



STUDENTS' SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROFILE AT PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN MANILA

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ABSTRACT

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has gained global recognition for its critical roles in developing emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and academic success among students. This study investigates SEL profiles of junior high school students in public high schools in Manila, examining potential differences based on age, sex, and grade level. Using a descriptive research design, 1,600 students across Grades 7 to 10 were assessed with the Delaware Competency Scale. The findings reveal consistent results in most SEL areas, with social awareness as the highest-rated competency. However, self-management emerged as the weakest across demographics. Females exhibited slightly higher competencies in relationship skills and decision-making compared to males, while younger students demonstrated higher self-awareness and social awareness than older cohorts. Grade 7 students reported the highest SEL competencies overall, with a gradual decline observed in higher grade levels. These results highlight the need for targeted interventions to enhance SEL competencies, especially self-management and responsible decision-making, particularly for older students, and to consistently integrate SEL across grade levels to improve student outcomes and holistic development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has gained global recognition and is increasingly integrated into national education systems worldwide, with structured frameworks and initiatives supporting its adoption (Ragini, 2018; Lozano-Pena, et al., 2021). SEL is the educational process that provides people—children and adults alike—how to identify and manage their emotions, set and achieve goals based on their strengths, show empathy, build strong relationships with others, and act upon wise decisions (CASEL, 2023). SEL underscores the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary for people to be effective and efficient in the workplace and is also attributed for career success. These include motivation, workload and anxiety management, leadership, embracing diversity, efficient dialogue, accountability, and courage (Paolini, 2020). Educational institutions in the US and across the world are encouraging SEL more than ever to aid youths gain such competencies. Approximately 90% of teachers at both primary and secondary schools shared that supporting SEL will contribute greatly to the student's learning outcomes (Hamilton & Doss, 2020). By developing adolescents' coping mechanism and the ability to control their feelings and conduct, SEL could improve their well-being and lessen burnout (Salmela-Aro et al., 2021). The students who participated in SEL had an average academic performance that was 13 percentile marks greater than those who did not take part, demonstrating the enduring advantageous effect on academic achievement (Taylor et al., 2017). SEL can be a great guide to adolescents by encouraging them to express their needs and setting boundaries in every action. Practices of critical thinking and fostering empathy will ultimately contribute to the prevention of teenage pregnancy. With the excellent implementation in teaching SEL competencies at school will highly contributes to the students' awareness to the negative effects of teenage pregnancy and the expected result is to lessen and prevent this issue (Belfield et al., 2015).

The CASEL wheel outlines the five interrelated competencies for social-emotional learning. These are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness is the capacity to comprehend one's emotions, thoughts, and values, recognizing their impact on behavior in various situations (CASEL, 2023). Self-management emerges as the central executive function, skillfully orchestrating students' internal landscape (emotions, thoughts, and behaviors) to propel them towards academic goals and navigate diverse challenges. Responsible decision-making is being able to make thoughtful and positive decisions about how we behave and interact with others in various situations. This competency delves deeper than mere choice, emphasizing the mindful selection of caring and constructive actions across a spectrum of personal and social situations. Relationship skill is the cornerstone of social competence, facilitating the construction and maintenance of positive interpersonal connections across diverse contexts. This competency rests upon a foundation of effective communication, with empathy and collaborative spirit serving as essential bridge builders. Social awareness serves as the cornerstone of empathy and understanding, empowering individuals to discern and appreciate the perspectives of others within diverse contexts. This competency encompasses the ability to recognize and respect cultural differences, identify historical and social norms, and perceive the emotional states and needs of others (Martinez-Yarza, 2023; Jugović et al., 2025).

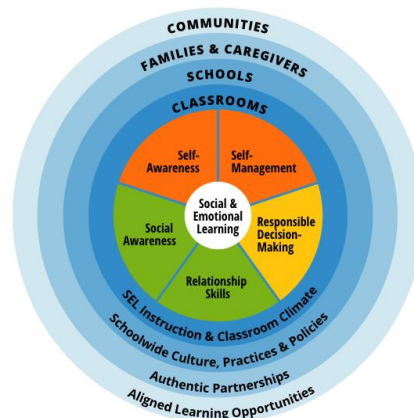


Fig. 1 – The CASEL Wheel

SEL also highlights the significance of the social environment of a child. Aligned learning opportunities across the learners' environment such as classroom, school, home and community ought to develop their SEL. Families and caregivers are encouraged to prioritize genuine partnerships with their children to enhance their relationships' quality. Schools should incorporate unified culture, practices, and policies throughout the institution to promote a sense of inclusion and belonging. However, the classroom must integrate SEL instruction alongside fostering an inclusive classroom climate (CASEL, 2020). SEL as an approach is considered a long-term educational program that links the home, community, and school (Mahoney et al., 2021). The educational approach aims to enhance the social and emotional competence of all students (Kim et al., 2022). Therefore, it is necessary that SEL is promoted across different environment of the learners.

