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Attitude of Secondary School Teachers towards Social and Emotional Learning of Students

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore secondary school teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and its implementation in schools. The study adopted a mixed-methods research design to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights. Objectives of the present study are to assess secondary teachers' attitudes towards social and emotional learning in relation to locality and gender, to identify perceived benefits and challenges of SEL implementation in Schools from teachers' perspectives, to identify teachers' perceptions of SEL's impact on students emotional and academic development. The quantitative component of the study assessed teachers' attitudes toward SEL and examined whether there were significant differences based on gender and locality (urban/rural). Data were collected using a structured attitude scale and analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The results indicated that teachers generally held positive attitudes toward SEL, with minor variations across gender and locality, though these were not statistically significant. The qualitative component involved four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with secondary school teachers from both urban and rural schools. The data were analyzed using a narrative-informed thematic approach. Teachers shared that SEL fosters a positive classroom environment, supports students' emotional well-being, enhances academic performance, and builds essential life skills. SEL was also seen as a preventive tool against emotional crises, helping students cope with stress, social pressure, and even risks like bullying or suicidal thoughts.

The study concludes that while teachers value SEL as a core element of holistic education, effective implementation requires systemic reforms, including teacher preparation, policy integration, and school-level support. The findings carry important implications for policymakers, educators, and curriculum developers aiming to promote emotionally intelligent and socially responsible learners in the Indian education system.

Keywords: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Secondary Teachers, Attitude, Perceptions

1. Introduction

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is an educational framework that focuses on developing the emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and ethical values of individuals. It emphasizes the importance of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Rooted in the belief that emotions and relationships are fundamental to learning and development, SEL equips students with the tools to navigate challenges in their personal and academic lives. SEL is not confined to the classroom; it extends to interactions within families, communities, and workplaces. Research has consistently shown that SEL positively impacts academic achievement,

emotional well-being, and long-term success in life. It also helps in reducing behavioural problems, enhancing resilience, and building a more inclusive and empathetic society.

Social and Emotional Learning has gained much attention globally for its use and effectiveness in the education curriculum. It is increasingly recognized as a critical component in fostering holistic development in students. Social and Emotional Learning is an integral part of education and human development. The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) termed social-emotional learning "as a process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions". SEL equips young learners with essential skills like self-awareness (feelings, interests, values, strengths, and self-confidence); social awareness (empathizing with others, taking other's perspectives; responsible decision-making (decision-making skills that are ethical and respectful); self-management (handling stress and difficulties); and relationship skills (promoting positive, healthy social interactions while resisting peer pressure) which are also defined as five SEL competencies in CASEL(2022) framework. Social Emotional Learning skills, also known as 21st-century skills, is the ability to self-regulate emotions and social interactions in a healthy manner in order to be successful in all aspects of life. The CASEL is an internationally recognised organisation that has developed a framework for SEL. It's a "trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based social and emotional learning," has spent over two decades researching the importance of social and emotional learning. The CASEL's (2020) research revealed "implementing evidence-based social and emotional learning programs led to an 11% gain in student achievement, an 11:1 return on economic investment," reduced dropout rates, fewer behaviour issues, and decreases in the areas of drug usage, teen pregnancy, mental health issues, and criminal behaviour (SEL Impact section). Organizations like CASEL and UNESCO have highlighted the value of SEL in shaping well-rounded, resilient individuals capable of contributing to society.

Implementing SEL standards and guidelines has also provided a better foundation for teachers in the classroom setting. The SEL abilities have a more positive impact on social behaviours, behavioural problems, stress, anxiety, and academic success. Although there are many factors that can affect SEL outcomes, teachers are one of the most important. SEL's presence in classrooms has been affected by teachers' perceptions of SEL and their self-efficacy in instructing it. Teachers who believed that SEL is important to be taught in classrooms strive to teach it to their students, especially through a formal curriculum (Zinsser et al., 2014). Teachers' positive attitude about SEL have been associated with teachers' greater confidence in teaching it.

Objectives of the present study are:
1. To assess secondary teachers' attitudes towards social and Emotional Learning in relation to locality and gender
2. To identify perceived benefits and challenges of SEL implementation in Schools from teachers' perspectives
3. To identify teachers' perceptions of SEL's impact on students emotional and academic development.

