



## ANALYSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SEL COMPETENCIES ON ENHANCING ACADEMIC OUTCOMES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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### Abstract

This study focuses on important areas including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relational skills, and responsible decision-making. It also looks at how Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competences affect college students' academic performance. SEL is becoming more widely acknowledged as being crucial to students' success as it affects their social and personal growth in addition to their academic achievement. The study used a mixed-methods approach to measure SEL abilities in a varied student population by combining behavioural observations, performance-based evaluations, and self-report questionnaires. According to the investigation, kids that possess greater levels of SEL abilities have superior academic results, such as enhanced engagement, higher retention rates, and improved GPA. Additionally, these children exhibit stronger interpersonal skills and resilience, which enhance the collaborative and encouraging learning environment. The research delves deeper into the efficacy of focused SEL interventions and discovers that these initiatives can greatly improve SEL abilities and, in turn, academic achievement. The results emphasize the necessity of incorporating SEL into student services and college courses, and they provide guidance to educators and legislators on how to use SEL to promote holistic student development.

**Keywords:** Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Academic Outcomes, Emotional Intelligence (EI), College Students, Interventions, Competency Development

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) abilities are essential for college students to succeed because they must navigate a variety of hurdles, such as academic expectations and social adaptations. Students need assistance navigating these pressures, and SEL skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relational skills, and responsible decision-making are essential. Though cognitive ability has historically been associated with academic performance, the role that social emotional learning (SEL) plays in promoting student progress is becoming increasingly apparent. Pupils who possess high SEL competences are better able to control their stress, develop goals, form wholesome relationships, and make wise decisions all of which are necessary for academic achievement. This study looks at how SEL characteristics affect important academic outcomes for college students, such GPA, retention rates, and student engagement. The goal of the research is to close a significant gap in the literature by examining the efficacy of SEL treatments and provide insights into how these abilities might be incorporated into higher education to assist holistic student development.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) outlines how individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation rather than solely through direct experience. The theory integrates cognitive and behavioural elements, emphasizing the role of modelling and reinforcement in learning [1]. Bandura introduces the concept of self-efficacy, highlighting how personal and environmental factors interact in the learning process. This work challenges traditional behaviourist views and provides a comprehensive framework for understanding social and cognitive development. It has significantly

influenced fields such as psychology, education, and behavioural science. The study by Beauvais et al. (2014) investigates factors associated with academic success among nursing students through a descriptive correlational research design [2]. The research identifies key predictors of academic achievement, including personal, educational, and environmental factors. The findings highlight the significance of variables such as study habits, support systems, and self-efficacy in influencing student performance. The study aims to provide insights that can inform strategies to enhance educational outcomes in nursing programs. The results emphasize the need for targeted interventions to support nursing students' academic success.

Brackett and Rivers in their chapter explores the transformative impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) on students' lives [3]. They discuss how SEL programs enhance students' emotional intelligence, which can improve academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being. The chapter highlights various SEL strategies and their effectiveness in fostering a supportive learning environment. The authors emphasize the importance of integrating SEL into educational curricula to address students' emotional and social needs. The work provides evidence-based insights on how SEL can contribute to students' holistic development and academic success. Colleen S. Conley examines the application of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) within higher education settings [4]. She discusses how SEL principles can be integrated into college and university environments to support students' emotional and social development. The chapter highlights the benefits of SEL for enhancing students' academic performance, interpersonal skills, and overall well-being. Conley reviews various SEL programs and practices that have been implemented in higher education and provides evidence of their effectiveness. The work underscores the importance of incorporating SEL into higher education curricula to promote student success and personal growth.

Durlak, Weissberg, and colleagues (2024) present a meta-analysis evaluating the impact of school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions [8]. The study synthesizes data from various universal SEL programs to assess their effectiveness in improving students' social skills, emotional well-being, and academic performance. The findings demonstrate that these interventions have a positive and significant effect on students' outcomes across multiple domains. The research highlights the value of implementing SEL programs in schools and provides evidence-based recommendations for enhancing student support. The study underscores the importance of SEL in fostering holistic development and academic success. In *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning*, Elias, Zins, and colleagues explore the essential components and benefits of integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into educational curricula [9]. The book provides a comprehensive overview of SEL's impact on student development, including improved emotional regulation, social skills, and academic performance. It offers practical strategies for educators to implement SEL programs effectively in schools. The authors emphasize the importance of SEL in fostering a positive school climate and supporting students' overall well-being. This resource serves as a guide for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance student outcomes through SEL.

