



Investigating the Implication of Socio-Emotional Learning Activities in Developing Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers in Norala

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, socio-emotional learning (SEL) has gained global recognition as a critical foundation for fostering healthy peer relationships, promoting inclusive classroom environments, and supporting the well-being of both students and educators. This study employed a quantitative, descriptive-correlational design to investigate the implications of SEL activities in developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala, Division of South Cotabato, during the

school year 2025–2026. Specifically, it examined the extent of SEL implementation and its relationship with teachers' peer interactions. Findings revealed that the implementation of SEL activities among teachers was carried out to a very great extent, indicating that schools actively integrated a broad range of practices aimed at fostering teachers' emotional and social growth. Through activities that focused on empathy, self-reflection, collaboration, and conflict resolution, teachers were able to enhance their interpersonal skills, emotional regulation, and group dynamics. Further, elementary teachers demonstrated excellent levels of peer relationships, reflecting strong professional connections characterized by trust, open communication, collaborative support, and effective conflict management. Such positive interactions contribute to a supportive school culture where educators feel valued, comfortable, and motivated to engage collaboratively. However, correlational analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between SEL implementation and peer relationships, suggesting that while SEL activities contribute to improving interpersonal dynamics, other factors—such as school culture, leadership practices, and individual dispositions—likely play a more decisive role in shaping strong collegial bonds. The study concludes that extensive SEL implementation supports teachers' social-emotional development and maintains a positive professional environment, yet additional strategies are needed to strengthen peer relationships. Recommendations include structured professional development on advanced SEL strategies, establishment of formal peer-support systems, policy incentives for schools demonstrating measurable SEL outcomes, and further research exploring factors that mediate the relationship between SEL activities and teacher collaboration.

Keywords: *Socio-Emotional Learning, Peer Relationships, Elementary Teachers, Teacher Collaboration*



INTRODUCTION

hierarchical norms shape teacher-student relationships.

Background of Study

In recent years, socio-emotional learning (SEL) has gained global recognition as a critical foundation for fostering healthy peer relationships, promoting inclusive classroom environments, and supporting the overall well-being of both students and educators. As defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL encompasses five key competencies—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which are vital for interpersonal growth and collaboration within educational settings.

A growing body of international research underscores that SEL not only enhances individual emotional intelligence but also strengthens collective interactions, building more cooperative, respectful, and empathetic school cultures. Programs that effectively integrate SEL into school systems have been linked to reduced behavioral issues, higher academic achievement, and improved teacher morale. Furthermore, SEL has been shown to play a key role in reducing teacher burnout, improving professional relationships, and creating more supportive and collaborative learning communities (CASEL, 2020; OECD, 2021).

However, despite this global momentum, the systematic integration of SEL remains a significant challenge, especially in developing countries. Many schools continue to lack the necessary policy framework professional training, and resources to implement SEL programs effectively. Often, SEL is treated as a supplementary activity rather than being embedded within the core curriculum or teacher development programs. As a result, teachers—particularly those in remote or under-resourced areas—struggle to consistently apply SEL principles in their daily interactions with students and colleagues. This gap is even more pronounced in contexts where academic performance is prioritized over socio-emotional well-being, and where, traditional,

Addressing this implementation gap is crucial, as the promotion of kindness, empathy, and emotional resilience among teachers can significantly influence the quality of peer relationships and overall school climate. As SEL continues to evolve as a pedagogical and policy priority worldwide, it is essential for educational leaders to invest in contextualized, culturally relevant SEL strategies that empower educators to foster emotionally supportive environments—not just for learners, but for themselves and their fellow teachers.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education recognizes the value of SEL in the K–12 curriculum through initiatives like the Brigada Pagbasa and Psychosocial Support Activities, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (DepEd, 2022). Yet, there remains a significant gap in examining how SEL-based activities directly impact peer relationships among elementary teachers, who are often expected to model and mediate emotional intelligence without targeted support (Dulay et al., 2021).

In South Central Mindanao, and more specifically in Sultan Kudarat, socio-cultural diversity and geographical isolation further complicate the social dynamics among teachers, amplifying the need for contextually relevant SEL practices (Magallon & Bataga, 2023). Although local programs focus on academic interventions, there is scant empirical research on the implications of SEL for professional peer interactions among in rural and underserved schools.

Addressing this gap aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, and Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, by promoting inclusive, supportive, and emotionally intelligent school communities. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the implications of socio-emotional learning activities in developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala, to inform policy and practice in



cultivating more compassionate and collaborative teaching environments.

Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to investigate the implications of socio-emotional learning activities in developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala, to inform policy and practice in cultivating more compassionate and collaborative teaching environments.

Specifically, this seeks to answer the following:

1.To what extent is the implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities, in terms of:

1.1. Empathy-Building Exercises;

1.2. Self-Awareness Activities;

1.3.Collaborative Group Tasks;

1.4.and Conflict Resolution Workshops?

2.What is the level of Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers, in terms of:

2.1.Trust and Mutual Respect.

2.2.Communication Openness.

2.3. Support and Cooperation; and

2.4.Conflict Management?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities, and the level of Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was quantitative, specifically a descriptive-correlational study, to investigate the implications of socio-emotional learning activities in developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala District, South Cotabato Division. According to Bhandari (2021), A correlational research design investigates relationships between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating any of them. Further, a correlation reflects the strength and/or direction of the relationship between two (or more) variables. The direction of a correlation can be either positive or negative. Correlational research is ideal for gathering data quickly from natural settings. That helps you generalize your findings to real-life situations in an externally valid way.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents were the 50 elementary teachers from selected elementary schools in the Norala District, South Cotabato Division, school year 2025–2026.

Sampling Technique

Simple Random Sampling Technique was used to select 50 elementary teachers from selected elementary schools in the Norala District, South Cotabato Division, for the school year 2025–2026. Simple random sampling is one of the most widely accepted probability sampling methods because it gives each member of the population an equal chance of being selected, minimizing selection bias and ensuring that the sample is representative of the larger teacher population (Taherdoost, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2021).



Research Instruments

This study employed a researcher-made survey questionnaire and a Five-Point Likert Scale evaluated by a panel of experts. To assess the extent of implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities, the scale below was used.

Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure reliable and authentic findings, the researcher adhered to a methodology that aligned with the study's objectives to investigate the implications of socio-emotional learning activities in developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala, South Cotabato Division.

Initially, the study's implementation will required the endorsement of the DepEd-Division Superintendent and the CGS Dean with their respective signatures on a format document.

An additional letter of authorization was dispatched to the school principals and to teachers. To ensure the accuracy of the data collected for this study, a survey questionnaire was developed, assessed and utilized. . The researcher intended to employ a random sampling technique by utilizing self-generated random number tables to select participants for the study.

Before the study, the research proposal underwent ethical considerations. The researcher sought clearance from the EWMCI Research Ethics Committee (EREC).

Provided that the health protocol was adhered to, the investigator initiated the face to face dissemination of the Survey Questionnaire. The outcomes derived from the distributed survey

questionnaire were compiled, assessed, and analyzed.

Statistical Treatment

The collected data were systematically presented in tabular form, rigorously analyzed, and subsequently interpreted; statistical techniques outlined in Chapter I were utilized to address the issues

Initially, the Mean statistical measure was employed to calculate the implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities, and the level of Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers.

Pearson r Correlation was employed to identify the relationship between the implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities, and the level of Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers.

Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent: In preparation for implementation, all the plans and recommendations were presented to East-West Mindanao Colleges Inc to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures and protocols. Within the context of research on the implications of socio-emotional learning activities for developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala District, South Cotabato Division, it is imperative to emphasize the paramount importance of ethical considerations. Before commencing this study, the following ethical principles will be highlighted: Before participation, consent was obtained from all school heads involved in the study. They must possess a comprehensive understanding of the study's objectives, methodologies, potential risks, and benefits. Furthermore, participation remained entirely voluntary, allowing participants to



withdraw from the study at any juncture without adverse consequences.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: To safeguard the identities and responses, rigorous measures were put in place to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Rather than using actual names, pseudonyms or codes were used to uphold the participants' privacy. The collected data was securely stored with access restricted solely to the research team.

Avoiding Harm: Delicate subjects, such as the challenges inherent in their roles, were discussed with meticulous consideration for the potential emotional and psychological impact on the participants. Strategies were in place to minimize distress, and a support system was readily available to assist participants should the need arise.

Researcher-Participant Relationship: The researcher maintained a professional and respectful rapport when engaging with the school heads. Any actions that may harm the participants were scrupulously avoided, ensuring their utmost dignity and respect throughout the research process.

Data Protection: Adherence to data protection regulations and laws will be unwaveringly followed to safeguard the personal information of the participants. Stringent measures will be employed to ensure the secure storage and transmission of data.