2. Literature Review

Person (2024) conducted a study on "Teachers' perceptions implementing social and emotional learning and the impact it has on students". The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to discover teachers lived experiences implementing social and emotional learning in the classroom setting and to determine its impact on students. The study included elementary school teachers who worked with students in grades K–5. Findings revealed that, the majority of participants think that SEL implementation is an essential element of education and that it is beneficial and impactful on the students, when it is implemented properly. Attending trainings, having more time, and having resources accessible, in the opinion of the participants, would aid in SEL effectiveness.

Clay (2024) conducted a study on "Elementary teachers' perception of social-emotional learning programs ". The purpose of this study is to examine elementary teachers' perceptions of SEL and its association with students' social-emotional competency. This study conducted by mixed-methods design. Research participants were selected through purposive or criterion sampling, conducting the

Teacher SEL Beliefs survey and the DESSA-mini , a Likert rating scale to assess students' social-emotional competency. This study's analysis suggests that teachers and school leaders must consider contributing factors associated with student outcomes, including implementing several strategies.

Washle (2023) studied on "Teacher Perceptions of the Connections Between Social and Emotional Learning and Student Success". Purpose of this qualitative study is to explore teacher perceptions of how incorporating Social and emotional learning addresses students' social and emotional needs as it relates to student success. The Researcher collected data through observation and face to face interview from elementary level classroom teacher. The research helped to conclude that teachers perceive a connection between social and emotional learning and student success. This conclusion adds to the existing literature regarding the need for and benefits of social and emotional learning.

Himel (2023) studied on "Government Teachers' Perception and Policy Provision on SEL – A Study in Selected Government Primary Schools in Bangladesh". Purpose of this study was to identify the SEL perspective of incumbent teachers and the existing policy. This study followed qualitative research, where 8 Government Primary School teachers have been interviewed and two major national policy documents have been analysed. Findings revealed that Teachers shared less to no concrete understanding on SEL. Moreover, the term 'SEL' is quite new to most of the teachers interviewed. However, teachers paid keen interest to implement SEL competencies within and outside the classroom for holistic development and mentioned about specific training.

Kaur & Sharma (2023) studied on "Measuring early childhood educators' knowledge of social-emotional learning pre and post training". The primary goal of this study is to measure the improvement in early childhood educators' knowledge of the five social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies post-training in India. The findings revealed a significant difference in educators' knowledge of SEL after training in the Ludhiana and Patiala cities of Punjab. The outcomes emphasize the importance of continuously and effectively training early childhood educators to develop their knowledge of SEL skills for self-growth and preschool students' holistic development.

Shinde, et al. (2022) conducted a study on "Acceptability and feasibility of the Heartfulness Way: A social-emotional learning program for school-going adolescents in India". This study aims to present a qualitative evaluation of the acceptability and feasibility of the Heartfulness Way program—a secondary school-based social-emotional program, based on mindfulness techniques delivered by teachers in India. Result reveal that, the mindfulness-based classroom curriculum was strongly supported by participants. Acceptability was determined by positive responses, prosocial behaviour, self-acceptance, and supportive bonds, according to students. Several themes of perceived benefits of the program including, improved relationships among peers and between students and teachers were identified. In general, the teachers' interviews indicated that there was a high level of satisfaction with the training and curriculum provided by the program.

3. Methodology

3.1 Population of the Study

The population for present study comprised of all secondary school teachers working in various government schools across the Cuttack district, Odisha.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

For this present study the survey sample consisted of 106 secondary school teachers selected for survey using a **non-probability convenience sampling technique**, considering practical constraints like time and access. The sample included 48 male teachers (45.3%) and 58 female teachers (54.7%), with 62 teachers (58.5%) from urban areas and 44 teachers (41.5%) from rural areas. Care was taken to ensure representation from both urban and rural areas to address one of the core research objectives.

For the qualitative phase, **purposive sampling** was used to select participants for Focus Group Discussions (FGD). A total of four FGDs were conducted, each FGD consisted of 6 teachers. Teachers were selected from two urban secondary schools (Badambadi New Colony High School and Odisha Police High School, Tulasipur) and two rural secondary schools (Gopabandhu Bidyamandir, Lalbahadur Nagar and Sailo Govindpur High School, Govindpur) in Cuttack district, to get in-depth insight.

3.3 Tools for Data Collection

The investigator has used the following tools in present study -

The tools developed and employed for data collection included the SEL Teachers' **Questionnaire and a Semi-Structured Interview Schedule**. The questionnaire was structured with 23 Likert-type closed-ended items and two familiarity questions regarding prior knowledge and understanding of SEL. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5) was used, and statements on challenges (Q13 to Q17 and Q23) were reverse-scored.

