

Exploring The Relationship Between Social-Emotional Competencies And Subjective Well-Being

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between social-emotional competencies (SECs) and subjective well-being (SWB) among secondary school students. This study was conducted on a sample of 300 students to investigate how four key components of SEC, namely self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and social awareness, correlate with three core components of SWB: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Correlation analysis revealed significant positive associations between self-management, relationship skills, and positive dimensions of well-being, particularly life satisfaction and positive affect. Multiple regression analysis further indicated that self-management was the strongest predictor of both life satisfaction and positive affect, while relationship skills also significantly contributed to positive affect. Additionally, self-management had a negative predictive value for negative affect, although the overall model for negative affect was not statistically significant. These findings highlight the crucial role of self-regulation and interpersonal skills in enhancing adolescents' psychological well-being. The results highlight the importance of integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into school curricula to foster emotional resilience and improve student well-being outcomes.

Keywords: Subjective Well-being, self-management, relationship skill, social-emotional competencies

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there has been growing academic and policy interest in the psychological well-being of adolescents, especially in educational settings. With rising stress levels, emotional disturbances, and academic pressures among students, the need to promote mental wellness and resilience has become more urgent than ever (WHO, 2021). One of the most promising frameworks to address these concerns is social-emotional learning (SEL), which emphasizes the development of competencies that enable individuals to understand and manage emotions, establish healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020).

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a widely used indicator of psychological functioning. It reflects individuals' evaluations of their lives and emotional experiences. It consists of cognitive aspect (life satisfaction) affective aspect (frequent pleasant emotions and (infrequent of unpleasant emotions) (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). In several studies, it has been observed that high levels of SWB are linked to better academic performance, healthier relationships, and lower rates of depression and anxiety in adolescents (Park, 2004; Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

The social-emotional competencies (SECs) which include self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and social awareness have been identified as essential predictors of mental health, academic engagement, and life outcomes (Zins et al., 2004; Durlak et al., 2011). For instance, self-management helps students regulate their emotions and behaviours in the face of stress, while relationship skills facilitate peer bonding and social support. Both component of social competencies is critical buffering against emotional distress (Brackett et al., 2012). Social emotional learning not only improves classroom behaviour but has also been shown to significantly enhance psychological well-being (Taylor et al., 2017).

Despite growing global interest, empirical studies linking social-emotional competencies with subjective well-being are limited in the Indian context, where educational stress, socio-cultural expectations, and exam-oriented systems often compromise student well-being (Deb, Strodl & Sun, 2015). It remains important to identify which SECs most strongly influence adolescent well-being in Indian schools, where mental health infrastructure is limited and SEL is not uniformly implemented.

This study aims to bridge that gap by exploring the relationship between key social-emotional competencies (self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and social awareness)

and the components of subjective well-being (life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect) among secondary school students in India. The goal is to determine which competencies significantly predict well-being outcomes and thus provide evidence for the integration of SEL into school curricula.

Objectives

1. To examine the correlation between different dimensions of social-emotional competencies and components of subjective well-being.
2. To assess the predictive power of SECs on life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect.

METHODS

Sample

This study was undertaken on a sample of 300 secondary school students. It comprises of 178 matric and 122 intermediate students in which 140 male and 160 females were drawn from various schools using purposive sampling technique.

Measures

1. Social-Emotional Competencies Scale: A modified version of Mantz et al., (2016) was used to measure social-emotional competencies of students. This consists of 12 items measuring four dimensions of social emotional competence: Responsible Decision Making, Relationship Skills, Self-Management, and Social Awareness.

2. Subjective Well-being Scale: Diener et al. (1985) life satisfaction scale and Diener et al. (2010) SPANE were used to measure life satisfaction and positive and negative state of respondents.

