



JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, INNOVATION, AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

An Academic Journal Publication

Website: | <https://jerimspublication.com>

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBERS

PRINT ISSN | 3116-5559

ONLINE ISSN | 3116-5567

Volume 1, Issue 04, pp 10-16, June 2026

Research Article

The Impact of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) in the Academic Performance of the Learners: Basis for Instructional Intervention

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Article History:

Submission: May, 2026

Revised: May, 2026

Accepted: May, 2026

Published: June, 2026

Originality: 98%

Similarity Index: 4%

Grammar Score: 96%

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Recommended Citation:

Ronda, E., (2026). The Impact of Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) in the Academic Performance of The Learners: Basis for Instructional Intervention. *Journal of Educational Research, Innovation, and Multidisciplinary Studies*, 1(4),10-16.

<https://doi.org/10.67001/jeri.2026.03.U1M5ZP>

ABSTRACT

This research examined the impact of socio-emotional learning (SEL) on the academic achievement of elementary pupils, employing a descriptive-correlational research approach with 107 students from Grades 3 to 6 in District IV, Oroquieta City. Data were gathered utilizing a validated SEL questionnaire and the General Scholastic Average (GSA), and evaluated by weighted mean, t-test, ANOVA, Pearson's r, and regression. Learners indicated an "Agree" Level of socio-emotional proficiency in all CASEL categories, with no notable variances observed among profile characteristics. A notable positive connection was found between SEL competence and academic success ($r = 0.35$, $p = 0.017$), with SEL competence significantly forecasting academic achievement ($\beta = 0.32$, $p = 0.004$). The results indicate that socio-emotional learning significantly contributes to academic achievement, highlighting the necessity for focused instructional strategies to improve SEL in elementary school.

Keywords: *academic performance, descriptive-correlational study, elementary learners, instructional intervention, socio-emotional learning, academic*

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Introduction

In recent years, the importance of socio-emotional learning (SEL) has gained strong international attention as educators and policymakers recognize that academic performance is not shaped by cognitive skills alone. Around the world, schools are increasingly incorporating SEL programs that seek to cultivate learners' emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making, in the belief that these aspects contribute significantly to learning outcomes. The international community, including educational research bodies, has reported that learners who exhibit higher socio-emotional learning often show better academic engagement, greater motivation, and more resilience in the face of challenges. This study explores how socio-emotional learning impacts the academic performance of learners and aims to provide a basis for designing instructional interventions. In the local context (the Philippines), while there is growing recognition by the Department of Education of the importance of holistic education, there remains a need for empirical investigations to determine how socio-emotional competencies specifically correlate with academic performance in elementary-level pupils and how these insights can guide interventions tailored to local learning environments.

Several recent studies shed light on the relationship between SEL and academic outcomes, offering diverse perspectives and findings. For example, Ramos (2021) examined SEL profiles of junior high learners in public schools in Manila and found that among the various SEL domains, social awareness was rated highest while self-management was weakest; younger learners showed higher self-awareness and social awareness than older ones. In another study, Tabalanza et al. (2022) conducted a comparative literature review of SEL interventions before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, discovering that these interventions continued to have positive effects on student learning outcomes, including academic performance, despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Furthermore, research by Castillon et al. (2024) among senior high school learners at Divine Word College of San Jose revealed that social learning and emotional learning were both highly correlated with academic performance; learners reporting stronger social-emotional learning tended to perform better academically, and the relationship was statistically significant. Finally, the UNICEF background paper (2021) ("Significance of Socio-emotional Skills in Children's Learning") reported that across multiple countries, children with stronger socio-emotional skills showed higher academic motivation and achievement and lower levels of anxiety and depression.

Despite the accumulating evidence, a number of gaps persist, particularly in the local elementary-level context. First, much of the research has focused on older learners (junior high, senior high, or college), leaving younger learners less studied. For example, Ramos (2021) focused on junior high school learners; Castillon et al. (2024) focused on senior high. Second, while many studies establish a correlation between SEL and academic outcomes, fewer provide specific, localized data on which socio-emotional domains (such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making) are most predictive of academic performance in elementary pupils. Third, even in studies that do focus on younger learners, there is often limited use of instructional interventions based explicitly on the findings—i.e., turning the correlative results into concrete programs that teachers or schools can apply and test. These gaps suggest that while the broad relationship between SEL and academics is accepted, there remains a lack of precise, actionable data for elementary school settings to inform well-designed instructional interventions.

