, and lessens his number of conduct-related issues. In a clearer term, social emotional learning is a key to building encouraging and benign environments that guarantees that student will feel highly supported and valued^[30]. It offers learners with special needs the chance to develop rapidly to meet their mates' level of intelligence. Therefore, social-emotional learning is not something to be simply added on to an inclusive education program; it is an essential ingredient of an inclusive education approach and one that ensures an integrated system of building skills and competencies to support a person's holistic development^[46].

Despite the global positioning of Inclusive Education, those who are academically at-risk remain challenged in both areas of academic performance and Social-Emotional well-being^{[26][21]}. The deficit model approach performed by schools re-enforces not only feelings of inadequacy of the student but also disengagement from the learning community, low self-confidence, and behavior problems^[33]. There

are no confirmed working strength-based models that incorporate social emotional learning as part of activities in the school for promotion of positive relationship and motivation. Without these models in place, the inclusive classroom is unable to provide equitable opportunities to all students for holistic development^[11]. This therefore calls for this research to develop an effective structured Social-Emotional Learning model that is inclusive in nature and applicable in a multitude of inclusive school settings.

Research Objectives

The primary aim of the study is to investigate Social-Emotional Learning for Academically Backward and Special Educational Needs Students. More specifically, the study's specific objectives include;

1. To enhance socio-emotional wellbeing through CASEL and OECD-aligned competencies.
2. To improve academic engagement, confidence, and resilience
3. To provide practical strategies for inclusive classroom routines

Research Questions

1. How can CASEL and OECD-aligned competencies enhance socio-emotional wellbeing for special need students?
2. How can academic engagement, confidence, and resilience be improved among special need students?
3. What are the strategies for inclusive classroom routines?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This aspect of the study focuses on existing literature on social emotional learning in inclusive education. It delves into empirical studies and viewing from the perspective of global framework and it has been applied across schools.

Foundational SEL Frameworks

The Impact of Enhancing SEL^[15] – The research on 213 school based SEL framework act as a strong foundation in the field. The students who participated in SEL Frame work were observed to show academic progress by 11 percentile in comparison to non-participant. This proves the fact through the study that SEL reduces the emotional stress and improved behavior is observed. Thus emotional regulation is important for cognitive processing. It is foundation that SEL is important baseline from academic view as a vehicle for students lagging behind the regular ones. This clearly implies emotional regulation is necessity for cognitive processing and development of students overall well-being.

The Evidence Base for SEL^[25] -Author has proved SEL is an important part of regular syllabus and most effectful when applied in daily routine rather than treated as an individual lesson in curriculum. According to author for learners at risk, or lagging behind, to develop the mind the joyful environment is equally important as curriculum. Author further states for cognitive development and long term success of individual, social and emotional skills are interlinked. This act as supporting bond, a must for Inclusive

School, focusing for holistic development of SEN and Academic backward students, the intervention should be responsive to culturally sustainable growth of student and overall.

SEL for Special Educational Needs (SEN)

SEL for Students with SEND^[24] - This research shows how important SEL program work for students with Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND). He argues SEL generally excludes those it aims to help. For academic backward students and more important SEN students' emotional vocabulary, literacy need to scaffolded on regular basis with visual aid, aim of achieving smaller behavioral goals of positive impact. This is important part in methodology, as it proves the need for "Practical Model" that adapts CASEL strategies in sensory accessible friendly formats for group of students with neurodivergent standards. With real life connections to emotional literacy it adapts quick success in achieving the goal.

Mental Health Promotion in Schools^[8] - Author study focuses how mental health and SEL are interlinked in vulnerable learners. The research highlights in academic backward students and learning disabilities learners has high risk for disorders connected to depression, fear, sever anxiety. The study findings suggested SEL curriculum connecting to self 'Resilience' help to fill the gap for academically backwards and slow learners who are observed to face failure on regular basis. This validates focus on Social Emotional wellbeing is most crucial connection and proactive factor. To make student self-independent, strengthen self-concept is a step toward classroom active participation and progressing academics and overall holistic development.

Inclusivity and Academic Backwardness

The Scientific Basis for SEL and Academic Success^[53] - The learners who are academically backwards and special need students with disability in learning often feel unsafe or socially isolated, lacks thinking ability for high-order level content, the author has explored 'Academic-Social Connection". Fear of judgement, performance anxiety, students often get disengaged and cut off from the class. Zins *et al.* demonstrate, if educators generate social climate of acceptance for all, prioritize equal supportive understanding, these students are motivated toward inculcating study habits. This links to goal of using SEL as a tool for overall "Academic Enhancement," along with holistic development in emotional safety surrounding. This act as a foundational layer, to enhances remedial academic setting.

SEL for Young Students at Risk^[3] - This research focuses on students showing delay in developmental milestones and lower-level achievement, where study impact seen on specific SEL program – You Can Do It! – for education base. The results showed greater significant improvement in behavioral issues and overall improvement in social-emotional components. The explicit SEL instruction showed huge impact on students "at-risk", by developing among peer relationship. This in my research stand as strong pillar – "proof of concept" showing when SEL models are applied wisely most students lagging behind have "highest – return on investment", a positive growth.

Teacher Roles and Inclusive Pedagogy

Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers^[41] – Author debates on teacher's social emotional components or strategies of success of an inclusive SEL model act as primary stage. Teachers' ability to

adapt to empathy in classroom with SEN and academic backward students is paramount. Author focuses the attention on need of training to every educator to adapt to SEL for diverse learner in Inclusion setup is important. This aspect supports my methodology, where it is projected that any practical model for inclusive setup schools, educators must get professional training and emotional support to be successful. Thus, reflecting importance of SEL in inclusive set up school for progress of students.

