

Developing a Curriculum Planning Model for Teaching Social and Emotional Skills

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a comprehensive curriculum planning model for teaching social and emotional skills by identifying key components that enhance the effectiveness of social-emotional learning (SEL) in educational settings. Given the increasing recognition of SEL's role in student well-being and academic success, this research seeks to address gaps in existing SEL curricula by proposing an integrative framework that aligns emotional and social competency development, pedagogical strategies, and institutional support. This qualitative study employed a semi-structured interview approach, gathering insights from 30 participants, including educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers from Tehran. A purposive sampling method was used, and data collection continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo 24, following a three-stage coding process: open coding to identify initial themes, axial coding to group related themes, and selective coding to develop overarching categories. The model was constructed based on these findings, ensuring a structured approach to SEL curriculum planning. The results revealed three primary dimensions essential for SEL curriculum planning: emotional and social competency development, pedagogical strategies for classroom implementation, and institutional and community support. Key themes included the necessity of teacher training, the role of resilience and emotional regulation, the importance of experiential learning, and the integration of SEL within educational policies. Participants emphasized that effective SEL programs require structured frameworks that support students' emotional well-being, foster positive relationships, and provide real-world applications for social-emotional skills. This study contributes to the field of SEL by proposing a curriculum planning model that addresses critical gaps in current SEL frameworks. By emphasizing teacher preparedness, experiential learning, and institutional integration, the model provides a structured approach to embedding SEL in education systems. Future research should explore the long-term impact of this model on student development and learning outcomes.

Keywords: social-emotional learning, curriculum planning, teacher training, emotional intelligence, educational policy, resilience, experiential learning.

1. Introduction

The integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) into educational curricula has gained significant attention in recent years as educators and policymakers recognize its essential role in fostering students' emotional intelligence, resilience, and interpersonal skills. Social and emotional skills enable individuals to navigate complex social environments, manage emotions effectively, and build meaningful relationships (Cavioni et al., 2024; Foster et al., 2022). With increasing global awareness of mental health issues and the necessity of holistic education, curriculum planning for SEL has become a crucial area of research and policy development (Dyson et al., 2024; Rukaesih, 2024). This study aims to develop a curriculum planning model specifically designed for the instruction of social and emotional skills, addressing gaps in existing frameworks and proposing an integrative approach that aligns with contemporary educational needs.

SEL is a structured approach that encompasses emotional awareness, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making, forming the foundation for personal and academic success (Plum et al., 2023). The CASEL framework, which identifies five core SEL competencies—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—has been widely accepted as a comprehensive model for SEL implementation (Cavioni et al., 2024). Research has demonstrated that SEL programs improve students' academic performance, reduce behavioral problems, and foster emotional well-being (Muñoz & Chang, 2021; Napoli & Day, 2024). Moreover, fostering social-emotional skills from an early age has long-term benefits, equipping students with the resilience and adaptability needed to thrive in an increasingly complex world (Foster et al., 2022; Özgünlü et al., 2022).

The impact of SEL extends beyond academic achievement, influencing students' social development and emotional regulation. Studies suggest that SEL-based curricula contribute to better mental health outcomes, reducing anxiety and depression while enhancing students' emotional intelligence and coping mechanisms (Kitayama et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2020). Additionally, SEL helps cultivate empathy and ethical awareness, fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity in diverse educational settings (Al-Matari et al., 2024; Choi, 2025). Given these substantial benefits, the integration of SEL into formal education systems has become a global priority, requiring well-structured curriculum planning models to ensure

effective implementation (Aygün & Taşkın, 2021; Mobarez, 2023).

While numerous SEL models have been introduced in different educational contexts, many face challenges in terms of practical implementation and adaptability. A major limitation of current SEL programs is the lack of teacher preparedness and professional training in SEL pedagogy (Davis et al., 2021; Odak et al., 2023). Teachers play a central role in delivering SEL content, but many educators lack the necessary resources and instructional strategies to integrate SEL effectively into their teaching practices (Dyson et al., 2024; Olson et al., 2021). Studies indicate that a majority of teachers report feeling underprepared to incorporate SEL components into their lesson plans, highlighting the need for structured training and professional development (Plum et al., 2023; Sorbet & Notar, 2022).