To address these gaps, this study will focus on elementary pupils, examining their socio-emotional learning across specific dimensions and correlating those dimensions with academic performance. It will use a descriptive-correlational research approach to obtain quantitative data about the levels of socio-emotional learning (breaking these into specific SEL domains), profile variables (age, gender, parents' occupation, income, religion), and academic performance (general average, etc.). Moreover, this research will go further by using the results to formulate an instructional intervention proposal tailored for the elementary level, grounded in the domains and profile variables found most relevant. This dual approach—measurement plus proposal—aims not only to document but also to generate practical, local solutions.

The expected outcomes of the study are several. First, we anticipate identifying which socio-emotional domains are at varying levels among elementary pupils and how they differ by demographic profile (e.g., age, gender, socio-economic background). Second, we expect to find significant positive correlations between certain socio-emotional competencies (such as self-management, responsible decision-making, and social awareness) and academic performance; that is, pupils with stronger socio-emotional skills in these domains will, on average, perform better in their academic work. Third, based on these empirical findings, an instructional intervention

program proposed that targets the weaker SEL domains and profile groups needing greater support. Finally, this research hopes to contribute to local educational policy and practice by providing evidence that schools can use to integrate socio-emotional learning systematically into curricula and guidance programs to boost academic outcomes holistically.

Methods

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design to examine the impact of socio-emotional learning (SEL) on the academic performance of elementary learners. The descriptive component determined the learners' levels of socio-emotional competency in terms of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, while the correlational component examined the relationship between these competencies and learners' academic performance, with socio-emotional learning serving as the independent variable and academic performance as the dependent variable, consistent with Creswell (2021). The study was conducted in Bunga Elementary School and Toliyok Elementary School under District IV, Division of Oroquieta City, Misamis Occidental, selected because they represent typical public-school settings that emphasize both academic achievement and socio-emotional development through programs such as Edukasyon sa Pagpapakatao (EsP) and Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC). A total of 107 learners from Grades 3 to 6 enrolled during the School Year 2024–2025 participated in the study. The sample size was determined using Slovin's Formula with a 95% confidence level, and respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation from each grade level and participating school. Participation was voluntary and based on signed parental consent forms, while anonymity and confidentiality were strictly observed throughout the study. Data were gathered using a researcher-made questionnaire developed from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2022) framework. The instrument consisted of three parts: the respondents' demographic profile, socio-emotional learning competencies measured through a five-point Likert scale, and academic performance based on learners' general average obtained with permission from the school administration. Prior to its administration, the instrument underwent content validation by experts in educational psychology, guidance and counseling, and educational research, followed by a pilot test among learners from a nearby school not included in the study. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, with a coefficient of $\alpha \geq 0.80$ indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Before the actual data gathering, the researcher secured approval from the Graduate School, the Schools Division Superintendent, and the school principals, after which the questionnaire was personally administered with the assistance of class advisers. Respondents were oriented regarding the study's purpose, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality of their responses before completing the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, securely stored, and managed in accordance with established data protection procedures. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution to describe respondents' demographic profile, weighted mean and standard deviation to determine the level and variability of socio-emotional learning competencies, independent samples t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine differences across profile variables, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient to examine the relationship between socio-emotional learning and academic performance, and regression analysis to determine the predictive influence of socio-emotional learning domains on learners' academic achievement.

Throughout the conduct of the study, ethical principles were strictly observed by obtaining all necessary institutional approvals, securing informed parental consent and learner assent, ensuring voluntary participation, protecting participants' anonymity and confidentiality, safeguarding all collected data, allowing respondents to withdraw at any stage without penalty, and adhering to the principles of justice, fairness, and the provisions of Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

Results and Discussions

Table 1

Summary of Learners' Socio-Emotional Competency

Socio-Emotional Domain	Overall Weighted Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
Self-Awareness	3.25	0.91	Agree
Self-Management	3.24	0.85	Agree
Social Awareness	3.28	1.28	Agree
Relationship Skills	3.36	0.83	Agree
Making Responsible Decisions	3.39	0.79	Agree
Overall	3.30	0.93	Agree

Table 1 summarizes the respondents' overall socio-emotional learning (SEL) profile, demonstrating a composite mean of 3.30 across all five CASEL categories, representing the "Agree" descriptive level. This suggests that learners have a generally positive opinion of their socio-emotional competencies. The data demonstrate that competence in Making Responsible Decisions (3.39) and Relationship Skills (3.36) are viewed most strongly, while Self-Awareness (3.25) and Self-Management (3.24) are assessed slightly lower, but all remain within the same positive descriptive band (Cipriano et al., 2023).