SEL as a Framework for Equity and Inclusion^[16] - Elias highlight that for every school system, irrespective of special regular or inclusive - SEL is crucial tool for justice under social ground. SEL is a tool that voice and an agency for students with special category- academically backward – lagging behind due to undiagnosed or gap in teaching learning. Every inclusive school must move ahead toward “belonging”. This author review in my investigation help me frame SEL model not as behavioral complexity intervention, but equitable practice for academic and SEN students not only in academics but holistic development.

Modern Technological and Behavioral Approaches

Promoting the Positive Development of All Children^[48] - Weissberg mentioned in his study SEL has evolution from niche area and its intervention moving further to a educational system round the globe. According to him huge data collection is must to prove “Evidence -Based Practice” of SEL, as tool to project efficacy and bring the reality to world. This review justified mixed method approach in my research. It focuses the idea for inclusive school, models to be accepted. It need a clear, measurable result in both “Wellbeing” the first priority to choose not only students but also educators and followed by “School Culture.” This is clear eye opener for my research - need for today’s educational current environment setup.

The SEL-Achievement Link in Secondary Schools^[5] – This study shows how SEL is directly linked to academic performance of every students – special highlight to SEN and Academic backward. The investigation showed school implying on development of “Soft Skill” for struggling students has shown dis-proportionate developmental rise in school grading system. Author has projected that well-being is the bottom line for success of school being ranked topped. It talks on entire health wellbeing of school. This research review has been connected in excellent way to my research overall “Introduction to Conclusion”, highlighting the systemic benefits of my research model – working on vulnerable students brings overall improvement in system and entire setup.

Social-Emotional Learning Concept

Educators around the Globe have adopted the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework. The foundation for this framework is built off of research that shows students who accurately identify themselves, manage their own emotions, show empathy towards others, create healthy interpersonal relationships, and make responsible decisions^[34]. They are predictors for future success both academically and in their psychological wellbeing. Negru & Palos^[33], noted that students exposed to the principles of the CASEL Framework have greater abilities in emotional self-regulation and building and maintaining appropriate relationships with peers.

McBrien^[30] also placed great emphasis on the development of and the sustainability of socio-emotional/ competence/ thought processes. Kankaras^[26] stated that such competencies as empathy, co-operation, and resilience do develop through education - and that these have very strong associations with both

lifelong learning and labor market outcomes: The OECD Framework synthesizes research evidence from psychology, sociology, and education; many of the programs developed based on this research demonstrate how social-emotional skills develop holistically^[29].

Hamafyelto *et al.*^[20] showed that socio-emotional skills development is not merely an academic concept but an evidence-based model of outcomes. The convergence of the CASEL FRAMEWORK with that of OECD studies offers firm grounds for proposing the application of a strengths-based intervention approach for students with academic delays and/or special educational needs to foster equity and wider access to quality education^[29].

Social-Emotional Learning in Inclusive Education

Pham^[38] examining the efficacy of social-emotional learning reported dramatic gains across all areas of student self-awareness, emotional regulation and interpersonal skills, including increased classroom participation with decreased conduct problems. Further, it has been noted that social-emotional learning fosters the growth of resiliency and intrinsic motivation among students experiencing academic or social difficulties^[6].

When social-emotional learning is implemented in an inclusive environment, the instances in which students exhibit disruptive behavior are reduced. This is accomplished by giving students predictable systems to manage impulsivity, verbalize their emotions, and regulate their behaviors^[1]. Cristovao *et al.*^[12] found that social-emotional learning-supportive interventions increased emotional resilience, improved the overall climate of classrooms where they were implemented, and ultimately supplied teachers with more time and energy to teach effectively as opposed to dealing with disciplinary issues. These types of results are of utmost importance to students who are behind academically and/or have Special Educational Needs, as both groups experience a high level of emotional frustration and disengagement from school^[14].

Traditional social emotional learning intervention types focus on correcting deficits in students, whereas strength-based approaches emphasize on the existing skills of students with disabilities and help increase students' feelings of self-efficacy and active involvement in their learning process^[13]. Bergin *et al.*^[6] observed that circle time discussions and supported vocabulary building activities helped develop empathy and cooperative behaviors of diverse types of learners. On the other hand, Ray^[39] asserted that practical problem-solving activities helped develop responsible decision-making behaviors in the learners. Scaffolded behavioral modelling was beneficial in helping special educational needs students to develop a variety of effective social skills.

Social-Emotional Learning and Academically Backward Students

Students with poor numerical skills, language difficulty in comprehending, vocabulary, low literacy, and limited participation in school are challenge students who have difficulties academically. These challenges tend to be heightened by low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority that eventually make students disengage and behave poorly^[10]. In this respect, social-emotional learning develops the necessary attributes for students to help them overcome the obstacles at hand through increased confidence in their ability to succeed and intrinsic motivation to do so^[21].

Stockhaus^[46] revealed that students who were exposed to social-emotional learning programs were

significantly more likely to continue with their tasks and be intrinsically motivated; they remained engaged with their classroom work, irrespective of any previous academic experience. Furthermore, the social-emotional learning competencies, especially the self-awareness and self-management, were found by^[18] to be significant in enhancing students' literacy and numeracy performance. Students' development of increased focus and emotional control during learning activities was associated with their development of self-awareness and self-management skills^[1].