Another challenge is the lack of standardized SEL curricula tailored to diverse educational environments. While some programs emphasize character education and emotional regulation, others focus on social awareness and community engagement, leading to inconsistencies in SEL implementation (Ly & Soutter, 2022; Piteo, 2023). Additionally, many SEL initiatives struggle to balance academic rigor with social-emotional learning, as traditional educational models prioritize cognitive learning over emotional development (Jelodar, 2021; Napoli & Day, 2024). The integration of SEL into core subjects remains a significant hurdle, requiring innovative curriculum planning strategies to align SEL goals with academic standards (Lytle et al., 2024; Olson et al., 2021).

The effectiveness of SEL curricula is highly dependent on cultural and contextual factors, which influence students' emotional development and social behaviors (Aygün & Taşkın, 2021; Kitayama et al., 2022). In many non-Western societies, SEL is often shaped by cultural values and societal norms, necessitating the adaptation of Western-based SEL frameworks to align with local traditions and belief systems (Choi, 2025; Odak et al., 2023). Research suggests that while universal SEL principles apply across different cultural settings, their implementation must be contextualized to address specific social and emotional needs (Davis et al., 2021; Muñoz & Chang, 2021). For instance, in collectivist cultures, SEL programs should emphasize group harmony and social responsibility, whereas in individualistic societies, self-regulation and personal growth may take precedence (Kongpha et al., 2025; Özgünlü et al., 2022).

Moreover, socio-economic disparities significantly impact students' access to SEL resources. Schools in

underprivileged communities often lack the financial and human resources necessary to support comprehensive SEL programs, limiting students' exposure to structured social-emotional learning (Foster et al., 2022; Mathew & Nair, 2024). Research highlights the need for equity-focused SEL initiatives that bridge these gaps and ensure that all students, regardless of their socio-economic background, receive quality social-emotional education (Gao et al., 2025; Sorbet & Notar, 2022). Addressing these disparities requires a curriculum planning model that is flexible, inclusive, and responsive to diverse student needs (Napoli & Day, 2024; Rukaesih, 2024).

Advancements in educational technology have opened new avenues for SEL integration, providing innovative tools to enhance students' social and emotional competencies (Kongpha et al., 2025; Ly & Soutter, 2022). Digital platforms, virtual simulations, and gamification-based learning have been increasingly utilized to support SEL initiatives, enabling students to engage in experiential learning and interactive emotional development exercises (Czuderna et al., 2023; Muñoz & Chang, 2021). Moreover, artificial intelligence and data analytics have facilitated personalized SEL approaches, allowing educators to tailor interventions based on students' emotional progress (Davis et al., 2021; Jelodar, 2021).

However, the use of technology in SEL also presents challenges, particularly concerning screen time, digital distractions, and the need for teacher guidance in online learning environments (Lytle et al., 2024; Mobarez, 2023). While digital tools can supplement SEL instruction, they should not replace face-to-face interactions, which remain essential for developing authentic social skills (Foster et al., 2022; Kitayama et al., 2022). Effective SEL curriculum planning should incorporate a balanced approach that leverages technology while maintaining direct social engagement (Dyson et al., 2024; Wright et al., 2020).

Given the challenges and opportunities in SEL implementation, there is a pressing need for a structured curriculum planning model that integrates social-emotional skills into educational systems in a sustainable and contextually relevant manner (Al-Matari et al., 2024; Mathew & Nair, 2024). This study seeks to address existing gaps by developing a model that aligns SEL with educational policies, teacher training programs, and institutional support structures (Cavioni et al., 2024; Napoli & Day, 2024). By leveraging qualitative research methods, this study aims to provide insights into effective SEL curriculum design, ensuring that social-emotional competencies are embedded

into educational practices in a meaningful and impactful way (Gao et al., 2025; Rukaesih, 2024).

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on SEL by offering a comprehensive framework that can be adapted across diverse educational settings.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employs a qualitative research design to develop a curriculum planning model for teaching social and emotional skills. The research follows an exploratory approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews to collect in-depth insights from participants. The study population consists of experts in education, psychology, and social sciences, as well as experienced teachers and curriculum developers. A purposive sampling method was used to select participants, ensuring diverse perspectives relevant to the research objectives. Theoretical saturation was reached with 30 participants, all of whom reside in Tehran.

2.2. Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to share their experiences, perspectives, and suggestions regarding the integration of social and emotional skills into the curriculum. The interview questions were designed based on a review of relevant literature and expert consultation. Each interview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation, were strictly maintained throughout the study.