3.4 Procedure for Data Collection

3.4.1 Quantitative Data Collection Procedure

The investigator first met the respondent, explain them about purpose of the study, introduce them about the purpose of the tool to collect relevant data. This process also involved circulating a Google Form link among teachers via official school groups wherever necessary. Informed consent was taken from all participants, and confidentiality of responses was maintained and after the collection of the data, the investigator conveyed thanks to the respondent.

3.4.2 Qualitative Data Collection Procedure

Qualitative data was collected through four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted among 24 secondary school teachers. Each focus group consisted of six teachers, selected based on their willingness to participate and their teaching experience in secondary classes. A semi-structured discussion guide was used, consisting of seven open-ended questions aligned with the objectives of the study. Each discussion lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was facilitated by the researcher in a conversational and non-judgmental manner.

Data Recording and Management: Detailed notes were taken during each FGD, and verbatim statements were noted as much as possible. The responses were later transcribed and organized for analysis using the principles of narrative analysis. No audio or video recordings were used, in order to maintain participant comfort and privacy.

3.5 Scoring Procedure

For quantitative analysis, each item in the SEL Teachers' Questionnaire was scored based on a five-point Likert scale, where the responses were assigned, numerical values as follows: Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

After applying the appropriate scoring to each item:

An individual total attitude score was computed by summing the scores of all 23 items for each respondent. Higher total scores indicated a more positive and supportive attitude toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

The total scores were then used for further statistical analyses such as calculation of means, standard deviations, and t-tests to explore differences across gender and locality.

3.6 Techniques of Data Analysis

The investigator has used Inferential Statistics to test the research hypotheses regarding differences in teachers' attitudes based on gender and locality. For this Independent Samples T-Test was conducted using SPSS analysis software to compare the mean attitude scores between Urban & Rural teachers and Male & Female teachers.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Analysis and Interpretation of Objective – 1

To assess secondary teachers' attitudes towards Social and Emotional Learning in relation to locality and gender.

Hypothesis of the study:

- H01: There is no significant difference between urban and rural secondary teachers' attitudes toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- H02: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' attitude towards Social and Emotional Learning

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	48	45.3%

Female	58	54.7%
Total	106	100%
Institution Location		
Urban	62	58.5%
Rural	44	41.5%
Total	106	100%

To fulfil this objective, the study employed a quantitative approach using a self-made attitude scale designed to measure secondary school teachers' attitudes toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

Table 2: Frequencies Table

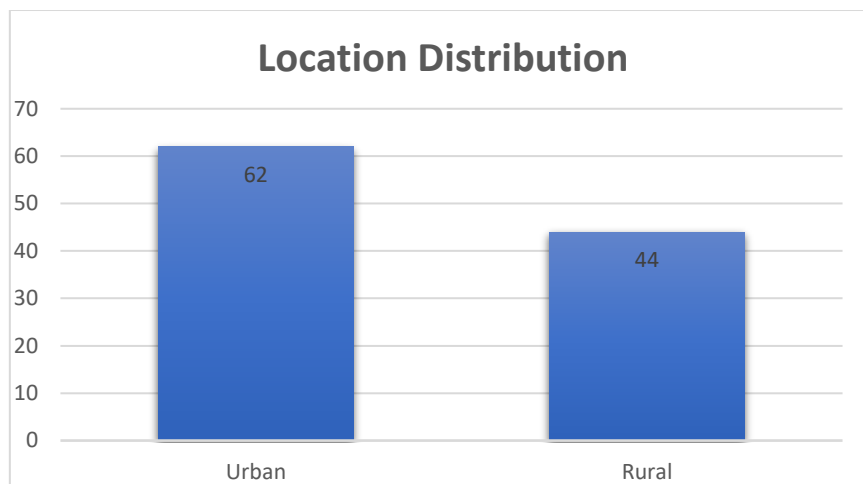| Statistics				
		Gender	Location	total sum
N	Valid	106	106	106
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		1.55	1.42	88.29
Median		2.00	1.00	89.00
Mode		2	1	81
Std. Deviation		.500	.495	6.650
Skewness		-.192	.350	-.080
Std. Error of Skewness		.235	.235	.235
Kurtosis		-2.001	-1.914	-.590
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.465	.465	.465
Minimum		1	1	73
Maximum		2	2	105

According to the coding used, gender was classified as 1 for male and 2 for female. The mean gender score of 1.55 suggests a slightly higher proportion of female respondents compared to males. The median value of 2.00 and mode of 2 further confirm that female participants were more prevalent in the study sample. The standard deviation of 0.500 shows a balanced representation of both genders with slight variation. The skewness value of -0.192 implies a near-normal distribution with a slight left tilt, indicating more female responses than male.