Ha *et al.*^[19] stated that structured social-emotional learning activities, such as circle-time discussions or guided problem-solving, enhance classroom participation and enable academically backward students to make a valuable contribution to group learning. Unlike the traditional deficit-oriented approach to education, SEL is grounded in students' strengths, focusing on strengths each learner possesses^[33]. Students become able to approach academic failure as an opportunity for growth. Academic failure becomes the source of strength for the academically backward learners. They begin to build up confidence, show active engagement, and achieve ongoing academic progress within a fully inclusive classroom^[38].

Social-Emotional Learning and Special Educational Needs Students

According to^[17], individual diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) along with slow-learners, Autism, Neurodivergent falls under the category of learners with special educational needs. The set of people with learning disabilities usually experience difficulties regulating their emotions or even interact within social gathering, which also extend to the classroom, where they are isolated^[12]. However, designing structured social-emotional learning offers solution to learners with learning difficulties, as it can help students to regulate their emotions and reduce anxiety^[30]. This, therefore, can help them integrate seamlessly with other students in the classroom for different learning activities. On a related note, Bergin^[6] showed that social-emotional learning-based interventions improved the social skills and peer relationships of students with ADHD, thereby creating a friendlier and more inclusive classroom environment.

Deroncele-Acosta & Ellis^[13] was of the opinion that scaffolded behavior-modelling together with peer support strategies are indispensable tool to improve participation of special educational needs students. According to them, it aids developing empathy and co-operative skills required to become sound academically. Special educational needs learner can also engage in guided problem-solving activities in addition to circle-time discussion to develop skills that contribute to making correct decision.

International studies support the same conclusions. In the United Kingdom, the SEAL program provided measurable improvements for SEN students in terms of their self-awareness and the capacity to interact with peers in a positive way^[5]. Social-emotional learning programs applied in the United States contributed to higher interaction in the classroom with the student becoming more resilient^[43]. Moreover, much of the research was done on relatively small sample sizes and based on context-specific interventions, which limited the generalization of findings. Additionally, there are insufficient investigation to have revealed the longevity of social-emotional learning and how it influences students with learning disabilities over a long period of time.

Global Standards and Policy Perspectives on Social-Emotional Learning

As asserted by^[30], the focus on Social Emotional Learning throughout the world supports the formation of

Inclusive Education Policy. Many International and National Education Policies have adopted the CASEL framework developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. According^[34], the framework laid a foundation to utilizing social-emotional learning programs for students development academically and improving the classroom atmosphere. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development viewed socio-emotional learning as a critical skills necessary for learning, resilience, and adaptability on a long term perspective, especially with the world rapidly evolving today. Kankaras^[26] argued that socio-emotional skills is teachable but developing it naturally can be viewed from the angle of employability and civic participation. Many countries including but not limited to the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada have made SEL a part of their National Policies for Inclusive Education with a view of providing equity and support for holistic development. These global standards are the beginning of the basis upon which strength-based SEL Modes can be developed for students who are at risk of being academically unsuccessful or who may have special educational needs (SEN).

Gaps in Existing Literature

While there has been extensive research conducted on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) as it relates to inclusion of students who are academically behind or have Special Educational Needs, there are still significant gaps in how SEL can be used in inclusive education practices for those students. Most of the available literature views all students as a whole, rather than specifically focusing on a strength-based model of SEL to help address the unique issues faced by these learners. Furthermore, most studies emphasize a deficit-based approach, whereas more research should have been placed on the strength-based approach where the student is recognized for his or her strengths and potential resiliency rather than what he or she may lack academically. In addition, SEL programs are usually specific to one culture/nationality and therefore do not provide a basis for cross-cultural application to different classrooms. There is also a tendency in research to look at short term results when researching SEL rather than conducting longitudinal studies that look at the impact over time for academic performance, emotional well-being and social inclusion. Finally, there is very little development of practical frameworks for how educators can effectively apply SEL within their classrooms as part of their daily routines; hence providing no clear method to implement SEL in an ongoing manner across an inclusive classroom environment.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology is the systematic approach that was taken in order to examine the effectiveness of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions. A Quasi-Experimental Mixed-Methods design was adopted which gave quantitative growth by scores along with qualitative shifts observed in students. It outlines the research design, participants, instruments, procedures and analysis methods that are understandable, rigorous and well ethical. This framework will offer a systematic foundation of studying the effect of SEL on the development of learners.

Research Design

This present study has adopted a quasi-experimental research design, employing a pre-and post-test procedure to evaluate the results of Social-Emotional Learning programs. A quasi-experimental design was selected because it allows for the assessment of change over time and is feasible to conduct in a

controlled environment^[31]. The intervention was designed to focus on two SEL domains, specifically self-awareness and relationship skills, thereby allowing differentiation of Cognitive and Behavioral changes that learners experience as a result of their learning through the SEL process.

Quasi-experimental methodology allowed consistent tracking of the changes in behavior of participants due to the implementation of the intervention with no need for random assignment of participants to treatment or control groups and thus without the need for outside institutional cooperation^[9]. Both quantitative and qualitative data were measured using the Structured Rating Scale developed for the study, and qualitative data provided through the reflections of facilitators about their experiences in facilitating the intervention^[36]. This research design, therefore, provides a highly rigorous yet also flexible framework within which the researcher can examine the effect of their SEL program on the social and emotional development of their learners while acknowledging the practicalities of Practice-Based Educational Research.