2.3. Data Analysis

For data analysis, the collected interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo 24 software. A thematic analysis approach was employed to identify key themes and patterns in the data. The initial coding phase involved open coding, where raw data were categorized based on emerging themes. Subsequently, axial coding was applied to establish relationships between themes, followed by selective coding to refine the core categories and develop a comprehensive model. To enhance the reliability of the analysis, member checking and expert validation were employed. This rigorous analytical process ensured the credibility and depth of findings, forming the basis for the proposed curriculum planning model.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the 30 participants in this study highlight the diversity of perspectives included in the research. Among the participants, 18 were male (60%) and 12 were female (40%), ensuring a balanced representation of gender perspectives in curriculum planning for social and emotional skills. The age distribution of participants ranged from 30 to 65 years, with the majority (40%) between 40 and 50 years old, followed by 30% between 50 and 60 years, 20% between 30 and 40 years, and 10% above 60 years. Regarding professional backgrounds, 12 participants (40%) were university faculty members specializing in education, psychology, or social sciences, while 10 participants (33.3%) were experienced school teachers with over 10 years of teaching experience. Additionally, 5 participants (16.7%) were curriculum developers, and 3 (10%) were education policymakers. The educational qualifications of the participants revealed that 20 individuals (66.7%) held doctoral degrees, 8 (26.7%) had master's degrees, and 2 (6.6%) had bachelor's degrees.

Furthermore, participants' years of experience in the education sector varied, with 40% having between 10 and 20 years of experience, 30% having more than 20 years, and 30% having 5 to 10 years of experience. The diverse professional and academic backgrounds of the participants contributed to a well-rounded exploration of strategies for integrating social and emotional skills into curriculum planning.

In the open coding phase, the transcribed interviews were analyzed line by line to identify recurring concepts and ideas related to curriculum planning for social and emotional skills education. During this phase, the data were broken down into distinct codes that captured meaningful segments of participants' responses. Through this process, a total of 76 open codes emerged, each representing a key concept mentioned by the participants. These codes were assigned based on thematic similarities, allowing for a structured organization of raw data. Table 1 presents the extracted open codes along with the corresponding interviewees who referenced each code.

Table 1

Open Codes Identified in the Analysis of Interviews

Open Code	Interviewees Referencing the Code
Emphasizing emotional intelligence	P2, P26
Integrating social skills in early education	P4, P29, P21, P10
Teacher training on emotional competencies	P24, P28, P19
Encouraging collaborative learning	P12, P30, P7, P16
Developing empathy through role-playing	P17, P21, P19
Using real-life scenarios in teaching	P8, P3, P22
Fostering self-awareness in students	P9, P14, P25
Enhancing conflict resolution skills	P1, P15, P27, P30
Promoting emotional regulation techniques	P5, P13, P18
Encouraging peer interaction	P6, P10, P11, P20
Incorporating storytelling for social learning	P23, P28, P4
Utilizing art for emotional expression	P7, P12, P26
Training teachers on active listening	P2, P8, P17
Enhancing communication skills	P9, P15, P21, P30
Parental involvement in emotional learning	P5, P11, P24
Establishing a supportive learning environment	P1, P16, P27
Teaching stress management strategies	P3, P14, P20
Providing constructive feedback	P8, P18, P25
Encouraging self-reflection	P6, P22, P28
Using technology to support emotional learning	P10, P13, P19
Addressing bullying through social education	P12, P15, P30
Promoting inclusive classroom practices	P4, P9, P18
Incorporating mindfulness techniques	P7, P23, P26
Fostering resilience among students	P3, P14, P21
Introducing emotional check-ins in classrooms	P1, P10, P25
Designing activities for teamwork	P5, P13, P20
Encouraging student-led discussions	P6, P11, P24
Using gamification for social skills training	P2, P17, P29
Teaching non-verbal communication cues	P9, P22, P28