RESULTS

Pearson's correlation was used to examine relationships between SECs and SWB. Table 1 presents Pearson correlation coefficients indicating the strength and direction of relationships between social-emotional competencies and subjective well-being components. Self-management shows the strongest positive correlation with life satisfaction ($r = .308, p < .01$), indicating that students who effectively manage their emotions and behaviours tend to evaluate their lives more positively. Relationship skills and social awareness also show moderate positive correlations with life satisfaction and positive affect, suggesting that the ability to maintain supportive social connections and empathize with others contributes to a more emotionally fulfilling experience. The overall social-emotional competence score significantly correlates with positive affect ($r = .274, p < .01$), implying that students with higher SECs are more likely to experience positive emotions. Notably, none of the SEC dimensions showed significant correlation with negative affect, though self-management was weakly (but negatively) associated ($r = -.099, p = .086$), pointing to a potential (though statistically insignificant) trend. It was found that self-management was the strongest correlate of life satisfaction ($r = .308, p < .01$) and also showed positive associations with positive affect. Relationship skill and social awareness were moderately associated with both life satisfaction and positive affect. None of the SEC dimensions showed significant correlations with negative affect.

Table-1 Correlation between dimensions of Social-emotional Competencies and Subjective Well-being

	Responsible Decision Making	Relationship Skill	Self-management	Social Awareness	Overall SEM
Life Satisfaction	.101	.154**	.308**	.163**	.109
Positive Affect	.178**	.249**	.226**	.157**	.274**
Negative Affect	.015	.097	-.099	.024	.072

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of SECs on each component of SWB. To further understand the contribution of SECs to SWB, three multiple regression analyses were conducted, each predicting a different dimension of subjective well-being. The model explains 11.6% of the variance in life satisfaction. Among all SEC dimensions, only self-management was a significant predictor. This highlights that the ability to regulate emotions, behaviours, and goals is a key determinant of how satisfied adolescents feel with their lives. This model accounts for 11.0% of the

variance in positive affect. Both relationship skills and self-management significantly contribute to positive emotional experiences among students. Those who can build healthy social bonds and regulate their emotions report feeling more positive emotions like joy, enthusiasm, and satisfaction. Although the overall model was not statistically significant, self-management showed a small but meaningful negative effect on negative affect. This suggests that students with better emotional regulation are somewhat less likely to experience distressing emotions such as sadness, anxiety, and anger.

Some key findings of the results are a. Self-management emerged as the most influential predictor across all dimensions of subjective well-being. b. Relationship skills significantly enhanced positive affect but did not influence life satisfaction or negative emotions. c. Responsible decision-making and social awareness had weak or no significant effects, either in correlational or predictive models. The models accounted for a modest proportion of variance, indicating other unmeasured factors (e.g., family support, mental health status, school environment) may also influence adolescent well-being (Siedlecki, 2023).

Table 2: Regression Summary

Dependent Variable	R ²	F	p-value	Significant Predictors
Life Satisfaction	0.116	9.637	.000	Self-Management ($\beta = .357$, $p < .001$)
Positive Affect	0.110	9.109	.000	Relationship Skill ($\beta = .395$, $p < .001$), Self-Management ($\beta = .288$, $p = .007$)
Negative Affect	0.024	1.812	.126	Self-Management ($\beta = -.193$, $p = .037$)

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that social-emotional competencies, particularly self-management, are strongly associated with enhanced well-being among adolescents. Students who are able to regulate their emotions and behaviours tend to experience higher life satisfaction and positive emotions while reporting fewer negative emotions. Relationship skills also play a key role in fostering positive affect, reflecting the importance of interpersonal connection and social support in emotional health.

The responsible decision making and social awareness showed weak or non-significant predictive power, suggesting that intrapersonal regulation may be more critical to adolescent well-being than external social reasoning at this developmental stage. These findings align with previous studies (Elias et al., 1997; Brackett et al., 2012; Costa et al., 2025), which have demonstrated that effective SEL contributes to emotional resilience, academic engagement, and reduced psychological distress.

CONCLUSION

This study reinforces the significance of self-management and relationship skills as crucial components of adolescents' subjective well-being. Educational institutions should prioritize the development of social-emotional skills through structured programs to promote holistic student development. Schools should implement SEL curricula focused on emotional regulation and relationship-building to support mental well-being. Policymakers must integrate SEL into national education policies, especially under frameworks like India's NEP 2020. Longitudinal and qualitative studies could explore how these competencies evolve over time and influence life outcomes.

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