Moreover, SEL greatly contribute to the prevention cases such as bullying and teenage pregnancy among schools through the effective implementation of its five competencies in schools. The SEL programs teach students how to practice emotional regulation, knowing oneself, making critical decisions, resolving conflicts, and maintaining interpersonal relationships. SEL programs implemented in schools effectively influence the positive development of behaviour of the student and evidently it decreases the number of bullying cases in schools (Valido

et al., 2023). Arauz et al. (2020) also indicated that SEL-based lessons are useful to positively influence the decision making and behaviors of the adolescents preventing health risks.

Nowadays, teachers have a greater duty to mold and shape students into more productive citizens and lifelong learners than to simply help them remember facts and retain knowledge. Thus, SEL is an important education framework that needs to be understood by teachers regardless of their learning area. Teachers have a significant impact on their students' social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and practices since they are the ones who drive these initiatives in schools and classrooms. A genuine rapport between the teacher and the student in the classroom supports deep learning and children's healthy social and emotional development (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Gamboa et al. (2023) indicates that social-emotional learning abilities support a student's professional development. Parental support, academic success, student involvement, and self-awareness are the variables that could be included in the SEL profiles of the students. People need to acquire the various SEL competencies throughout a critical developmental stage that occurs during the transition from middle childhood to adolescence. Educational inequality is an issue that SEL supports solving (CASEL, 2020). Through the assistance of partnerships between schools, the community, and families, it fosters educational quality and equity while creating a supportive learning climate. Besides, it supports empowering adults and youth and building inclusive communities.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has been extensively studied across Asia and revealed its cultural dimensions and challenges compared to Western frameworks. Research highlights the collectivist values prevalent in Asian cultures, such as interdependence and community harmony, shape SEL implementation and outcomes. In East Asia, studies have shown that SEL programs emphasizing self-discipline and respect for authority align closely with cultural expectations (Rao et al., 2019). However, challenges such as academic pressure and mental health stigma often impede the holistic integration of SEL in schools (Yang et al., 2020).

Finding from Southeast Asia reveal a growing recognition of the role of SEL in addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting resilience among students (Panayiotou et al., 2019). In Thailand, for instance, SEL has been integrated into national education policies to address emotional well-being and reduce bullying in schools (Nikerson et al., 2019). Similarly, in Malaysia, SEL programs have demonstrated success in improving peer relationships and reducing student anxiety (Cho et al., 2019).

Findings from Southeast Asia reveal a growing recognition of the role of social-emotional learning (SEL) in addressing socio-economic disparities and promoting resilience among students (Panayiotou et al., 2019). In Thailand, for instance, SEL has been strategically integrated into national education policies to enhance emotional well-being, reduce bullying, and support inclusive learning environments (Nikerson et al., 2019). Similarly, in Malaysia, SEL programs have demonstrated measurable success in improving peer relationships, enhancing empathy, and reducing student anxiety (Cho et al., 2019). Beyond these country-specific initiatives, recent studies emphasize that SEL implementation in Southeast Asia is deeply intertwined with cultural values emphasizing collectivism, respect for authority, and community harmony (Tan et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2023). These cultural dimensions influence how SEL competencies—such as social awareness and relationship skills—are taught and internalized by students. Furthermore, the integration of SEL within the curriculum is increasingly viewed as a mechanism for supporting holistic education reform, particularly in contexts marked by economic inequality, rapid digitalization, and post-pandemic recovery (Cahapay, 2022; Yulita & Tan, 2024). Despite these advances, there remains limited empirical research exploring how these competencies manifest in public school settings, especially within the Philippine context, where systemic educational disparities continue to challenge equitable student development.