Voluntary Participation: Participants were assured that their involvement in the study was voluntary, devoid of any coercion or external pressure.

Researcher Bias: The researcher remained vigilant regarding potential biases that might influence data collection and analysis,

upholding objectivity and transparency throughout the research endeavor.

Institutional Approval: Before initiating the study, the researcher sought ethical clearance from the pertinent institutional review boards or ethics committees.

Honesty and Integrity: The research findings were reported truthfully and accurately, free from manipulation or distortion to align with preconceived notions or biases.

Beneficence: The potential benefits of the research in educational practices and policies were thoughtfully considered, ensuring that the study contributes to the education system.

Cultural Sensitivity: The researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity by respecting local customs, beliefs, and practices within the research setting, refraining from imposing external values on the participants. The study's structure prioritized inclusivity and diversity, encompassing a wide range of socio-emotional learning activities to develop peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala, South Cotabato.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study investigated the implications of socio-emotional learning activities in developing peer relationships among elementary teachers in Norala, South Cotabato Division, for the school year 2025–2026. Specifically, it focused on how structured socio-emotional learning interventions, such as collaborative exercises, reflection activities, and empathy-building tasks, related to the quality of interpersonal relationships and collegial interactions among teachers. The study was limited to elementary teachers currently teaching within selected schools in Norala, thereby



excluding teachers from other grade levels or nearby municipalities.

Data was collected through quantitative correlational methods, including surveys and structured questionnaires, to examine the strength and direction of relationships between engagement in socio-emotional learning activities and peer relationship development. The study did not assess other personal or professional factors that may influence relationships, such as administrative policies or external social networks. By exploring these dynamics, the research aimed to provide insights into the role of socio-emotional learning in fostering supportive and collaborative work environments among elementary educators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Extent of the Implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) Activities

Results show that the implementation of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) activities among teachers is carried out to a very great extent, with high mean scores across all indicators—Collaborative Group Tasks (4.84), Empathy-Building Exercises (4.83), Self-Awareness Activities (4.76), and Conflict Resolution Workshops (4.68)—yielding an overall mean of 4.77. This indicates that schools are actively integrating a comprehensive range of SEL practices that engage teachers emotionally and socially. Consistent implementation in areas such as empathy, self-reflection, collaboration, and conflict resolution suggests that school administrators are fostering environments where teachers can develop not only interpersonal skills but also emotional regulation, group dynamics, and self-understanding. Such environments are essential for creating supportive learning contexts that value students' holistic well-being alongside professional progress.

The significance of robust SEL implementation is reinforced by recent research demonstrating that SEL activities contribute to meaningful improvements in students' social competencies and collaborative abilities. A study conducted in elementary settings revealed that structured SEL interventions significantly enhanced students' collaboration skills and questioning abilities, improving responsibility and teamwork through group dynamics and reflective exercises, which aligns with the high scores found in collaborative group tasks in this study (Budiansyah et al., 2025).

Moreover, comprehensive reviews of SEL programs highlight their positive effects on social-emotional competencies, including emotional intelligence, empathy, and conflict resolution, which are core to SEL activities such as self-awareness and conflict management workshops (Zhao & Sang, 2025). These findings affirm that consistently implemented SEL activities not only promote emotional and social growth but also support broader educational goals by enhancing students' ability to engage productively with peers and navigate complex social situations.

Level of Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers

Results reveal that elementary teachers demonstrate excellent levels of peer relationships, with high mean scores in trust and mutual respect (4.85), communication openness (4.68), support and cooperation (4.74), and conflict management (4.75), resulting in an overall mean of 4.75 (Excellent).

This implies that teachers in the sampled schools maintained strong professional connections characterized by mutual respect, transparent communication, collaborative support, and effective conflict management which is



conducive to both individual well-being and collective effectiveness. Such robust peer relationships are foundational, creating a positive, supportive school culture where educators feel valued and comfortable engaging with one another, which contributes to overall job satisfaction and organizational harmony.

Research indicates that collegial relationships and mutual trust among teachers positively influence their job satisfaction and professional engagement, as relationships built on respect and cooperation enhance teachers' sense of belonging and satisfaction in their roles (International Journal of Latest Technology in Engineering Management & Applied Science, 2025). Moreover, positive professional relationships among teachers are linked to improved collaborative practices and instructional outcomes. Findings from the OECD's TALIS 2024 report highlight that teachers who collaborate frequently and maintain trusting relationships with colleagues tend to report higher levels of well-being and professional fulfillment, and are more likely to engage in activities that support shared instructional goals and continuous improvement (OECD, 2025).