Population and Sampling

Ten students from the researcher's centre, aged 10-14, constituted a purposive sample for this study. Student were identified as academically backward or SEN (ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia). Ten to fourteen years is a time when students begin to establish the requisite social and emotional abilities that impact their ability to engage with peers and be engaged academically. Thus, the sample was purposive to identify students exhibiting both academic obstacles and or social problems in relation to SE. Therefore, the sample aligned from inclusive classroom with the strength-based approach of SEL emphasized by the researcher^[51].

The two groups experimental group focused on receiving SEL model and control group with traditional curriculum. The investigator was ethical in obtaining permission from parents of each student participant, thus all students in this study volunteered to participate. Because of the relatively small size of the sample, a closer observational opportunity was created for all participants, along with individualized support during the intervention phase^[37]. Besides that, the small sample size also provided sufficient diversity among participant learner profiles to study the impact of SEL on participants in the development of their self-awareness and relationship skills^[4]. 40 to 60 minute sessions per week was conducted for 12 weeks. For SEN – visual aids, friendly environment and emotional vocabulary was adapted during the investigation.

Instruments and Measures

In order to quantify the changes in the development of students' social and emotional competencies, namely in the self-awareness and relationship skills areas, Standardized scales for structured observation checklists and social emotional and behavioral difficulties rating scales were used as instruments in this study^[28]. Each area was defined by a number of specific behavioral indicators. Examples include recognizing their own strengths, articulating their feelings, being able to empathize with another person, listening carefully when another person is communicating with them, and being able to solve a dispute peacefully. Each of these indicators was rated on a 4-point scale both before and after intervention in order to determine how much change occurred during that period^[35].

Quantitative data based on frequency of positive social interactions or outburst were observed and data collected from the numerical ratings of each participant so that they could be compared with each other

and against the group as a whole. Facilitator reflections and casual participant feedback added to the qualitative information regarding behavioral changes and increasing emotional maturation^[40]. The research instruments were developed to be user-friendly and context relevant and ethical in terms of being able to demonstrate observable behavior rather than abstract conceptions^[27]. This combined approach provided the instruments with higher levels of reliability and validity and therefore provided a more accurate view of how the SEL activities facilitated the learning and growth of each participant.

Intervention Model

The reason behind this intervention was to improve two important domains of SEL: Self-Awareness & Relationship Skills. The sessions were conducted at the researcher's center, managed and run by the researcher and team, and provided uniform opportunities for practice as well as reflection. Students engaged in academic study and various activities related to curriculum, and also add on part of SEL activities, circle-time discussions where they shared their feelings, found their strengths, and named the difficulties they faced in daily life. Role-playing and peer-guided interactions were also used to model supportive ways to communicate, to empathize, and solve conflicts^[7].

Behavior modelling with scaffolding allowed students to observe and practice positive behaviors in gradual increments, while Peer Support provided a method for students to work collaboratively and include one another in experiences^[32]. Students were also provided with vocabulary development exercises to assist them in better articulating their feelings and experienced structured Group Work Exercises where they listened to and respected one another's comments and shared information and their abilities within the group^[45].

These sessions were an hour long, held twice to thrice a week over five to six weeks, which is adequate for the reinforcement of the concepts learned. This model focuses on a Strength-Based approach: it helps students to build on current skills instead of focusing on areas of need or difficulty. By embedding SEL activities into clear, interactive routines, students are able to build confidence and self-regulation and establish strong peer-to-peer relationships within a nurturing environment^[22].

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected in a systematic manner at the researcher's center. Before the start of the intervention, pre-tests were given in order to take baseline self-awareness and relationship skills measurements^[23]. The observational checklists and rating scales provided a means for measuring student behaviors against specific indicators that allowed consistent and comparable measurement. Completion of the five to six-week intervention saw students being given post-testing that allowed measuring changes in emotional expression, confidence, and peer relationships. Facilitators also kept reflective notes to capture qualitative reflections during each session. Emphasis was placed on the process to ensure that the combination of quantitative scores for students with qualitative observations of facilitators led to a thorough understanding of a student's socio-emotional development^[44].

Data Analysis Methods

Quantitative and qualitative analysis of data has given a clear insight into how the intervention has affected

students. The quantitative data, obtained from pre-test and post-test scores on structured rating scales for the measurement of self-awareness and relationship skills, were tabulated and compared to demonstrate observable changes in individual and group performance^[52]. The percentage change and means were used to depict the extent to which each behaviour changed from before to after the intervention to clearly show improvement in the different behavioral indicators.

Qualitative data were analyzed qualitatively by means of thematic coding of facilitator reflections and informal student feedback. Examples of qualitative themes that emerged include increased emotional expressiveness, increased self-esteem, and improved ability to cooperate with peers^[47]. These supported the quantitative data. The combination of quantitative and qualitative results allows for cross-validation of findings through the use of triangulation, confirming validity in data collected and the true measure of behavioral growth due to the intervention rather than simple numerical changes^[2]. This combined process of both quantitative and qualitative analysis gave a holistic view of SEL activities' impact on socio-emotional competencies in students attending the centre-based program.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was ensured for this study in all aspects. All the participants were voluntarily recruited, while their parent(s) gave informed consent before participation. The identities of all participants were anonymized and kept confidential, and hence individual information of any student could not be disclosed this easily. The intervention process was facilitated totally by the researcher in all its original settings; hence, an environment free from any type of institutional interference was guaranteed to support students' success and compassion. All activities were developed to be relevant to the visual and cognitive development stage of that age, and each activity was carefully designed to be non-intrusive and responsive to the emotional nature of learners. Respect, inclusiveness, and encouragement were at the core of facilitation, and any facilitation procedures that could belittle or disadvantage a student were not employed at all.