In terms of location, coded as 1 for urban and 2 for rural, the mean location score of 1.42 shows that urban respondents slightly outnumbered rural ones. The median and mode values of 1.00 affirm that most participants were from urban schools. The standard deviation of 0.495 reflects a relatively balanced geographic distribution. The skewness value of 0.350 suggests a modest right skew, indicating more responses from urban locations but with notable rural representation as well.
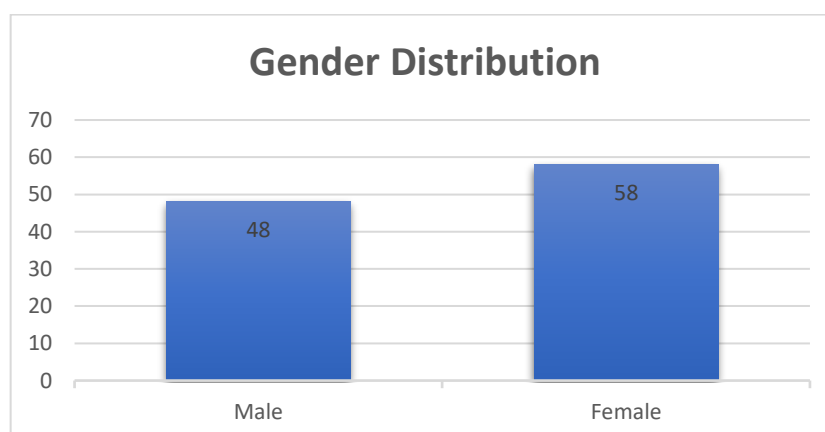
Regarding the total sum scores on the Likert-scale-based questionnaire assessing teachers' awareness and attitudes toward SEL, the mean total score was 88.29, with a median of 89.00 and a mode of 81. This indicates that, on average, teachers exhibited a high level of awareness and positive attitude toward SEL. The standard deviation of 6.650 denotes moderate variability in the responses, suggesting some differences in perceptions, possibly due to personal experiences, institutional support, or training exposure. The skewness value of -0.080 shows a nearly symmetric distribution, and the kurtosis of -0.590 implies a relatively flat distribution, indicating a wide spread of responses rather than clustering around the mean. The scores ranged from a minimum of 73 to a maximum of 105, further supporting the notion that most teachers held favourable views, though a few exhibited moderate levels of awareness or attitude.

Table 3: Location Frequency Table

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Urban	62	58.5	58.5	58.5
	Rural	44	41.5	41.5	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Location Distribution

Table 4: Gender Frequency Table

Gender		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	48	45.3	45.3	45.3
	Female	58	54.7	54.7	100.0
	Total	106	100.0	100.0	

Figure. 2: Graphical representation of Gender Distribution

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between urban and rural secondary teachers' attitudes toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

T-test (location)

Table 5: Group Statistics

	Location	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
total sum	Urban	62	87.66	7.466	.948
	Rural	44	89.18	5.249	.791

Table 6: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
total sum	Equal variances assumed	13.859	.000	-1.162	104	.248	-1.521	1.309	-4.116	1.075
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.231	103.996	.221	-1.521	1.235	-3.969	.928

The independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the total attitude scores toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) between teachers from urban(n=62) and rural(n=44) locations in Cuttack district, Odisha. Descriptive statistics revealed that rural teachers reported slightly higher mean attitude scores (M=89.18, SD=5.249) compared to their urban counterparts (M=87.66, SD=7.466), with a mean difference of 1.52 points.

Levene's test for equality of variances was significant (F=13.859, p<.001), indicating unequal variances between groups. Therefore, the results from the "Equal variances not assumed" row were interpreted. The t-test revealed no statistically significant difference between urban and rural teachers' SEL attitudes (t(103.996)=-1.231, p=.221). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference (-3.969 to 0.928) includes zero, further supporting the null hypothesis that there **is no significant difference between groups**.