Incorporating real-world challenges	P3, P8, P19
Developing critical thinking for social interactions	P12, P14, P27
Providing mentorship programs	P5, P16, P30
Addressing cultural sensitivity in education	P2, P7, P23
Encouraging ethical decision-making	P10, P15, P26
Creating emotionally safe classroom environments	P1, P18, P24
Integrating cooperative learning projects	P6, P13, P22
Fostering student autonomy in decision-making	P4, P9, P20
Using reflective journaling	P3, P11, P28
Encouraging student self-assessment	P7, P14, P29
Providing emotional support resources	P5, P12, P17
Integrating SEL (Social Emotional Learning) frameworks	P1, P10, P25
Facilitating open classroom discussions	P2, P19, P23
Teaching responsible decision-making	P9, P13, P21
Encouraging growth mindset approaches	P6, P15, P30
Using positive reinforcement strategies	P8, P11, P26
Promoting self-efficacy in students	P4, P12, P18
Incorporating music for emotional awareness	P7, P14, P22
Training educators on psychological safety	P1, P16, P28
Encouraging self-discipline	P3, P10, P25
Developing social awareness through case studies	P5, P17, P30
Linking curriculum to real-world social issues	P2, P9, P20
Teaching self-motivation techniques	P8, P13, P24
Building teacher-student emotional connections	P6, P11, P27
Encouraging community engagement	P4, P15, P29
Integrating values education	P3, P7, P22
Using simulations for conflict resolution	P1, P12, P18
Enhancing emotional literacy through literature	P5, P14, P26
Promoting kindness initiatives	P2, P9, P23
Encouraging self-regulation through exercises	P6, P10, P25
Providing hands-on experiential learning	P3, P11, P28
Creating peer mentoring programs	P4, P15, P29
Teaching emotional resilience strategies	P8, P13, P24
Encouraging self-compassion	P7, P12, P17
Building student social adaptability	P1, P16, P30
Integrating character education	P2, P9, P20
Providing peer feedback opportunities	P5, P14, P22
Teaching leadership skills	P3, P10, P25
Encouraging positive peer relationships	P6, P11, P27
Training teachers to manage classroom emotions	P4, P15, P29
Enhancing student emotional vocabulary	P8, P13, P24
Encouraging student storytelling for self-expression	P7, P12, P17
Using positive psychology principles	P1, P16, P30
Promoting cultural competence	P2, P9, P20
Facilitating conflict mediation among students	P5, P14, P22
Providing stress management workshops	P3, P10, P25
Encouraging community-based projects	P6, P11, P27
Using digital tools for SEL	P4, P15, P29
Developing pro-social behaviors	P8, P13, P24
Incorporating active listening in curriculum	P7, P12, P17
Teaching gratitude practices	P1, P16, P30
Encouraging constructive peer feedback	P2, P9, P20
Promoting school-wide emotional wellness programs	P5, P14, P22
Using experiential learning for social-emotional growth	P3, P10, P25

The open coding phase revealed a broad spectrum of themes related to integrating social and emotional skills into curriculum planning. A total of 76 open codes were identified, capturing various strategies, teaching

methodologies, and pedagogical considerations emphasized by participants. The interviewees frequently highlighted the importance of fostering emotional intelligence, promoting empathy, and incorporating mindfulness techniques as

essential components of social-emotional learning. Many participants underscored the necessity of teacher training programs to equip educators with the skills to manage and nurture students' emotional development effectively. Additionally, the integration of interactive activities such as role-playing, storytelling, and cooperative learning was commonly mentioned as an effective approach to reinforcing

social skills. Several interviewees also stressed the significance of parental involvement, peer mentorship, and community-based projects in reinforcing these competencies beyond the classroom setting. The open coding results provide a foundation for the next phase of analysis, in which these initial codes will be categorized into broader themes through axial coding.