Methodology Limitations

The research methods utilized in this analysis bear certain limitations. The research was targeted on academic backward and special need students generalization of the findings is limited by the small sample size (10 students). Thus, the results of this study may not be representative of a larger population. Moreover, since the intervention was conducted within the confines of the researcher's centre, there was no means to substantiate them in other types of educational settings. So, too, while the observation checklists and facilitator reflections proved useful in practice, both bear potential biases when interpreted.

When reflecting upon behavioral changes. Moreover, a twelve-week window is not sufficient to assess long-term outcomes from the targeted SEL strategies. On the whole, despite these limitations, the research design produced some positive information with regards to the effectiveness of targeted SEL strategies in a controlled environment

RESULTS

This part of the study presents the findings obtained from the analysis exercise using frequency and tables.

It seeks to show the connection between social-emotional learning intervention and self-awareness and relationship skills among students aged 10-14.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Self-Awareness Score (Pre Vs. Post)

| Students | Pre-Test Total | Post-Test Total | Change | Average Pre | Average Post |
|----------|----------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | 15 | 16 | +1 | 2 | 2 |
| 2 | 15 | 15 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 16 | 30 | +14 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 17 | 30 | +13 | 2 | 3 |
| 5 | 16 | 29 | +13 | 2 | 3 |
| 6 | 14 | 29 | +15 | 2 | 3 |
| 7 | 15 | 28 | +13 | 2 | 3 |
| 8 | 14 | 19 | +5 | 2 | 2 |
| 9 | 14 | 18 | +4 | 2 | 2 |
| 10 | 15 | 23 | +8 | 2 | 2 |

From Table 1, it can be seen that each student made a different amount of progress between the pre-test and post-test assessments of the self-awareness. Students #1 and #2 had very little or no progress; $\Delta = +1$ for Student #1 while $\Delta = 0$ for Student #2; whereas Students #3 through #7 increased from +13 to +15 points between assessments. More specifically, Student #6 went from 14 on the pre-test to 29 on the post-test. Students #8, #9, and #10 made moderate progress with scores increased by +5, +8, and +4, respectively. From the perspective of the mean score of all students increased from a mean score of 2.0 on the pre-test to a mean score of 3.0 on the post-test, which indicates that these students have become better able to identify what their strengths are, what emotions they feel, and how to show empathy towards others.

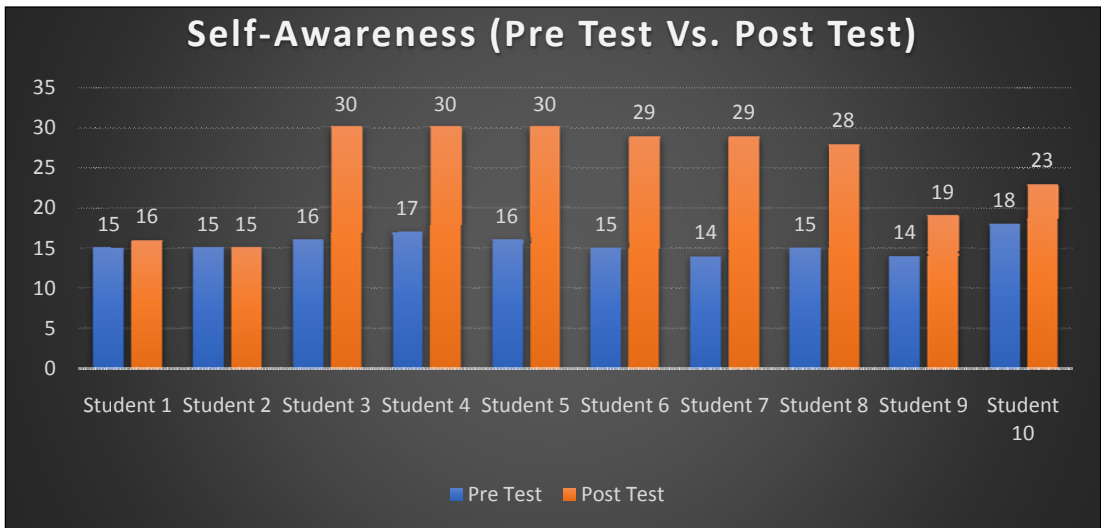
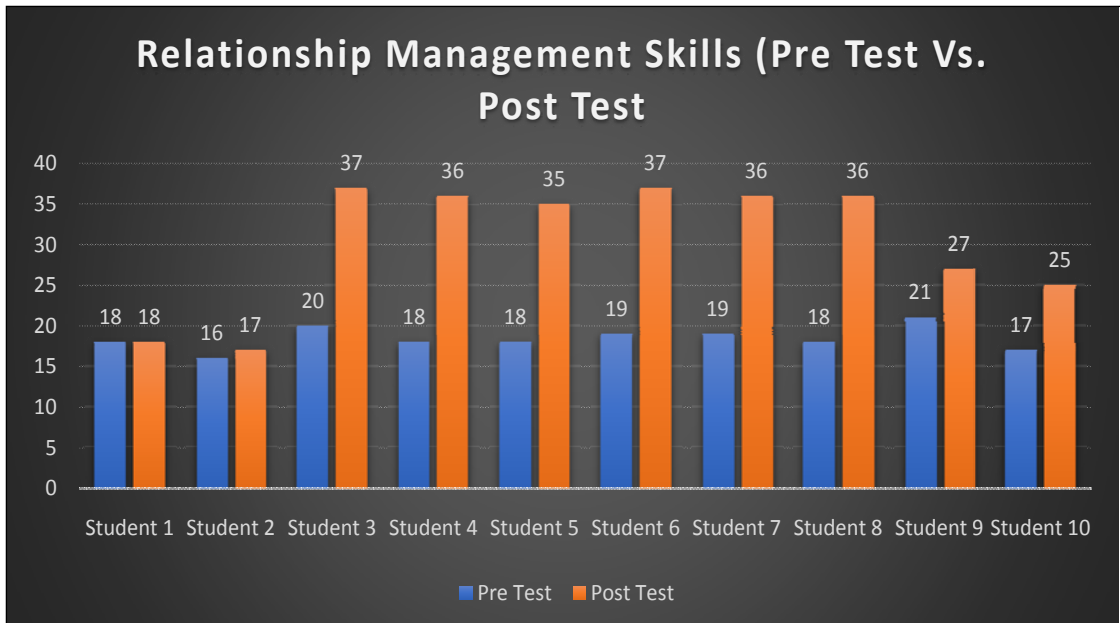