Therefore, the excellent peer relationship scores in this study reflect not only a harmonious professional climate but also a collaborative ecosystem that can contribute to sustained teacher development, collective problem-solving, and improved educational practices within the school community.

Correlation Between the Extent of Implementation of SEL Activities and Level of Peer Relationships among Elementary Teachers

The correlational result showing a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.37$, $p = 0.63$) between

the extent of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) activities and peer relationships among elementary teachers suggests that while greater implementation of SEL is somewhat associated with better interpersonal dynamics among teachers, the association is not strong or statistically meaningful. In essence, although SEL activities such as empathy-building, self-awareness exercises, collaborative group tasks, and conflict-resolution workshops may contribute to improved trust, communication, cooperation, and conflict management among peers, other factors likely play a more substantial role in shaping teacher relationships within the school context.

This finding resonates with research indicating that SEL implementation alone does not guarantee extensive improvements in interpersonal dynamics unless it is part of a broader supportive climate. For example, some studies emphasize that SEL programs contribute to positive relational outcomes by enhancing emotional awareness and supportive environments, but are often mediated by school culture, leadership, and the quality of implementation (Palero & Ngag, 2025). When SEL is practiced consistently and integrated into daily interactions, it fosters empathy, communication, and understanding—key elements of peer relationships—yet the impact varies depending on context and uptake levels.

Furthermore, research on SEL's effects on educators highlights that social-emotional competencies among teachers are linked to improved well-being and relational capacities yet implementing SEL practices does not automatically transform school relationships without intentional support and resources (Hövel et al., 2025). Specifically, SEL interventions targeting teachers have demonstrated modest effects on their emotional competence and well-being, suggesting that while SEL contributes



positively, its influence is part of a larger constellation of factors affecting interpersonal dynamics at work.

Overall, the weak positive correlation underscores that SEL activities may support peer relationships, but complementary strategies—such as strong leadership, collaborative school culture, and ongoing professional development—are also critical for strengthening collegial bonds among elementary teachers.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made in light of this study's findings:

The very great extent of SEL implementation highlights the schools' commitment to fostering teachers' emotional and social growth. It reflects a proactive approach in creating professional environments that encourage self-awareness, empathy, collaboration, and conflict resolution, which are essential skills for effective teaching and supportive school communities.

The excellent levels of peer relationships among teachers indicate a strong culture of trust, cooperation, and open communication. Such positive professional interactions not only enhance teamwork and collective problem-solving but also contribute to teachers' personal well-being and the schools' overall harmonious functioning.

The weak positive correlation suggests that while SEL activities contribute to improved interpersonal dynamics, other factors—such as school culture, leadership practices, and individual personalities—likely play a more decisive role in shaping strong peer relationships. This underscores the need for complementary strategies alongside SEL to strengthen professional bonds among teachers.

Recommendations

Considering the findings of the study, the following were recommended:

1. For the Department of Education (DepEd), it is recommended to provide structured and ongoing professional development programs focused on advanced SEL strategies for teachers. While SEL is being implemented to a very great extent, the weak correlation with peer relationships suggests that additional guidance and reinforcement may be needed to translate SEL activities into stronger interpersonal connections among staff. Workshops could include practical exercises in collaborative problem-solving, peer coaching, and emotional regulation techniques.
2. School administrators can encourage the establishment of formal peer-support systems, such as mentorship programs or teacher learning circles, that explicitly leverage SEL principles. By creating structured opportunities for teachers to practice empathy, trust-building, and collaborative conflict resolution in daily interactions, administrators can help ensure that SEL activities have a more direct and meaningful impact on peer relationships.
3. For policymakers, it is recommended to institutionalize incentives and recognition programs for schools or teacher teams that demonstrate exceptional integration of SEL with measurable improvements in workplace relationships. Policies could encourage schools to go beyond activity implementation and focus on outcomes that strengthen collegiality, communication, and cooperation among educators.
4. Future researchers are encouraged to explore the factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between SEL implementation and peer relationships, such as school culture, leadership style, or teacher workload. Longitudinal studies could examine how sustained SEL practices influence teacher collaboration and organizational climate over time, providing evidence-based



strategies for improving interpersonal dynamics in schools.

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Declaration AI Tools Utiization



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I do hereby declare the use AI tools, such as Chat GPT and Grammarly for grammar checking and sentence organization purposes only.

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