These findings align with Hypothesis H01, which posited no significant difference in SEL attitudes based on locality. The results suggest that despite potential differences in resource availability and training opportunities between urban and rural settings, teachers' fundamental attitudes toward SEL may be similarly positive across locations.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between male and female teachers' attitude towards Social and Emotional Learning
T-Test (Gender)

Table 7: Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
total sum	Male	48	88.92	5.878	.848
	Female	58	87.78	7.238	.950

Table 8: Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	

							Difference	Lower	Upper
total sum	Equal variances assumed	6.544	.012	.878	104	.382	1.141	1.299	-1.435	3.717
	Equal variances not assumed			.895	103.970	.373	1.141	1.274	-1.385	3.667

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the overall attitude scores toward Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) between maleand female secondary school teachers. The sample consisted of 48 male teachers and 58 female teachers. Descriptive statistics revealed that male teachers reported slightly higher mean attitude scores (M = 88.92, SD = 5.878) compared to female teachers (M = 87.78, SD = 7.238), with a mean difference of 1.14 points.

Levene's test for equality of variances was significant (F = 6.544, p = .012), indicating unequal variances between groups. Therefore, results from the "Equal variances not assumed" row were interpreted. The t-test revealed **no statistically significant difference between male and female** teachers' SEL attitudes (t (103.970) = 0.895, p = .373). The 95% confidence interval for the mean difference (-1.385 to 3.667) includes zero, supporting the null hypothesis (H02) that there is no significant gender-based difference in SEL attitudes.

These findings suggest that gender does not play a significant role in shaping teachers' attitudes toward SEL in the context of this study. Both male and female teachers exhibited relatively similar perceptions and openness toward the integration of SEL practices in secondary education.

4.2 Analysis and interpretation of Objective – 2

To identify perceived benefits and challenges of SEL implementation in Schools from teachers' perspectives

To fulfil this objective, qualitative data collected through four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was analysed using a narrative-informed thematic approach. The relevant data was drawn from teacher responses to Focus Group Questions 3, 4, 5, and 7, which were specifically designed to explore their views on the benefits and challenges of implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in secondary schools.

Table 9: Perceived benefits of SEL implementation in Schools from teachers' perspectives:

Sl. No.	Emerging Theme/ Statement	No. of Teachers who Expressed This View (out of 24)	Supporting Quotes
1	SEL helps create a positive and emotionally safe learning environment	18	"it creates a positive and emotionally safe learning environment…"
2	SEL supports development of life skills	21	"Students develop essential life skills like self-awareness, empathy, conflict resolution, and responsible decision-making"
3	SEL strengthens teacher-student relationships and classroom engagement	12	"SEL also helps build stronger teacher-student relationships, which improves trust and engagement in the classroom."

4	SEL improves academic performance	20	"students who are emotionally stable tend to perform better because they can focus, manage stress, and collaborate well with peers."
5	SEL prepares students for real-life challenges and builds confidence	14	"Through SEL we can better prepared students for real-life challenges" "Students will be more confident to speak up, ask questions, and share their problems."
6	SEL acts as a preventive tool against emotional crises (e.g., suicide, stress overload)	20	"SEL can be act as an emotional toolkit, a healing process that they need to navigate life confidently and responsibly."
7	SEL helps reduce dropout by addressing emotional/social pressures	8	"Many students drop out due to emotional or social pressures. SEL can make them feel supported, which can help them stay in school and learn better."

The teachers who participated in the focus group discussions expressed strong and consistent support for the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in secondary classrooms. The qualitative data reveals a rich range of perceived benefits, with multiple themes emerging from across the responses.

A significant number of teachers (18 out of 24) emphasized that SEL creates a positive and emotionally safe classroom environment. Teachers viewed this emotional safety as foundational for effective teaching and student participation.

The development of life skills such as empathy, conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and responsible decision-making was mentioned by 21 teachers. They also observed that SEL helps students become more emotionally strong and socially active.

Academic improvement as a result of SEL was acknowledged by 20 teachers, who noted that emotionally well students are better equipped to concentrate, manage academic stress, and collaborate effectively with peers.

Additionally, 14 teachers believed that SEL plays a vital role in preparing students for real-life challenges, boosting their confidence to express themselves, speak up, and manage problems both inside and outside the classroom.

A powerful theme that emerged from 20 teachers was that SEL can act as an emotional support or preventive tool in dealing with modern-day student challenges such as anxiety, stress overload, emotional breakdowns, and even suicidal thoughts.