Table 2

Axial Codes and Their Corresponding Open Codes

Axial Code	Corresponding Open Codes
Emotional Intelligence Development	Emphasizing emotional intelligence, Enhancing emotional literacy through literature, Teaching gratitude practices, Encouraging self-reflection, Using positive psychology principles
Teacher Training and Professional Development	Teacher training on emotional competencies, Training teachers on active listening, Training educators on psychological safety, Managing classroom emotions, Using digital tools for SEL
Classroom Strategies for SEL	Encouraging collaborative learning, Integrating cooperative learning projects, Using real-life scenarios in teaching, Using gamification for social skills training, Encouraging student-led discussions
Role of Empathy and Perspective-Taking	Developing empathy through role-playing, Encouraging self-compassion, Promoting kindness initiatives, Teaching leadership skills, Encouraging positive peer relationships
Emotional Regulation Techniques	Promoting emotional regulation techniques, Encouraging self-discipline, Providing stress management workshops, Teaching responsible decision-making, Encouraging growth mindset approaches
Social Awareness and Ethical Decision-Making	Addressing cultural sensitivity in education, Encouraging ethical decision-making, Teaching non-verbal communication cues, Using reflective journaling, Developing pro-social behaviors
Mindfulness and Self-Awareness	Incorporating mindfulness techniques, Encouraging emotional check-ins, Using music for emotional awareness, Encouraging self-regulation through exercises, Teaching self-motivation techniques
Family and Community Involvement	Parental involvement in emotional learning, Encouraging community engagement, Community-based projects, Providing peer mentoring programs, Integrating values education
Conflict Resolution and Mediation	Enhancing conflict resolution skills, Facilitating conflict mediation among students, Using simulations for conflict resolution, Addressing bullying through social education
Communication and Social Interaction	Enhancing communication skills, Teaching active listening, Using experiential learning for social-emotional growth, Encouraging constructive peer feedback
Supportive Learning Environments	Establishing a supportive learning environment, Creating emotionally safe classrooms, Providing emotional support resources, Encouraging open classroom discussions
Student Autonomy and Decision-Making	Fostering student autonomy, Encouraging self-assessment, Teaching responsible decision-making, Encouraging ethical leadership skills
Resilience and Adaptability	Fostering resilience among students, Building student social adaptability, Promoting self-efficacy in students, Encouraging self-discipline
Real-World Applications	Linking curriculum to real-world social issues, Encouraging real-world challenges, Providing hands-on experiential learning
School-Wide Emotional Wellness Programs	Promoting school-wide emotional wellness programs, Encouraging student storytelling for self-expression, Integrating SEL frameworks, Providing mentorship programs
Peer Interaction and Mentorship	Encouraging peer interaction, Promoting inclusive classroom practices, Providing peer feedback opportunities, Encouraging student-led initiatives
Character and Ethical Education	Integrating character education, Using storytelling for social learning, Developing critical thinking for social interactions, Using positive reinforcement strategies
Emotional Expression through Arts	Utilizing art for emotional expression, Using music for emotional awareness, Encouraging creative self-expression through storytelling
Technology in Social-Emotional Learning	Using digital tools for SEL, Teaching self-motivation techniques, Encouraging online collaboration for SEL
Cultural and Social Diversity Awareness	Promoting cultural competence, Addressing cultural sensitivity in education, Encouraging social awareness through case studies

The axial coding phase allowed for the consolidation of related open codes into well-defined categories that reflect the essential components of social and emotional skill development within curriculum planning. The analysis revealed that participants frequently emphasized the significance of emotional intelligence, classroom-based strategies, and teacher training as foundational aspects of

social-emotional learning. Additionally, the role of mindfulness, conflict resolution, and ethical decision-making emerged as critical factors in shaping students' emotional and social competencies. A strong focus was placed on creating a supportive learning environment and integrating real-world applications to make social-emotional learning more effective. The role of arts, digital tools, and

family engagement was also evident in enhancing students' social and emotional skill acquisition. These axial codes set the stage for the selective coding phase, where the core themes will be synthesized into a cohesive model for curriculum planning.

In the selective coding phase, the core themes of the study were identified by integrating the axial codes into broader, overarching categories that represent the key elements of a curriculum planning model for teaching social and emotional skills. This phase synthesizes the results from the

previous coding stages, forming a structured and cohesive framework that encapsulates the essential aspects of social-emotional learning. Three main categories emerged from this phase: Emotional and Social Competency Development, Pedagogical Strategies and Classroom Implementation, and Institutional and Community Support for SEL. Each main category contains several axial codes, which in turn are linked to specific open codes. The following table presents the selective codes, their corresponding axial codes, and the related open codes.