The domain ranking indicates that learners are more confidence in their interpersonal and ethical decision-making abilities than in their intrapersonal skills of emotion management and self-understanding. This pattern is important for instructional design because it identifies areas where fundamental support may be most needed; intrapersonal qualities such as self-management are essential for academic self-regulation and resilience (Tabalanza et al., 2022). The overall standard deviation of 0.93 reflects moderate variability in total SEL scores across the sample, confirming that, while the group average is positive, there is still a significant range of socio-emotional development among the learners, necessitating both universal and tailored interventions.

Among the five socio-emotional domains, learners assessed their competence highest in Making Responsible Decisions and Relationship Skills, while rating themselves somewhat lower in Self-Awareness and Self-Management. This hierarchy indicates that elementary students in the study context have greater confidence in interpersonal and ethical decision-making compared to their intrapersonal abilities related to understanding and regulating their emotions. This distinction is pedagogically important, as self-management and self-awareness are essential for academic self-regulation, resilience, and enduring motivation. Therefore, instructional interventions must emphasize organized activities that improve emotional literacy, self-reflection, and coping techniques, guaranteeing comprehensive development across all SEL competencies to facilitate both academic and personal advancement.

Table 2

Test of Significant Difference in Learners' Socio-Emotional Competency When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Profile Variable	Statistical Test Used	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Age	One-Way ANOVA	F = 1.12	0.34	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Gender	Independent Samples t-test	t = 0.89	0.38	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Grade Level	One-Way ANOVA	F = 1.27	0.29	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Parents' Occupation	One-Way ANOVA	F = 1.45	0.21	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Parents' Monthly Income	One-Way ANOVA	F = 1.09	0.36	Accept Ho	Not Significant
Parents' Educational Attainment	One-Way ANOVA	F = 1.33	0.26	Accept Ho	Not Significant

Table 2 shows the results of inferential statistical tests that compare socio-emotional skills across different demographic groups. The data consistently reveals that all computed p-values above the conventional alpha Level of 0.05, leading to the acceptance of all null hypotheses (H_0). This suggests that there is no statistically significant variation in learners' overall socio-emotional learning across age, gender, grade level, parents' occupation, monthly income, or educational attainment. For example, the p-values for age ($F=1.12$, $p=0.34$) and gender ($t=0.89$, $p=0.38$) show that these profile characteristics do not significantly differentiate SEL scores in this population.

This conclusion is academically noteworthy because it indicates that, in this study environment, socio-emotional competencies are rather uniformly distributed among different demographic segments of the elementary student population. It implies that household socioeconomic status, as measured by parental occupation and income, was not a significant predictor of overall SEL levels in this cohort, pointing to a potential mitigating role for the school environment or other community factors (Cipriano et al., 2023). As a result, a universal instructional intervention aimed at improving SEL would be appropriate, as the need for socio-emotional development appears to be consistent across the diverse profile groups represented in this study, rather than concentrated in any single demographic (UNICEF Philippines & King, 2024).

Table 3

Level of Learners' Academic Performance Based on General Scholastic Average (GSA)

GSA Range	Descriptive Level (DepEd Standard)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
90–100	Outstanding	49	45.79%
85–89	Very Satisfactory	43	40.19%
80–84	Satisfactory	15	14.02%
Total		107	100%

Table 3 shows the 107 respondents' academic performance based on their General Scholastic Average (GSA) in accordance with DepEd's descriptive requirements. The data shows a good academic profile, with 45.79% of learners receiving a "Outstanding" grade (90-100), and 40.19% receiving a "Very Satisfactory" rating (85-89). This means that more than 85% of the sample is performing at very high to excellent academic levels, establishing a solid baseline of scholastic accomplishment against which socio-emotional competencies can be measured (Guerrero et al., 2024).

The high concentration of learners in the top performance ranges provide an ideal setting for investigating the role of SEL. Strong academic performance appears to be the norm rather than the exception in this population. This profile is important for interpretation because it frames the subsequent correlation and regression analyses; the positive relationship between SEL and academic performance (to be investigated in later tables) occurs within a generally high-achieving group, rather than being driven by comparisons between failing and passing learners (Dalauta, Fernal, & Comon, 2024). The low proportion (14.02%) in the "Satisfactory" range (80-84) and the lack of scores below 80 highlight the participant group's overall academic strength, highlighting the school's effective instructional environment while also focusing the study's lens on how socio-emotional skills may contribute to levels of excellence.