In the Philippines, the adoption of SEL in the Philippines is timely and relevant as well. Following this approach, schools can provide appropriate guidance and instructions on how competencies can be developed among Filipino learners, address bullying, and contribute to positive learning environment (Nickerson et al., 2019). The EDCOM II recommends that SEL, anti-bullying, and rights-based lesson must be integrated in new basic education curriculum, known as the MATATAG curriculum, highlighting educators as essential facilitator that must be passionate to teach these concepts and properly communicated the implications of bullying to the class to prevent students' behavioural problems. DepEd acknowledges the need to firm up the implementation of SEL programs in schools to guide learners in developing all the competencies (DepEd, 2023). It provides emphasis on the development of SEL among learners. This curriculum was established through research on the significance of social-emotional learning (SEL) for human development to improve an individual's overall outcomes and those of the society they belong to. The new Values Education curriculum also places SEL as a values-based approach which should be utilized by teachers in teaching the learning area.

Then, are the schools in the country able to integrate SEL into the curriculum and school policies? Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 71 Series of 2009 or the "Guidelines for the Effective Implementation of the Elementary Curriculum" mandated the incorporation of SEL into the fundamental education curriculum. Emphasis is placed on cultivating the five SEL competencies, recognizing that these aptitudes contribute significantly to academic success. Academic subjects seamlessly integrate SEL into their instructional framework, creating a conducive environment that enhances learning outcomes. DepEd has laid a strong foundation to incorporate SEL into the school culture and all facets of school life. Investments in child protection policies, a values education curriculum, teaching standards, and the implementation of a leadership framework for school heads demonstrate this commitment (Napa et al., 2022). It is also actively working to enhance social and emotional support for learners, recognizing its crucial role in the learning process and recovery.

In this study, the researchers attempted to determine and analyze the SEL profile of junior high school learners in public schools. This aims to provide insights on how they behave in their environment based on the five SEL

competencies. The data gathered from this study will contribute and provide input on how educators and school leaders can navigate on SEL and develop interventions to competencies that need improvement. It will further provide insights on the conditions of learners based on SEL and provide a starting point of discussions on how SEL can be effectively integrated in the teaching-learning process and other school and community-based programs.

2. METHOD

The researchers used quantitative research with descriptive survey methods to examine the SEL profiles of junior high school students in public high schools in Manila. The study involved 1,600 students from Grades 7 to 10 within the age range of 12 to 17 years old across four public high schools in Manila. Quota sampling technique was used to ensure that the target sample will be achieved while ensuring that there are at least 100 students chosen per grade level, per school.

The researchers utilized the Delaware Social and Emotional Competency Scale including additional researcher-items (Mantz et al., 2018). The study adopted the said scale to evaluate five SEL competencies in accordance with the CASEL framework. The DSECS scale was chosen for its conciseness, cost-effectiveness, and strong psychometric assessment, making it an effective tool for evaluating student's social emotional skills (Mantz et al., 2018). Each item was rated on a four point-Likert scale with 4 = Very much like me, 3 = Somewhat like me, 2 = Not much like me, and 1 = Not like me at all. Mean scores were interpreted using range shown in Table 1. The additional researcher-made items were meant to determine how the students work in improving their SEL. A similar four point-Likert scale was used with 4 = Always, 3 = Often, 2 = Sometimes, and 1 = Never. See Table 1 for the interpretation of mean scores.

Table 1 – Interpretation of Mean Scores

Range	Interpretation
3.25 - 4.00	Highly Competent
2.50 - 3.24	Competent
1.75 - 2.49	Low Competent
1.00 - 1.74	Very Low Competent

A survey consisting of demographic questions, SEL profile items was distributed in both English and Filipino language to ensure clarity and accessibility to all respondents. The questionnaire was administered in printed form as a pen and paper assessment on school premises. Prior to data collection, the researchers secured approvals from the adviser, school administrators, and the Department of Education's Division Office in Manila. Informed consent was also obtained from respondents prior to their participation, ensuring ethical compliance and voluntary involvement. Afterward, the researchers collected the completed questionnaires to maintain confidentiality and ensure the accuracy of the data.

The SEL profiles across various demographic variables and competencies were analyzed data and processed descriptive statistics like weighted mean, frequency, and percentage distribution. Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to analyze the differences in SEL profiles among students grouped by age, sex, and grade level. Throughout the study, the researchers followed strict ethical protocols, ensuring the confidentiality of students' information, privacy, and safety. Parental consent and assent were secure before the data collection. In the writing of the report, GenerativeAI (ScholarGPT) was used for copyediting to improve readability

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall SEL Profile of Junior High School Students

Figure 2 highlights the SEL profiles of junior high school students from four public high schools in Manila. The findings reveal that 45.90% ($f = 734$) of students demonstrate competence in their overall SEL profile. However, a significant portion, 44.60% ($f = 714$), falls under the low competence category. This aligns with Philibert's (2021) recommendation to provide students with safe spaces for emotional processing and experiential activities to further bolster their SEL skills.