Table 3

Selective Codes, Axial Codes, and Corresponding Open Codes

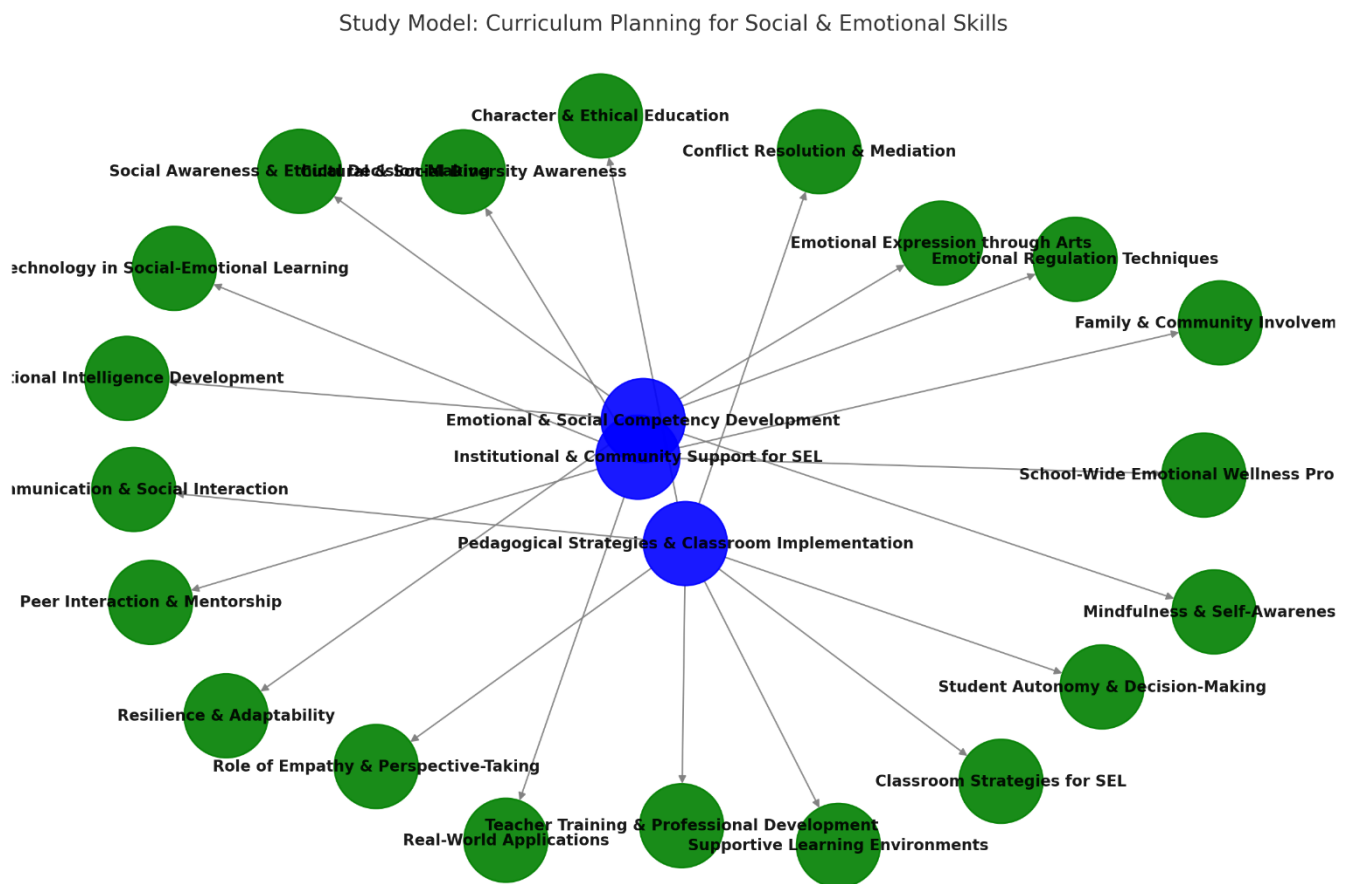
Selective Code	Axial Code	Open Codes
Emotional and Social Competency Development	Emotional Intelligence Development	Emphasizing emotional intelligence, Enhancing emotional literacy through literature, Teaching gratitude practices, Encouraging self-reflection, Using positive psychology principles
	Emotional Regulation Techniques	Promoting emotional regulation techniques, Encouraging self-discipline, Providing stress management workshops, Teaching responsible decision-making, Encouraging growth mindset approaches
	Social Awareness and Ethical Decision-Making	Addressing cultural sensitivity in education, Encouraging ethical decision-making, Teaching non-verbal communication cues, Using reflective journaling, Developing pro-social behaviors
	Mindfulness and Self-Awareness	Incorporating mindfulness techniques, Encouraging emotional check-ins, Using music for emotional awareness, Encouraging self-regulation through exercises, Teaching self-motivation techniques
	Resilience and Adaptability	Fostering resilience among students, Building student social adaptability, Promoting self-efficacy in students, Encouraging self-discipline
Pedagogical Strategies and Classroom Implementation	Emotional Expression through Arts	Utilizing art for emotional expression, Using music for emotional awareness, Encouraging creative self-expression through storytelling
	Teacher Training and Professional Development	Teacher training on emotional competencies, Training teachers on active listening, Training educators on psychological safety, Managing classroom emotions, Using digital tools for SEL
	Classroom Strategies for SEL	Encouraging collaborative learning, Integrating cooperative learning projects, Using real-life scenarios in teaching, Using gamification for social skills training, Encouraging student-led discussions
	Role of Empathy and Perspective-Taking	Developing empathy through role-playing, Encouraging self-compassion, Promoting kindness initiatives, Teaching leadership skills, Encouraging positive peer relationships
	Conflict Resolution and Mediation	Enhancing conflict resolution skills, Facilitating conflict mediation among students, Using simulations for conflict resolution, Addressing bullying through social education
	Communication and Social Interaction	Enhancing communication skills, Teaching active listening, Using experiential learning for social-emotional growth, Encouraging constructive peer feedback
	Supportive Learning Environments	Establishing a supportive learning environment, Creating emotionally safe classrooms, Providing emotional support resources, Encouraging open classroom discussions
Institutional and Community Support for SEL	Student Autonomy and Decision-Making	Fostering student autonomy, Encouraging self-assessment, Teaching responsible decision-making, Encouraging ethical leadership skills
	Character and Ethical Education	Integrating character education, Using storytelling for social learning, Developing critical thinking for social interactions, Using positive reinforcement strategies
	Family and Community Involvement	Parental involvement in emotional learning, Encouraging community engagement, Community-based projects, Providing peer mentoring programs, Integrating values education
	Real-World Applications	Linking curriculum to real-world social issues, Encouraging real-world challenges, Providing hands-on experiential learning
	School-Wide Emotional Wellness Programs	Promoting school-wide emotional wellness programs, Encouraging student storytelling for self-expression, Integrating SEL frameworks, Providing mentorship programs
Peer Interaction and Mentorship	Peer Interaction and Mentorship	Encouraging peer interaction, Promoting inclusive classroom practices, Providing peer feedback opportunities, Encouraging student-led initiatives
	Technology in Social-Emotional Learning	Using digital tools for SEL, Teaching self-motivation techniques, Encouraging online collaboration for SEL
	Cultural and Social Diversity Awareness	Promoting cultural competence, Addressing cultural sensitivity in education, Encouraging social awareness through case studies