In *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (1995), Daniel Goleman explores the concept of emotional intelligence (EQ) and its profound impact on personal and professional success. Goleman argues that EQ comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills can be more crucial than traditional IQ for achieving lifelong success, health, and strong relationships [7]. He presents research and real-world examples illustrating how emotional competencies contribute to effective leadership, better mental health, and enhanced interpersonal interactions. The book underscores the importance of developing emotional skills for overall achievement and well-being. In "An EI-Based Theory of Performance" (2000), Daniel Goleman connects emotional intelligence (EI) to workplace success, arguing that EI competencies such as self-awareness and empathy enhance job performance and leadership [6]. The chapter highlights the importance of measuring and developing EI to improve individual and organizational outcomes. Goleman's framework offers practical guidance for integrating EI into workplace practices.

In "Preparing for Effective SEL Implementation" (2018), Stephanie Jones, Rebecca Bailey, and colleagues provide a guide for successfully integrating social and emotional learning (SEL) into educational settings [14]. The paper outlines key strategies for preparing educators and schools for SEL implementation, emphasizing the importance of planning, professional development, and

community involvement. The authors offer practical recommendations to ensure that SEL programs are effectively executed and sustained. In *Emotional Intelligence: Achieving Academic and Career Excellence* (2003), Nelson and Low explore how emotional intelligence (EI) contributes to academic and professional success [10]. The book emphasizes the role of EI skills, such as self-awareness and interpersonal abilities, in enhancing both educational outcomes and career advancement. It provides practical strategies for developing EI to achieve excellence in various life domains.

In "A Socially Contextualized Model of African American Identity: Possible Selves and School Persistence" (1995), Oyserman and Gant present a model examining how African American students' identity and possible selves influence their school persistence [5]. The study explores how socially contextualized identities impact students' motivation and academic success. The findings underscore the importance of considering cultural and personal factors in supporting educational outcomes for African American students. In "Emotional Intelligence and Academic Success: Examining the Transition from High School to University" (2004), Parker, Summerfeldt, and colleagues investigate the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in students' transition from high school to university [11]. The study finds that higher EI is associated with better academic performance and smoother adaptation to university life. The results highlight the significance of EI in supporting students' success during this critical transition period.

In "Using Emotional and Social Factors to Predict Student Success" (2003), Pritchard and Wilson analyze how emotional and social factors influence student outcomes in college [12]. The study identifies key predictors of academic success, including emotional well-being and social support. Their findings underscore the importance of addressing these factors to enhance student achievement and development. In "Classroom Emotional Climate, Student Engagement, and Academic Achievement" (2012), Reyes and Brackett explore how the emotional atmosphere of the classroom affects student engagement and academic performance [13]. The study finds that a positive emotional climate enhances students' engagement and, in turn, their academic success. The research highlights the critical role of emotional climate in fostering a supportive learning environment and improving educational outcomes. In "The Scientific Base Linking Social and Emotional Learning to School Success" (2007), Zins and Bloodworth review research demonstrating how social and emotional learning (SEL) positively impacts academic achievement and school success [15]. They present evidence that SEL enhances students' emotional skills and social behaviors, which in turn improve their academic performance. The paper highlights the importance of incorporating SEL into educational practices to support student development and success.

### **3. THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACADEMIC SUCCESS**

Academic achievement is increasingly linked to emotional intelligence (EI), especially in challenging and complicated learning environments. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the capacity to identify, comprehend, regulate, and utilize emotions in oneself and other people. Pupils with strong emotional intelligence are better able to cope with the demands of the classroom, control their stress, remain motivated, and stay goal-focused. These abilities are critical to maintaining the resilience required for academic success. Furthermore, Emotional Intelligence (EI) improves students' capacity to establish constructive interactions with teachers and peers, which promotes a helpful learning environment. Studies regularly reveal that students with higher EI are more likely to be engaged in their studies, to solve problems more effectively, and to get better scores. Higher retention rates are also correlated with emotional intelligence (EI), as students who possess high EI are more inclined to stick with their studies during difficult times. As a result, emotional intelligence (EI) is critical to academic performance because it supports students in controlling their emotions, staying motivated, and developing supportive connections. As such, educational institutions that want to improve student results should place a strong emphasis on EI.