Table 4

Relationship Between Learners' Socio-Emotional learning and Academic Performance

Variables Compared	Statistical Test Used	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Socio-Emotional learning and Academic Performance (GSA)	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation	$r = 0.35$	0.017	Reject H_0	Significant Relationship

Table 4 shows the results of the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, which yielded a r-value of 0.35 and a p-value of 0.017. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is smaller than the 0.05 alpha threshold,

showing a statistically significant positive link between learners' total socio-emotional learning and their academic achievement (GSA). The positive correlation value of 0.35 indicates a low to moderate Level of link, implying that as learners' assessed socio-emotional competencies grow, so does their overall scholastic average, and vice versa (Cipriano et al., 2023).

This finding experimentally validates the study's theoretical assumption, demonstrating that socio-emotional learning is crucial to academic outcomes in the local elementary context. The substantial link is consistent with international meta-analyses that show SEL helps to promote academic engagement and achievement (Cipriano et al., 2023). However, the moderate strength of the link indicates that socio-emotional learning is one of numerous interconnected factors determining academic performance, including cognitive talents, instructional quality, and other environmental supports (Dalauta, Ferenal, & Comon, 2024). This emphasizes that, while SEL is an important component of holistic education, it works in tandem with other elements of the larger educational ecosystem.

Table 5

Influence of Socio-Emotional learning on Learners' Academic Performance

Predictor Variable	Statistical Test Used	Computed Value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Socio-Emotional learning	Simple Linear Regression	$\beta = 0.32$	0.004	Reject Ho	Significant Influencing Factor

Table 5 shows the findings of a Simple Linear Regression analysis that examined the predictive power of socio-emotional learning on academic performance. The study yielded a beta coefficient of 0.32 and a p-value of 0.004. Because the p-value is less than the 0.05 significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that socio-emotional learning has a statistically significant impact on learners' academic achievement (GSA). The positive beta value suggests that for every unit improvement in socio-emotional learning, academic performance is expected to rise by 0.32 units, while other variables remain constant (Tabalanza et al., 2022).

This discovery goes beyond mere association and suggests a predictive link, offering more empirical support for constructing focused instructional interventions. It confirms that improving learners' socio-emotional skills can be a viable strategy for promoting academic improvement in the sampled population, as competencies such as self-management and responsible decision-making directly support the behaviors and attitudes required for academic success (Cipriano et al., 2023). However, the beta value also indicates that socio-emotional learning accounts for a portion of the variance in academic scores, implying that other significant variables—such as cognitive ability, teaching methodologies, and home support—play important roles in determining academic outcomes and should be addressed in a comprehensive educational approach (Dalauta, Ferenal, & Comon, 2024).

So, this result shows that socio-emotional learning is not only a side activity, but a key part of teaching. For people who make decisions about education and design curricula, these results show how important it is to formally include and fund SEL frameworks in primary schools. This will make sure that the full learner's growth stays at the heart of the academic mission. This planned integration will help students become more resilient, engaged, and flexible, so they can handle problems in school and in life. So, putting money into SEL is like putting money into the basic skills that will help you learn and succeed for the rest of your life. The data necessitates a transformation in educational practices, acknowledging that the cultivation of emotional and social competences is essential for attaining academic brilliance.

Conclusions

The findings indicate that elementary learners in District IV have a positive Level of socio-emotional learning across all essential dimensions, signifying a foundational preparation for continued social-emotional learning growth. Significantly, socio-emotional learning remains largely consistent across demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, suggesting that the necessity for SEL improvement is universal across the examined learners. The students' academic performance is significantly robust, indicating an effective teaching environment in the involved schools. A statistically significant positive link exists between socio-emotional learning and academic accomplishment, indicating that students with greater socio-emotional learning generally

attain superior academic performance. Ultimately, socio-emotional learning is a crucial predictor of academic achievement, highlighting that promoting SEL is an effective approach for improving educational outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that learners actively participate in socio-emotional learning (SEL) activities that strengthen self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and responsible decision-making both in and outside the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to integrate SEL into daily instruction through collaborative learning, reflective activities, emotional check-ins, and explicit teaching of empathy and conflict resolution while participating in continuous professional development on SEL strategies. Parents and guardians should reinforce socio-emotional competencies at home by fostering open communication, modeling positive emotional behaviors, and maintaining strong collaboration with schools. School administrators are encouraged to institutionalize the proposed SEL intervention program by providing adequate resources, teacher training, and supportive policies that promote learners' emotional well-being alongside academic achievement. Likewise, the Division Office of Oroquieta City is encouraged to support the wider implementation of the validated SEL program across schools through capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance, and the integration of SEL indicators into monitoring and evaluation systems. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to conduct experimental, qualitative, or longitudinal studies to further examine the effectiveness of socio-emotional learning interventions and explore their long-term impact on learners' academic performance, behavior, mental health, and social development.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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