Encouragingly, 7.10% ($f = 114$) of students achieved a high level of competence in SEL, although this represents only a small proportion of the student population. This highlights the presence of specific subgroups requiring targeted interventions to enhance their SEL profiles. Meanwhile, 2.40% ($f = 38$) of students were identified as having very low competence, underscoring the urgent need for focused support to address their social-emotional needs effectively.

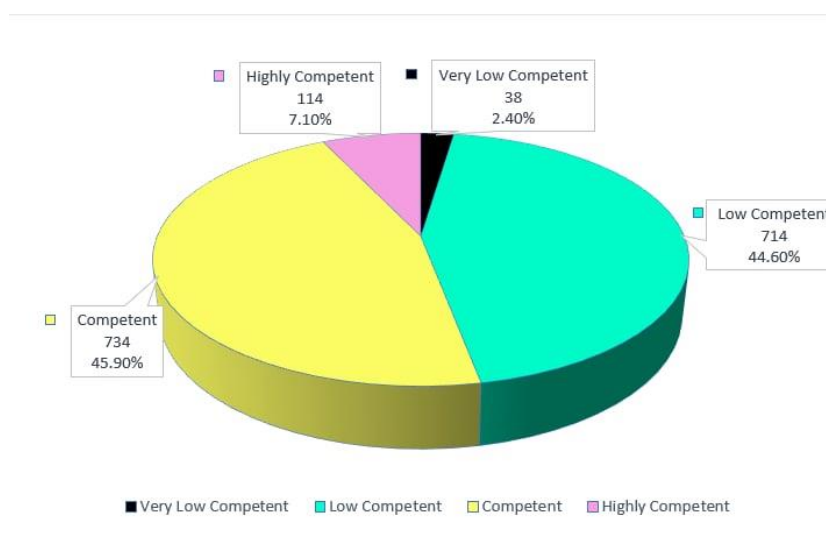


Fig. 2 – SEL Profile of Junior High School Students in Manila

Table 2 – Overall Mean Scores for each SEL Competencies

Competency	Mean	Interpretation
Self-Awareness	2.68	Competent
Self-Management	2.38	Low Competent
Responsible Decision-making	2.53	Competent
Social Awareness	2.70	Competent
Relationship Skills	2.58	Competent

As presented in Table 2, among the five SEL competencies, **social awareness** scored the highest with a mean of 2.70, which falls under the category of competent. According to CASEL (2021), students with competent social awareness tend to better understand various situations and can effectively consider diverse perspectives. These students demonstrate empathy, appreciate diversity, and respect differing opinions. Moreover, CASEL highlights that social awareness contributes significantly to leadership development, and enhancing this competency through school-based strategies can help shape future leaders.

The second-highest mean was observed in **self-awareness**, with a score of 2.68, also regarded as competent. This suggests that students with higher self-awareness are more likely to achieve personal and academic success. As noted by Flavian (2016), self-awareness facilitates goal-setting and personal fulfillment, enabling students to excel academically and personally. Similarly, **relationship skills** were found to be competent, with a mean score of 2.58. Wattanawongwan (2021) emphasized the role of group activities in fostering strong interpersonal relationships among students, which supports their ability to collaborate and build positive connections. **Responsible decision-making** also received a competent rating, with a mean score of 2.53. Hassan Majeed (2021) underscores that this competency enhances academic performance by enabling students to make thoughtful and constructive choices.

However, **self-management** recorded the lowest mean score of 2.38, falling under the low competence category. As Chudari (2017) explains, poor self-management often manifests as tardiness, missed deadlines, and ineffective use of time, which can negatively affect students' overall success. Strengthening self-management is essential, as it promotes motivational and organizational strategies that support personal and professional growth (Muluk et al., 2021).

Overall SEL Profile based on School

Figure 3 highlights the SEL profiles of junior high school students across four public high schools in Manila, showcasing notable differences between schools. School 1 demonstrates that 54.50% ($f = 218$) of its students are competent in their SEL profiles. According to Reymond et al. (2022), this level of competence can be attributed to the quality of instruction, including effective teaching strategies and pedagogical approaches. However, 33% ($f = 132$) of the students fall into the low competence category, while 12% ($f = 48$) are classified as highly competent. A small minority of 0.50% ($f = 2$) exhibit very low competence.

In School 2, 47.50% ($f = 190$) of students are deemed competent, with 45.30% ($f = 181$) categorized as low competent. A smaller proportion of students, 6.30% ($f = 25$), are highly competent, and 1.50% ($f = 4$) fall under the very low competence category.