Fig. 1

Table 2: Relationship Management Scores (Pre vs. Post)

| Student | Pre-Test Total | Post-Test Total | Change | Average Pre | Average Post |
|---------|----------------|-----------------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| 1 | 18 | 18 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 16 | 17 | +1 | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | 20 | 37 | +17 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 18 | 36 | +18 | 2 | 3 |
| 5 | 18 | 35 | +17 | 2 | 3 |
| 6 | 19 | 37 | +18 | 2 | 3 |
| 7 | 19 | 36 | +17 | 2 | 3 |
| 8 | 18 | 36 | +18 | 2 | 3 |
| 9 | 21 | 27 | +6 | 2 | 2 |
| 10 | 17 | 25 | +8 | 1 | 2 |

As can be seen from Table 2, Students 1 and 2 only showed minimal change, $\Delta = 0$ and $+1$, respectively, indicating scant responsiveness. By contrast, Students 3 through 8 showed significant improvements, with a range of $+17$ to $+18$ points, such as Student 4, 18 to 36, and Student 6, 19 to 37, representing improved collaboration, listening, and conflict resolution skills. Students 9 and 10 had more modest changes, with $\Delta = +6$ and $+8$ points, respectively. Average scores also shifted upwards, with several students shifting from a mean of 2.0 to a mean of 3.0 between pre-test and post-test, indicating more robust interpersonal competencies.

**Fig. 2**

Domain Level Analysis

Table 3: Domain Level Result Comparison

| Domain | Pre-Test Mean | Post-Test Mean | Mean Change | % Improvement |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|---------------|
| Self-Awareness | 15.1 | 23.7 | +8.6 | 57% |
| Relationship Management Skills | 18.4 | 30.9 | +12.5 | 68% |

Analysis of domain-level scores in Table 3 indicated consistent gains for both self-awareness and relationship management subsequent to the intervention. For self-awareness, the group mean rose from $M = 15.1$ ($SD = 1.0$) at pretest to $M = 23.7$ ($SD = 5.6$) at post-test, reflecting an average gain of +8.6 points. The growth for relationship management was even larger, with the group mean rising from $M = 18.4$ ($SD = 1.5$) at pretest to $M = 30.9$ ($SD = 7.6$) at post-test, representing an average gain of +12.5 points. Percentage change calculations indicated that self-awareness improved approximately 57%, whereas relationship management improved 68%. This result suggests that while both domains benefited from the intervention, relationship management was more globally responsive, especially with regard to indicators related to collaboration, conflict resolution, and respectful communication.

Table 4: Cohen’s D Effect Size

| Domain | Pre-Test Mean | Post-Test Mean | Cohen’s d | Implication |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Self-Awareness | 15.1 | 23.7 | 2.15 | Very Large |
| Relationship Management Skills | 18.4 | 30.9 | 2.27 | Very Large |

According to the Effect Size Analysis reported in Table 4, the intervention produced large effect sizes for both domains. Cohen’s d for Self-Awareness (2.15) indicates that the intervention led to a very large increase in students’ capacity to identify their strengths, articulate their feelings, and empathize with others.