Moreover, 8 teachers shared that SEL can reduce school dropout rates, especially among students who face emotional or social pressures at home.

Together, these findings suggest that teachers see SEL not just as an add-on but as an essential element of secondary education, deeply connected to emotional well-being, academic growth, and overall life preparedness.

Table 10: Perceived Challenges of SEL implementation in Schools from teachers' perspectives:

St. No.	Emerging Theme/ Statement	No. of Teachers who Expressed This View (out of 24)	Supporting Quotes

1	Lack of training or professional development	23	"Most teachers haven't received proper training on SEL."
2	Absence of government policy, support, or official guidance	22	"Until government passes rules and orders, schools cannot implement SEL"
3	Lack of structured support systems and implementation policies	18	"Unless there is an official directive, many schools may hesitate to implement SEL."
4	Lack of time due to packed syllabus and academic pressure	17	"Teachers often struggle to complete the syllabus. Adding SEL without cutting into academic subject becomes difficult"
5	Shortage of appropriate materials and resources	19	"Very few resources in the local language and suitable for rural students"
6	Need for formal inclusion of SEL in the curriculum	16	"SEL should be formally included in the school curriculum, deserves structured time and attention like core subjects."
7	Overwork and teacher shortage reduces motivation for new initiatives	14	"Due to workload, teachers are not interested in introducing new subjects."
8	Inadequate infrastructure in schools	19	"Most schools do not have adequate infrastructure for SEL implementation."
9	Low parental awareness and support	11	"Parents don't understand the value of SEL and question its place in the curriculum."
10	Difficulty in designing inclusive SEL activities for diverse classrooms	9	"Students come from different socio-cultural backgrounds. designing SEL activities that suit everyone and feel inclusive can be a challenge."
11	Assessment of SEL outcomes is difficult	6	"It is hard to measure progress in emotional and social skills like we assess academics."
12	Teachers' personal attitude or lack of interest may be a barrier	5	"Teachers' attitude towards this may be a challenge—whether they are interested or not."

The qualitative data reveals that teachers across both urban and rural schools encounter multiple and layered challenges in implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in the classroom.
The most frequently cited barrier was the lack of training and professional development, reported by 23 out of 24 teachers. Many expressed that they were unfamiliar with the SEL concept and lacked the skills or confidence to integrate it into their teaching practices.
Closely linked to this is the absence of government policies or official directives, mentioned by 22 teachers. Particularly in government schools, teachers felt that without proper rules or recognition from educational authorities, SEL cannot be formally introduced or sustained.

Furthermore, 18 teachers strongly felt the need for a structured implementation framework, supported by government policy, clear guidelines, trained personnel, and regular monitoring.

Time constraints and academic pressure were another major concern, highlighted by 17 teachers.

Teachers also highlighted the absence of formal curriculum inclusion as a major barrier to successful SEL implementation. A total of 16 teachers believed that SEL should be treated with the same seriousness as academic subjects, with designated class periods, a structured syllabus, and evaluation methods.

The shortage of culturally appropriate teaching materials, especially in rural areas, was raised by 19 teachers.

Additionally, 14 teachers said that overwork and shortage of staff negatively affects teacher motivation. Teachers feel burdened and stressed, making them reluctant to introduce new concepts like SEL.

Infrastructure-related challenges were noted by 12 teachers, who shared that many schools lack the basic space, environment, or tools necessary for effective SEL implementation.

Parental and leadership awareness was another recurring concern. 11 teachers reported that parents and some school leaders lack understanding about the importance of SEL and may not actively support its inclusion.

Designing inclusive SEL activities for students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds was mentioned by 9 teachers, who said it's hard to ensure that all students feel represented and included.

A few teachers (6 out of 24) pointed to the difficulty in assessing SEL progress, given the abstract and emotional nature of the outcomes.

Lastly, 5 teachers suggested that teacher attitudes and motivation can also be a barrier.

These findings indicate that for successful implementation of SEL in secondary schools, there is a need for structured teacher training, official policy support, curriculum integration, infrastructure development, and community awareness. Without these foundational supports, SEL risks remaining an underdeveloped concept despite its widely acknowledged benefits.

4.3 Analysis and interpretation of Objective – 3

To identify teachers' perceptions of SEL's impact on students emotional and academic development.