The selective coding phase provided a comprehensive framework for curriculum planning that emphasizes the interconnectedness of emotional and social competencies, pedagogical strategies, and institutional support. The first main category, Emotional and Social Competency Development, underscores the fundamental skills students need to regulate their emotions, interact ethically, develop resilience, and express themselves creatively. The second category, Pedagogical Strategies and Classroom

Implementation, highlights the instructional approaches and methodologies that educators can employ to cultivate social-emotional learning, including teacher training, empathy-building activities, and conflict resolution techniques. Finally, Institutional and Community Support for SEL addresses the external factors that contribute to successful SEL integration, including family involvement, real-world applications, peer mentorship, and school-wide initiatives.

Figure 1

Final Research Model



4. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive model for curriculum planning in social and emotional skills education, highlighting key components necessary for an effective SEL curriculum. The open coding phase identified a broad range of themes, including emotional intelligence, teacher training, conflict resolution, mindfulness, resilience, communication skills, and real-world applications. Through axial coding, these themes were grouped into broader

categories, such as emotional and social competency development, pedagogical strategies, and institutional and community support. Finally, the selective coding phase synthesized these categories into three overarching dimensions: Emotional and Social Competency Development, Pedagogical Strategies and Classroom Implementation, and Institutional and Community Support for SEL.

One of the most significant findings was the central role of teacher training in SEL implementation. Many participants emphasized the necessity of equipping

educators with the skills and knowledge required to integrate SEL into their teaching practices. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that teacher preparedness is a crucial factor in the successful delivery of SEL programs (Davis et al., 2021; Odak et al., 2023). Studies have indicated that when teachers are trained in SEL pedagogy, they are more effective in fostering students' emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills (Olson et al., 2021; Plum et al., 2023). However, despite its importance, teacher training in SEL remains insufficient in many educational systems, highlighting the need for structured professional development initiatives (Dyson et al., 2024; Sorbet & Notar, 2022).

Another key finding was the importance of fostering emotional regulation and resilience in students. Many participants emphasized that teaching self-regulation strategies, stress management techniques, and resilience-building exercises should be central to SEL curricula. These findings are consistent with research indicating that SEL programs focusing on emotional regulation significantly improve students' mental health outcomes and academic performance (Foster et al., 2022; Kitayama et al., 2022). Studies have also shown that resilience training contributes to better coping mechanisms and higher levels of emotional stability among students (Lytle et al., 2024; Napoli & Day, 2024). The alignment of these findings with existing literature reinforces the necessity of incorporating resilience-building strategies into curriculum design.