### **4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SEL COMPETENCIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

The competences of social-emotional learning (SEL) are becoming more widely acknowledged as critical elements of academic achievement. These abilities, which have a big impact on students'

academic achievement, include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relational skills, and responsible decision-making. Students that possess SEL abilities are better able to control their emotions, maintain concentration, make reasonable objectives, and communicate with classmates and teachers. For instance, self-awareness enables students to recognize their strengths and shortcomings and improve academic preparation, while self-management enables them to control their emotions and form healthy study habits. Academic results and SEL abilities are positively correlated, according to research that is frequently conducted. Pupils with good SEL abilities typically get better marks, show more interest in their coursework, and have greater retention rates. Additionally, these kids are less prone to burn out, more resilient, and better able to handle the pressures of the classroom. Additionally, SEL creates a welcoming and inclusive learning atmosphere that boosts kids' drive for success and sense of belonging.

## **5. SEL AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ACADEMIC MOTIVATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) has a profound impact on academic motivation and engagement, essential components for student success in educational settings. SEL equips students with crucial skills that enhance their ability to stay motivated and actively participate in their learning experiences. Self-awareness, a core Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competency, helps students understand their strengths, weaknesses, and interests, enabling them to set personal and academic goals that are meaningful and aligned with their intrinsic motivations. When students have a clear sense of their own abilities and aspirations, they are more likely to be motivated to engage in their studies and strive toward their goals. Self-management, another crucial SEL competency, involves regulating one's emotions, behaviors, and time. Students who excel in self-management are better equipped to handle academic stress, maintain focus, and develop effective study habits, supporting consistent academic effort and perseverance.

This, in turn, increases their motivation to stay engaged in their coursework. Responsible decision-making enhances students' ability to set realistic and achievable academic goals. When students make informed decisions, they can create and pursue goals aligned with their long-term aspirations, fostering a sense of purpose and driving deeper engagement in their studies. Additionally, social awareness and relationship skills contribute to a positive and supportive learning environment. Building strong, empathetic relationships with peers and educators helps students feel connected and engaged in their academic community, with a supportive social network providing encouragement, feedback, and a sense of belonging. Finally, effective emotional regulation allows students to manage frustration, anxiety, and other emotions that can impact their motivation and engagement. Students who can regulate their emotions are better equipped to cope with academic challenges and maintain focus on their studies.

## **6. DEVELOPMENTAL DIFFERENCES IN SEL COMPETENCIES AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, evolve as students' progress through their college years. These developmental differences are shaped by a variety of factors, including age, life experiences, academic demands, and social contexts. During the early years of college, particularly for freshmen and sophomores, students often face significant transitions such as adjusting to increased academic responsibilities, living independently, and forming new social connections. At this stage, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies are still developing, and students may struggle with self-management and responsible decision-making as they navigate these new challenges. Social awareness and relationship skills are also in the early stages of development, as students work to establish new friendships and build a sense of belonging within the college community.

By the time students reach their junior year, many have developed stronger SEL competencies, particularly in self-management and responsible decision-making. They typically become more adept at handling academic pressures, managing their time, and making informed decisions about their academic and personal lives. Social awareness and relationship skills also improve as students become more comfortable in their social environments and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics. Juniors

often demonstrate greater self-awareness, understanding their strengths and weaknesses more clearly, which aids in making more strategic academic and career choices. In the senior year, SEL competencies are generally well-developed. Students nearing graduation tend to have a high level of self-awareness, allowing them to articulate their goals and pursue them with confidence. Self-management skills are typically strong, enabling students to balance the demands of completing their degree, preparing for post-graduation plans, and maintaining personal well-being.

Social awareness and relationship skills are highly refined, as seniors are often engaged in more complex social and professional networks. Responsible decision-making becomes particularly crucial as students make important choices about their future careers and life paths. However, it is important to note that SEL development is not uniform across all students. Individual differences, such as personality traits, prior experiences, and cultural background, can influence the pace and nature of SEL development, with some students entering college with already well-developed SEL skills while others may need more support and time to cultivate these competencies.