To address this objective, the researcher analysed qualitative data gathered through four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with secondary school teachers from both urban and rural areas. Responses were drawn primarily from Focus Group Questions 1, 2, and 6, which were specifically framed to explore teachers' perceptions of how Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) affects students' emotional well-being and academic growth.

Table 11: Teachers' perceptions of SEL's impact on students emotional and academic development.:

Sl. No.	Emerging Theme / Statement	No. of Teachers Who Expressed This View (Out of 24	Supporting Quotes
1	SEL supports emotional health and well-being	20	"Students face a lot of stress, peer pressure, and emotional challenges."
2	SEL contributes to academic performance	18	"When students are emotionally well, they perform better academically."
3	SEL helps in building life skills and personal growth	19	"SEL is a foundational pillar for both academic success and personal growth"
4	SEL promotes a sense of belonging and classroom harmony	12	"It helps students express themselves, ask questions, and set goals."
5	SEL builds confidence and self-esteem	17	"It helps students express themselves, ask questions, and set goals."

6	SEL is essential for students from emotionally deprived or under-resourced backgrounds	9	"Many of our students come from emotional neglect or economic hardship."
7	SEL should be a shared responsibility among school, family, and society	6	"Teaching SEL is not only the teachers' responsibility — it is the duty of family, society, and government."

The focus group discussions with secondary school teachers revealed a deep and consistent belief that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) plays a transformative role in both emotional well-being and academic success of students.

Most teachers (20 out of 24) emphasized that SEL significantly contributes to students' emotional health, helping them manage stress, peer pressure, anger, sadness, and other emotional challenges.

A large number of teachers (18) believed that these emotional strengths translate into better academic performance. Teachers reported improvements in student engagement, attendance, and effort as a result of SEL practices.

The role of SEL in promoting personal growth and life skills was highlighted by 19 teachers, who noted that SEL supports the development of self-awareness, decision-making, cooperation, and ethical behaviour—skills critical for success beyond the classroom.

Teachers also pointed out that SEL promotes a sense of belonging within the classroom and reduces disciplinary issues, with 12 teachers saying that SEL fosters peace, understanding, and a supportive peer culture.

Additionally, 10 teachers emphasized SEL's role in building student confidence, particularly for those hesitant to participate or express themselves in class.
Importantly, 9 teachers shared that SEL is especially valuable in rural and emotionally deprived contexts, where students often lack emotional support at home.
Finally, 6 teachers expressed that SEL implementation should be a shared responsibility, involving not just schools and teachers but also families, communities, and policymakers.
These insights clearly affirm the value of SEL in shaping not just academic learners, but emotionally intelligent, socially responsible individuals—aligned with the holistic goals of education.

5. Conclusion

Objective 1: To assess secondary teachers' attitudes towards Social and Emotional Learning in relation to locality and gender
The distribution of the scores appeared relatively normal, with slight negative skewness (-0.080) and a standard deviation of 6.65, indicating moderate variability in responses.

Gender-wise Attitude toward SEL (Independent Samples t-test):
1) Male teachers had a mean score of 88.92, and female teachers had a mean score of 87.78.
2) The t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in attitudes between male and female teachers (p = 0.382).

Although male teachers scored slightly higher, the difference was not statistically significant (t = 0.895, p = 0.373). This indicates that gender does not significantly affect teachers' attitudes toward SEL.

Location-wise Attitude toward SEL (Independent Samples t-test):
1) Urban teachers had a mean score of 87.66, while rural teachers had a slightly higher mean of 89.18.
2) The t-test indicated no significant difference in attitudes based on location (p = 0.248), despite rural teachers scoring slightly higher.

Despite rural teachers having a slightly higher average, the result was also not statistically significant (t = -1.231, p = 0.221). Therefore, the findings suggest that location also does not significantly influence teachers' attitudes toward SEL. Both urban and rural teachers equally value the importance of SEL.

The **quantitative data analysis** revealed that teachers generally held a positive attitude toward SEL, recognizing its importance in school education.

1) Female teachers were found to have a slightly more favourable attitude toward SEL compared to male teachers.
2) Urban teachers showed a higher inclination toward adopting SEL practices than rural teachers, likely due to greater exposure, training opportunities, and policy awareness.
3) However, the differences observed based on gender and locality were not statistically significant at a high level, indicating that positive attitudes toward SEL are shared widely across demographics.