Additionally, the study identified the critical role of real-world applications in SEL instruction. Participants stressed the need for experiential learning, community engagement projects, and real-life scenarios to reinforce social and emotional competencies. These findings support research suggesting that active and applied learning methods are more effective than passive instruction in developing SEL skills (Choi, 2025; Muñoz & Chang, 2021). A study by Gao et al. (2025) further highlighted that SEL programs integrating real-world problem-solving exercises lead to greater student engagement and skill retention (Gao et al., 2025). By immersing students in practical social and emotional learning experiences, curricula can foster meaningful personal development and behavioral adaptation.

The findings of this study align with existing research on the integration of SEL into educational curricula while also addressing gaps in current implementation strategies. Previous studies have emphasized that effective SEL models require a multi-tiered approach that incorporates teacher training, student-centered learning strategies, and

institutional support (Olson et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2020). This study reinforces these conclusions by identifying teacher preparedness, emotional intelligence training, and institutional collaboration as key components of SEL curriculum planning.

Furthermore, the study's emphasis on cultural sensitivity in SEL is supported by research highlighting the importance of adapting SEL programs to diverse socio-cultural contexts (Aygün & Taşkın, 2021; Kitayama et al., 2022). Many participants noted that current SEL frameworks are often designed based on Western educational paradigms, which may not always align with the cultural values of different regions. This concern has been echoed in studies advocating for the contextualization of SEL programs to reflect local norms and social structures (Choi, 2025; Odak et al., 2023).

In addition, this study's findings align with research on the role of technology in SEL. Several participants identified digital tools as valuable resources for enhancing social and emotional learning, particularly through interactive platforms, gamification, and AI-driven feedback systems. These findings are consistent with studies suggesting that technological interventions can complement SEL instruction by providing personalized and scalable learning experiences (Jelodar, 2021; Ly & Soutter, 2022). However, some participants also expressed concerns about over-reliance on technology in SEL, emphasizing the importance of direct human interaction in social learning. This aligns with the conclusions of Foster et al. (2022), who argue that while technology can enhance SEL, it should not replace face-to-face interpersonal engagement in educational settings (Foster et al., 2022).

One area where this study expands upon existing research is the integration of SEL into broader educational policies. While much of the current literature focuses on SEL at the classroom level, fewer studies have explored how SEL principles can be institutionalized within national curricula and policy frameworks (Al-Matari et al., 2024; Cavioni et al., 2024). This study highlights the need for system-wide approaches that incorporate SEL into teacher education programs, school policies, and community engagement initiatives.

While this study provides valuable insights into curriculum planning for SEL, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted in a specific regional context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational settings. Different cultural, socio-economic, and policy environments may influence the effectiveness of SEL models in diverse contexts. Second, the

study relied on qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews, which, while providing rich and detailed insights, may be subject to participant biases or personal interpretations. Third, the study focused primarily on educators and curriculum developers, and while their perspectives are crucial, incorporating student viewpoints could provide additional depth to the findings.

Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of SEL programs to assess their effectiveness over time. While this study identified key components for effective SEL curriculum planning, future studies could examine how these components influence student outcomes in the long run, including academic achievement, emotional well-being, and social integration. Additionally, comparative studies across different educational systems and cultural contexts would provide a more nuanced understanding of SEL implementation globally. Another important avenue for future research is the integration of artificial intelligence and digital tools in SEL. Investigating how AI-driven platforms can personalize SEL instruction while maintaining meaningful human interaction could significantly contribute to the field.

To enhance the effectiveness of SEL curricula, educational institutions should prioritize teacher training and professional development in social-emotional pedagogy. Providing educators with the necessary skills and strategies will ensure that SEL is effectively integrated into classroom instruction. Additionally, curriculum planners should emphasize experiential learning and real-world applications to foster deeper student engagement in SEL. Schools should also adopt a multi-tiered SEL approach, ensuring that social and emotional competencies are embedded at all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education. Furthermore, policymakers should work toward institutionalizing SEL within national curricula, ensuring that it is not treated as an optional add-on but as a fundamental component of holistic education. By implementing these strategies, educational systems can equip students with the emotional intelligence, resilience, and social skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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