School 3 shows the highest percentage of competence, with 61.90% (f = 245) of students meeting this standard. Meanwhile, 30.70% (f = 126) of students are categorized as low competent. A further 6.40% (f = 25) are highly competent, and only 1.00% (f = 4) of students are classified as having very low competence.

In contrast, School 4 exhibits the highest percentage of students with low competence, at 72.60% (f = 287). However, 20.10% (f = 83) of students are rated as competent. The percentage of highly competent students is only 1.50% (f = 6), while 5.80% (f = 24) fall under the very low competence category.

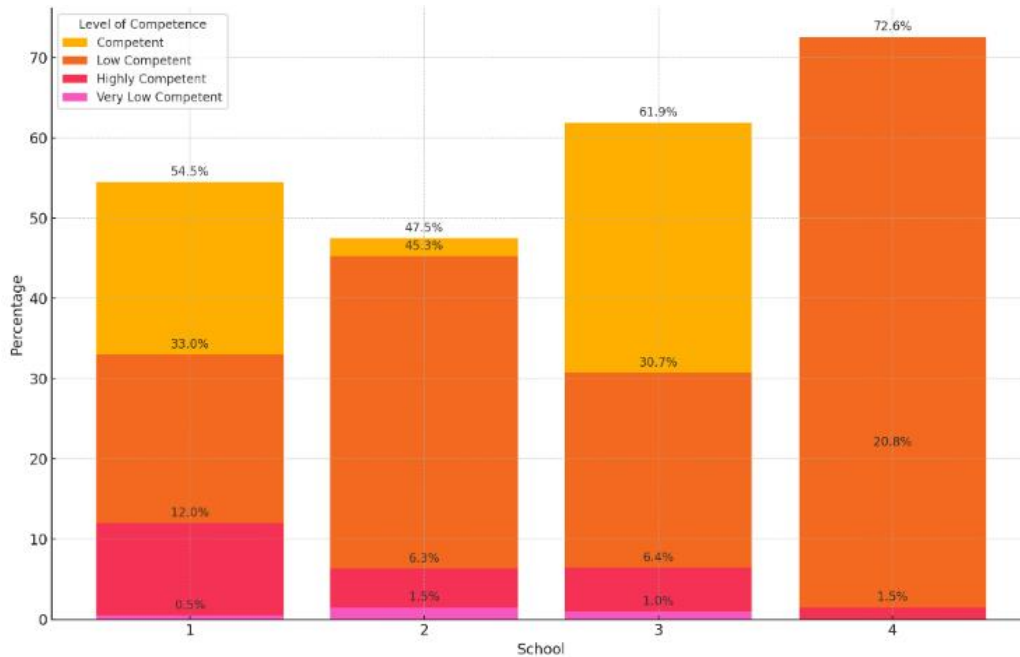


Fig. 3 – Overall SEL Profile Per School

Table 3 – Mean Scores of SEL Competencies based on School

School	Self-Awareness		Self-Management		Responsible Decision-Making		Social Awareness		Relationship Skills	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
School1	2.88	Competent	2.50	Competent	2.73	Competent	2.92	Competent	2.75	Competent
School2	2.68	Competent	2.42	Low Competent	2.53	Competent	2.67	Competent	2.60	Competent
School3	2.82	Competent	2.52	Competent	2.65	Competent	2.79	Competent	2.65	Competent
School4	2.36	Low Competent	1.99	Low Competent	2.23	Low Competent	2.41	Low Competent	2.31	Low Competent

Table 3 shows the SEL **School 1** students achieved the highest SEL mean score for social awareness at 2.92, categorized as competent, followed closely by self-awareness at 2.88. The scores for relationship skills (2.75) and responsible decision-making (2.73) are also in the competent range, with only minor differences between these competencies. However, self-management received the lowest score of 2.50, though still within the competent range. Overall, the school's SEL competency profile is consistent with Bai et al. (2021), who observed similar trends of higher social awareness and self-awareness but lower self-management in their studies. The findings suggest a need for targeted interventions to enhance students' self-management skills.

School 2 had its highest mean score in self-awareness (2.68), followed by social awareness (2.67), both in the competent range. Relationship skills (2.60) and responsible decision-making (2.53) also scored as competent, although the gap between these and the top competencies was more noticeable. Self-management, however, scored only 2.42, categorizing it as weakly competent. Stan (2021) emphasized the importance of structured programs to address such gaps, particularly in developing self-management among students.