## 7. INTERVENTIONS TO ENHANCE SEL COMPETENCIES IN COLLEGE SETTINGS

Improving students' Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills in college environments is essential to fostering their overall growth, well-being, and success. Successful interventions may be incorporated into academic programs and campus life, among other facets of the college experience. Here are some key interventions:

- **Incorporating SEL into the Curriculum:** Incorporating SEL concepts into the academic curriculum is one of the best strategies to improve SEL abilities. Courses on conflict resolution, leadership, emotional intelligence, and ethics can be specifically created to teach SEL competencies like self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making. Furthermore, SEL-focused exercises like group projects, case studies, and reflective writing may be included into already-existing courses to force students to exercise empathy, cooperation, and critical thinking.
- **Workshops and Training Programs:** Colleges can provide training courses and seminars aimed at fostering SEL skills. These could consist of seminars on emotional intelligence, mindfulness instruction, leadership development, and stress management courses. Students' capacity for self-control, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal interaction can all be improved by participating in such programs.
- **Peer Mentoring Programs:** A potent intervention that helps develop SEL abilities in mentors and mentees is peer mentoring. Through these programs, more seasoned students mentor freshmen, assisting them in overcoming the intellectual and social obstacles of college life.
- **Counselling and Mental Health Services:** For SEL development to be supported, especially in areas like self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management, access to counselling and mental health services is crucial. Colleges have to make sure that their students have access to counselling services so they may get advice on how to control their emotions, deal with stress, and form wholesome relationships.
- **Service Learning and Community Engagement:** Students can use programs that involve community participation and service learning to apply SEL abilities in practical settings. Engaging in community service, volunteer work, or civic engagement initiatives may foster in pupils a feeling of duty, empathy, and social awareness. Through these interactions, students are inspired to engage with a variety of groups, which deepens their comprehension of social concerns and improves their capacity for responsible decision-making and teamwork.
- **Extracurricular Activities and Student Organizations:** Engaging in extracurricular pursuits and student groups provides opportunity for applying SEL skills in real-world settings. Participating in extracurricular activities, athletic teams, or leadership positions in the student government can improve students' interpersonal, cooperative, and conflict-resolution skills.
- **Integration of SEL into Residential Life:** Colleges that provide workshops, discussion groups, and other events that foster community building and emotional well-being might integrate SEL programming into residential life. To assist students in gaining social awareness, relational skills, and self-awareness in the dorm environment, resident advisors can get SEL training.

- **Faculty and Staff Training:** It is essential that instructors and staff receive training on how to identify and assist students in developing SEL abilities. By being aware of SEL, teachers and administrators may model SEL behaviors, foster a more understanding and compassionate learning environment, and apply SEL concepts to their interactions with students.

## **8. SEL COMPETENCIES AND THEIR ROLE IN REDUCING ACADEMIC STRESS AND ANXIETY**

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies play a critical role in reducing academic stress and anxiety among college students. Self-awareness involves understanding one's emotions, strengths, and challenges, which allows students to recognize the sources of their stress and anxiety and take steps to address these issues. By identifying when they are feeling overwhelmed, students can seek appropriate coping strategies or support. Self-management, another key competency, is crucial for regulating emotions, behaviors, and impulses, particularly in challenging situations. It helps students stay focused, manage their time effectively, and maintain a balanced approach to their studies, using techniques like goal setting, time management, and stress reduction to mitigate academic pressures. Social awareness involves understanding and empathizing with others and appreciating diverse perspectives, which aids in building supportive relationships and engaging in positive social interactions, thus buffering against stress and anxiety.

Relationship skills, including communication, teamwork, and conflict resolution, are essential for managing stress in academic settings. Supportive relationships with peers, faculty, and mentors provide emotional support that alleviates stress, while collaborative learning environments, where students feel safe to express themselves and work together, contribute to lower levels of academic stress. Finally, responsible decision-making involves making thoughtful, ethical choices that consider the consequences for oneself and others. This competency helps students manage academic stress by enabling them to make decisions that prioritize their well-being, such as seeking academic support, balancing study and rest, and setting realistic goals.

## **9. SOCIAL AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIP SKILLS IN COLLABORATIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

Extending the significance of social awareness and interpersonal skills in cooperative learning settings, it's critical to emphasize the ways in which these proficiencies support the growth of a constructive group identity and collective effectiveness. Students are more likely to forge strong bonds inside the group when they possess social awareness and relationship-building skills. Each member feels responsibility for both the success of the group as a whole and for their individual work as a result of this cohesiveness, which encourages a shared commitment to collective goals. Through the application of these SEL qualities in a cooperative learning setting, students get practical experience in interpersonal communication and teamwork.