Objective 2: To identify perceived benefits and challenges of SEL implementation in schools from teachers' perspectives

Teachers strongly believed that implementing SEL leads to numerous benefits, including improved classroom behaviour, better emotional regulation among students, development of life skills, and enhanced academic performance.

However, teachers identified several challenges in implementing SEL:

- Lack of formal training and professional development
- Absence of government policy and clear guidelines
- Inadequate time due to syllabus pressure
- Shortage of culturally relevant materials and trained personnel
- Low parental awareness and limited community support

Teachers advocated for the formal inclusion of SEL in the school curriculum, with a structured timetable, syllabus, and regular evaluation system. They also highlighted the need for government-supported policies and professional training programs to ensure consistent and effective implementation.

Objective 3: To identify teachers' perceptions of SEL's impact on students' emotional and academic development

1) Teachers across both urban and rural settings believed that SEL plays a transformative role in students' emotional well-being and academic success.
2) SEL helps students become more emotionally balanced, self-aware, confident, and socially responsible.
3) Teachers observed that students who receive emotional support through SEL are more focused, motivated, and resilient, leading to better academic outcomes.
4) SEL also contributes to a more peaceful, respectful, and inclusive classroom environment.

Particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, SEL was seen as a tool to bridge emotional gaps and promote school connectedness.

Importantly, teachers viewed SEL as more than just an educational program—**they saw it as a necessary framework for preparing students to cope with real-life challenges.** The study further emphasizes that without emotional readiness, academic success may remain incomplete, and that SEL bridges this critical gap.

The study concludes that for SEL to be meaningfully implemented in secondary schools, **systemic changes are required,** including curriculum integration, professional development for teachers, policy-level backing, and collaborative involvement of families and communities. With appropriate support and infrastructure, SEL can become a powerful tool to create emotionally strong, socially responsible, and academically successful students.

5.1 Educational Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several important implications for various stakeholders involved in the education system, especially in the context of integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into secondary education.

- **For Teachers:** The study highlights that while teachers are aware of the benefits of SEL, they require structured training to effectively implement it in classrooms. This suggests a strong need to integrate SEL modules into both pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.
- **For School Leadership and Administrators:** The findings emphasize the importance of school-level planning, time allocation, and assigning responsibility for SEL delivery. Schools can introduce designated periods for SEL, create emotionally safe spaces for students, and involve teachers in collaborative planning for SEL integration.
- **For Curriculum Developers:** The study reveals the need to formally integrate SEL into the school curriculum. SEL should not be treated as an add-on but as a core component of holistic education.
- **For Policymakers and Government Bodies:** One of the key challenges identified was the lack of government-level guidelines and support for SEL. Policymakers should consider issuing mandates or policy frameworks that recognize SEL as an essential part of education.
- **For Parents and the Community:** Parents and communities should be sensitized about the value of SEL and encouraged to collaborate with schools in supporting children's emotional and social development at home and in society.
- **For Future Educational Reforms:** The study supports the idea that emotional intelligence and social competence are as critical as cognitive development. This reinforces the broader educational goal of developing emotionally intelligent and socially responsible citizens, aligned with the goals of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and global standards like those set by CASEL and OECD.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations that may have influenced the scope and generalizability of the findings:

- **Limited Geographic Scope:** The study was confined to a selected number of urban and rural secondary schools within a specific district (Cuttack).
- **Small Sample Size for Qualitative Data:** A larger number of FGDs across more diverse school types could have yielded broader perspectives.
- **Self-Reported Data:** Both quantitative and qualitative data relied on self-reported responses. Participants may have expressed ideal views rather than actual practices.
- **Lack of Student Perspective:** The study focused solely on teachers' perceptions.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the scope, findings, and limitations of the present research, the following suggestions are proposed for future studies in the area of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL):

1) Future research may be conducted across multiple districts or states to ensure wider generalizability and to explore regional variations in teachers' attitudes and SEL implementation.
2) Future studies can include students, school heads, parents, or counsellors to obtain a multi-stakeholder perspective on the effectiveness and impact of SEL.
3) Further researcher can extend to longitudinal studies can be undertaken to examine how SEL programs affect students and teachers over time.
4) Further researchers can conduct classroom observations, case studies, or action research to validate the implementation and outcomes of SEL practices more objectively.
5) Future research may explore the effectiveness of specific SEL intervention programs and their influence on students' academic and emotional development.
6) Further research can be conducted on how SEL is incorporated into pre-service teacher education and how well new teachers are prepared to deliver SEL in classrooms.

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