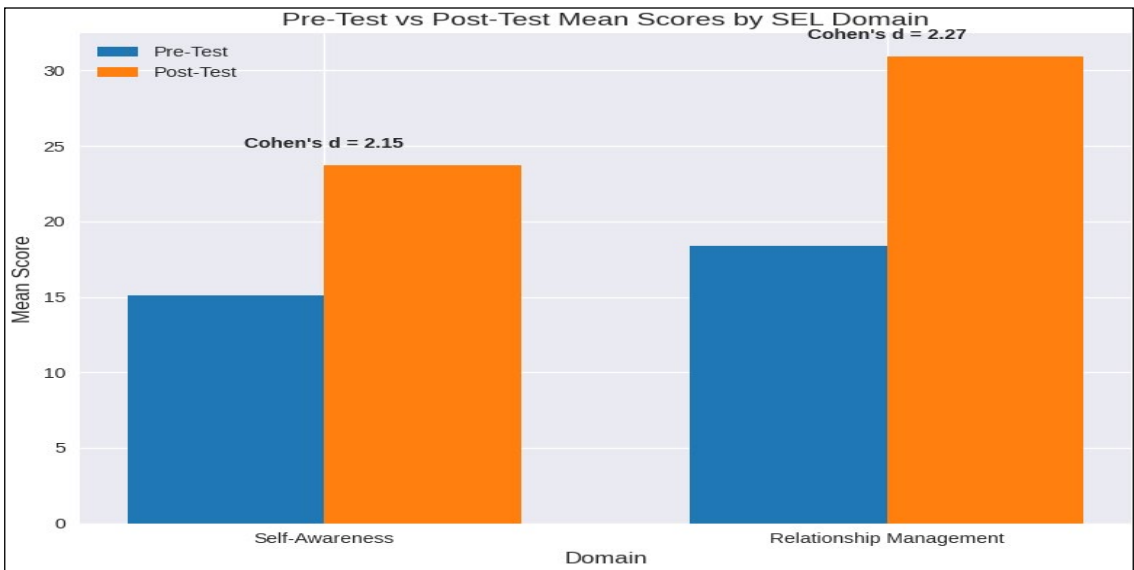


Fig. 3

Relationship Management also showed a large increase in the measures of collaboration, conflict resolution, and respectful communication with a Cohen's d of 2.27. Both of these values are substantially greater than the large effect size threshold ($d \geq 0.80$) established by Cohen; therefore, the intervention has had a powerful and substantive impact on developing socio-emotional skills.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the impact of a structured SEL program on academically challenged (or backward) and SEN students. The self-awareness and relationship management focus of this SEL program had the intention of fostering confidence, regulating emotions, and increasing collaboration with peers. Results indicated that the SEL program significantly enhanced confidence and regulating emotions (thereby enhancing collaborative working) and provides further support for using SEL as a strength-based approach to promote the inclusion of all learners, particularly diverse learners, in addition to supporting students' social-emotional development.

The results indicated that self-awareness improved to various extents across the student population following the implementation of the intervention. Whereas some students realized very significant progress—that is, an almost doubling—between pre-intervention and post-intervention assessment scores, others experienced only slight improvement in assessment score. At the inception of the program, many students struggled to articulate their feelings and were not able to identify their strengths; by the end of the program, these same students could articulate their feelings consistently and express recognition of personal strength. The greatest growth for this group involved those who commenced the program at “moderate” level scores at baseline. This supports the idea that this type of intervention is beneficial for learners who have a basic level of self-awareness and require structured guidance to build confidence in developing greater skills in articulating emotion. However, some students experienced very little change in scores, which would indicate that there can be a number of variables—individual, motivational, and environmental—that can affect the ways in which learners respond to social-emotional learning interventions.

These findings are in tandem with previous research that has repeatedly highlighted the importance of SEL in teaching people how to manage their emotions and to better understand themselves. Cristovao *et al.*^[12] noted that if students know their strengths and weaknesses, they are most likely to be more meaningfully engaged in school; hence, good self-awareness leads to good performance at school. He^[11] noted that teaching social and emotional learning at school improved the level of acceptance of peers and the emotional expression of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder. It therefore follows that through structured interventions to improve SEL, it is possible to increase self-awareness among different types of learners. Also,^[21] mentioned, in a review of literature, that the results of SEL intervention programs are very varied, with some children showing outstanding improvements while other children only showed gradual improvements; the same trend can be seen within this study.

The improvement in the student's relationship management skills was significant due to the intervention and varied across the different skill areas. There were some students whose scores increased by 17 - 18 points for the areas of listening, conflict resolution, inclusion, and respectful communication from their pre-test to their post-test. These significant gains were indicative of the effectiveness of the structured SEL activities for building interpersonal competencies. Students who displayed a lack of collaboration or who did not show much empathy before the intervention showed remarkable growth and are now displaying

more confidence and willingness to use courtesy and supportive gestures during group work. A small number of students made moderate gains while two students did not display any noticeable changes. This shows that even though the intervention as a whole was successful in realizing the intended outcomes, the individual student's response to the intervention was varied.

In support of that,^[4] reported on the positive impact SEL Intervention in northeast Nigeria had on fostering collaboration and Empathy between students, which resulted in increased quality of relationships with peers - in line with the previous improvement in Listening and Inclusiveness. Bonfim *et al.*^[7] findings reinforced that there is a strong connection between Circle-time activities and development of Empathy and Teacher-student Relationship in Brazilian Kindergartens; thus findings in these two instances align with improved levels of Supportive Communication and Conflict Resolution. It is further highlighted by^[4] that SEL practices within the school environment focused on students with Disabilities create an increased ability to express feelings of emotion & foster peer inclusion which further substantiates the proposition that Structured Intervention can increase Relationship Management skills for a variety of learners. Deroncele-Acosta & Ellis^[13] findings regarding Inclusive schools and xenophobia are similar since they indicate that SEL programs increase Respectful Communication, as well as Conflict Resolution skills. However, limited responsiveness of some students aligns with the findings by^[21], who concluded that the effectiveness of the SEL has varied based on baseline competency levels and contextual support.

According to the effect size analysis, the results from the intervention have an enormously large impact across all areas that were assessed. The scores for self-awareness were 2.15 (Cohen's d), while for relationship management (Cohen's d), scores were even greater, at a value of 2.27. Though scores above 0.80 are considered to have a large effect (Cohen, 1988), both of these areas have shown an exceptional level of responsiveness to the Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program. The effect size analysis allows a further indication that these results are not only statistically significant but practically significant, with educational impact on student daily interactions being the result of the change facilitated by intervention. Results from meta-analyses and intervention studies support these conclusions because both find similar or greater effect sizes than those attained with traditional academic interventions. Ha *et al.*^[19] report that SEL programs across Grades 1-12 yielded significant gains in social-emotional competency with effect sizes frequently exceeding those of traditional academic interventions. Similarly, Bergin^[6] and Lee^[28] demonstrated similar outcomes for emotional regulation and interpersonal skills for both teachers and students through participation in SEL.