## **10. ASSESSMENT AND MEASUREMENT OF SEL COMPETENCIES IN COLLEGE STUDENTS**

Assessing and measuring Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies in college students is crucial for understanding the impact of SEL programs and identifying areas for improvement. Here are key considerations and methods for assessing SEL competencies in a college setting:

- **Self-Report Surveys and Questionnaires:** Self-report surveys and questionnaires are widely used as one of the most popular tools for evaluating SEL abilities. Students can use these activities to reflect on their attitudes, behaviors, and feelings in relation to SEL competencies. College students might benefit from adaptations of surveys like the Social-Emotional and Character Development Scale (SECDs) and the Emotional Intelligence Scale (EIS). These tests can be given on a regular basis to monitor changes over time and are helpful in obtaining information about students' perceived areas of strength and improvement.
- **Behavioural Observations:** Direct behavioural observations offer important insights regarding students' SEL abilities in addition to self-report measurements. In order to evaluate students' interpersonal abilities, social awareness, and emotional control, faculty and staff can watch how they

interact with one another in group projects, talks, and other social situations. Structured feedback may be given and these observations can be properly documented using checklists and rubrics.

- **Peer and Faculty Assessments:** When it comes to students' SEL abilities, peer assessments can provide an alternative viewpoint, especially in group projects and cooperative learning settings. By giving structured comments on the communication, cooperation, and conflict resolution abilities of their classmates, children learn more about their own social-emotional growth. Faculty evaluations are also beneficial as teachers watch how students behave in a variety of social and academic settings.
- **Performance-Based Assessments:** In performance-based evaluations, real-world activities and challenges are used to gauge students' SEL abilities. Students may be evaluated, for instance, on their capacity to control their anxiety during presentations, show empathy in peer criticism, or work well with others in a group setting. These evaluations offer concrete proof of how well students use SEL skills in real-world contexts.
- **Reflective Journals and Portfolios:** Students can track their growth as self-aware learners over time by keeping reflective notebooks and portfolios. Students can evaluate their development in areas like self-management and responsible decision-making by regularly reflecting on their experiences. Portfolios that contain proof of SEL-related activities—like leadership positions or volunteer work—offer a thorough picture of students' development.
- **Focus Groups and Interviews:** Focus groups and interviews are examples of qualitative techniques that can offer greater insights into students' experiences with SEL. With the use of these techniques, students may talk about the difficulties and achievements they have had in acquiring SEL abilities, providing rich, narrative data to support quantitative assessments. Additionally, focus groups can highlight patterns and trends that may not be picked up by surveys by themselves.
- **Institutional Data:** Institutions can evaluate the overall effect of SEL programs by looking at statistics like academic achievement, retention rates, and involvement in campus events. Evidence of the success of SEL interventions can be found, for instance, by monitoring changes in GPA or retention rates following their implementation.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Longitudinal studies may be carried out to assess the long-term effects of SEL abilities on students' academic and personal results. Researchers may evaluate how SEL skills impact academic progress, job preparedness, and general well-being by tracking kids over several years.
- **Technology-Based Assessments:** Technological developments have made it possible to create digital platforms and tools for SEL competency assessments. These resources might be virtual simulations that assess social and decision-making abilities, online surveys with real-time feedback, or applications that monitor emotional states. It is possible to test SEL abilities in scalable and engaging ways via technology-based exams, which can facilitate the collection of data from big student groups.

## 11. CONCLUSION

The examination of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competences reveals how important they are for improving college students' academic performance. These abilities—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making, among others are essential for both academic achievement and personal development. Studies indicate that pupils possessing robust SEL abilities typically exhibit superior academic performance, increased rates of retention, and a deeper level of engagement with their studies. By assisting students in stress management, developing healthy relationships, and making wise decisions, these competences enhance the supportive learning environment. One method that shows promise for promoting holistic student development is the integration of SEL into courses and student services in higher education. However, cultural and demographic considerations must be given due consideration throughout implementation, and SEL programs must be continuously assessed and modified. All things considered, SEL abilities are critical for academic achievement, and incorporating them into teaching methods may greatly improve the college experience by equipping students for both academic demands and life after graduation. To optimize the advantages of SEL interventions for all children, future research should concentrate on longitudinal studies and the development of successful treatments.

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