The higher effect size of relationship management also corroborates the research by Bailey^[4] who found that social and emotional (SEL) programmes in North East Nigeria were very successful in developing teamwork and empathy where relationship management is likely to be better developed through planned group work. This is supported further by^[7], who provided evidence that implementing circle-time increased both empathy and teacher-child relationships. Therefore, it is likely that the very substantial increase in relationship management which was evident in this study can also be attributed to both the use of the circle-time format and to the strong teacher led focus on developing children's social and emotional skills. Similarly, the effect size of Relationship Management in this study was much larger than effect sizes which have previously been reported within the larger body of literature on SEL, where effect sizes rarely exceed 0.30 to 0.70^{[12];[21]}. Therefore, it is possible that because of the manner in which the intervention was implemented, i.e., small groups with a focus on academically disadvantaged and special educational needs (SEN) students, together with strength-based approaches, this contributed positively to

the development of relationship management. It also provides evidence of the effectiveness of specifically targeting SEL interventions in order to produce significant transformation in environments where children face high levels of socio-emotional difficulties.

The SEL practical model for SEN and academically backward students succeeds only when it shifts the focus from “behavioral management” to “emotional safety.” The intentional intersection of neurodiversity and pedagogy plays very important role. Traditional classroom environment function often has stress-zone. Schools can lower the stress by allowing neurodivergent student integrating visual scaffolding and predictable routines, to engage with academic content without the constant interference of social anxiety or distress.

In the “inclusive” element it is not merely the student who must learn to adapt, but the school environment, educators must recognize diverse emotional expressions, adapt to every individual need for success of system. For students with diverse learning disability or academic backward students – identifying triggers that disturbs before meltdown occurs must be celebrated as small wins , achieving academic milestones. To culminate this research, SEL should be “core subject”, base foundation of curriculum to bridge the gap, for life long learner in a complex world.

CONCLUSION

The study reported here involved examining how students were impacted by a structured Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) intervention designed for academically under-performing students and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN), specifically helping the students to develop their self-awareness and manage their relationships with others. Results showed that there was significant improvement in both areas as a result of students being able to articulate their feelings better and recognize their strengths, demonstrate empathy towards others, collaborate effectively, and utilize conflict resolution skills. The results also revealed that group means for all areas improved, with effect size analysis indicating that there were very large effects (Cohen’s $d > 2.0$) for all areas of development, thus confirming the practical value of this intervention. Furthermore, Relationship Management was found to be more responsive to the structured SEL intervention than Self-Awareness, indicating that interpersonal competencies are likely to be more easily developed through participation in regular structured SEL programming. The results of this study have great implications. First, they indicate that SEL is a meaningful way to foster the development of socially and emotionally competent people in schools for all students who may be struggling to participate in school academically and socially. Developing self-awareness increases a student’s self-efficacy and motivation, and the better a student is at managing her relationships, the more harmony there is within the classroom and the greater the peer cooperation and teamwork. These findings justify incorporating SEL as part of the general curriculum in the regular and special education classroom. As a positive, strengths-based instructional model, SEL attends to the emotional and social aspects of a student’s schooling experience. Furthermore, the findings of this study shows that SEL not only supports the socio-emotional development and growth of a student but also serves to facilitate his or her academic achievement along with holistic development because learners who possess strong emotional competencies are more likely to show the interest in learning and become invested in their learning journey. The following recommendations suggested through findings: All educators should embed activities of SEL into daily classroom routines using various activities related to curriculum aligned to SEL, real-life situation to understand in quicker way methods like circle-time, reflective discussions, and cooperative learning experiences to develop

both self-awareness and relationship management, also other domains can be considered. Policymakers must embed SEL into core educational systems, including in diverse learning environments, to provide equal opportunities for socio-emotional development to students with developmental delays or special education needs along with other regular students. Educators need professional development program connected with SEL implementation, included in teacher training programs curriculum as a part to show how to teach SEL, including how to help students express their feelings, understand what empathy is, and handle conflict effectively. Schools need to implement mindfulness exercise that gives positive impact on students as well as educators to balance their emotional levels. The assessment policies should evaluate socio-emotional competence together with academic achievement and recognize the importance of looking at the overall development of students and educators' well-being too. Future research should look at SEL interventions of different durations and demonstrate their adaptability through different educational and cultural contexts. There will be an opportunity to explore how SEL interacts with other culturally grounded practices for collective learning, peer mentoring, and/or conflict resolution. Research may also seek to embed the technological infrastructure-including digital platforms and gamified approaches-to test whether the use of technology to enhance Andres can build engagement for those learners who are academically disadvantaged or SEN. The existing studies could be elaborated, and future studies can develop SEL as an ongoing, adaptable, contextualized framework through which individuals can learn, grow emotionally, and excel academically in an ever-evolving educational environment. To ensure the longevity and scalability of inclusive SEL models, further research should tract the implementation of longitudinal tracking as foundation recommendation to evaluate the “sleeper effects” of early emotional interventions; such self-regulation skills gained by SEN and academic backward students at primary school correlate with higher graduation rates, along with an improved vocational outcomes in adulthood. To add on future research must address home-schooling gap in SEL when student shifts in different environments. Furthermore the relationship between educator self-efficacy and student outcomes within this frame-work; should be part of future study to identify how an educator's own emotional resilience affects the SEL implementation. To sum up as classrooms become increasingly diverse, future studies should focus on cultural adaptations of SEL, ensuring that “socially appropriate behaviour” is defined through a lens that respects the diverse cultural and neurological identities of all learners.

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