School 3 showed strong performance, with the highest mean score in self-awareness (2.82), reflecting competency. Social awareness followed closely (2.79), while relationship skills and responsible decision-making both scored 2.65, also competent. Self-management, although the lowest at 2.52, remained in the competent range. Overall, the findings align with McKown (2019), who found that improved SEL competencies foster better student-teacher relationships, enhancing the learning environment.

School 4, in contrast, showed lower competency levels across all SEL dimensions. The highest score was for social awareness (2.41), which was categorized as less competent. Self-awareness scored 2.36, while relationship skills and responsible decision-making were 2.31 and 2.23, respectively—all within the low competence range. Self-management was the lowest at 1.99, also categorized as low competence. Panayiotou et al. (2019) stress that in such cases, educators and administrators must implement targeted strategies to address these significant gaps, ensuring students receive the support they need to improve their SEL skills.

SEL Profile based on Sex

Table 4 – Mean Scores of SEL Competencies based on Sex

Sex	Self-Awareness		Self-Management		Responsible Decision-Making		Social Awareness		Relationship Skills	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Male	2.68	Competent	2.38	Low Competent	2.53	Competent	2.70	Competent	2.57	Competent
Female	2.68	Competent	2.38	Low Competent	2.53	Competent	2.69	Competent	2.57	Competent

Table 4 presents the mean scores of SEL competencies based on sex, highlighting a consistent demonstration of competence among both male and female students across most competencies, except for self-management. Both sexes exhibited low competence in self-management, a finding that aligns with research by Manousaido (2022), which suggests that adolescents often face challenges with self-regulation and psychosocial functionality, significantly impacting their school performance and well-being. This observation raises important questions about the underlying factors contributing to low self-management among both groups. It suggests the need for targeted interventions, such as mindfulness practices, time management workshops, and emotional regulation programs, to address these gaps effectively and support students' holistic development.

SEL Profile based on Age

Table 5 – Mean Scores of SEL Competencies based on Age

Age	Self-Awareness		Self-Management		Responsible Decision-Making		Social Awareness		Relationship Skills	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
12	2.76	Competent	2.46	Low Competent	2.60	Competent	2.76	Competent	2.63	Competent
13	2.73	Competent	2.43	Low Competent	2.57	Competent	2.72	Competent	2.61	Competent
14	2.70	Competent	2.40	Low Competent	2.54	Competent	2.71	Competent	2.58	Competent
15	2.67	Competent	2.37	Low Competent	2.52	Competent	2.69	Competent	2.56	Competent
16	2.68	Competent	2.38	Low Competent	2.53	Competent	2.70	Competent	2.57	Competent
17	2.65	Competent	2.35	Low Competent	2.51	Competent	2.67	Competent	2.55	Competent
18	2.64	Competent	2.32	Low Competent	2.49	Low Competent	2.65	Competent	2.53	Competent

Table 5 illustrates the mean scores of SEL competencies based on age. Students aged 12–17 generally demonstrate competence across their social and emotional competencies, with the notable exception of self-management. Research by Al-Abyadh et al. (2022) highlights that self-management at this stage requires improved impulse control and emotional regulation, areas where students often face challenges.

However, students aged 18 exhibit lower competence, particularly in self-management and responsible decision-making. This finding is significant, as students at this age undergo critical developmental transitions, including social, biological, cognitive, hormonal, and academic changes, as well as career planning (Feraco & Meneghetti, 2023). Adjusting to these shifts is crucial to maintaining their well-being and achieving success in various areas of life.

For students under 18, gaps in self-management are often linked to insufficient parental guidance, limited supervision, and inadequate school programs focused on self-regulation. These factors hinder their ability to fully develop this competency (Ridosh et al., 2022). Adolescents in this age range frequently find themselves making decisions influenced by a range of individual, social, and environmental factors, which adds complexity to their development (Páez-Gallego et al., 2020). Additionally, consistent low competence in self-management and responsible decision-making among individuals aged 12–18 may stem from the increasing prevalence of emotional

challenges in this age group (Lin & Guo, 2024). Addressing these concerns through tailored interventions could significantly enhance their social-emotional skills and overall development.

SEL Profile based on Grade Level

Table 6 – Mean Scores of SEL Competencies based on Grade Level

Grade Level	Self-Awareness		Self-Management		Responsible Decision-Making		Social Awareness		Relationship Skills	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Grade 7	2.76	Competent	2.46	Low Competent	2.59	Competent	2.75	Competent	2.63	Competent
Grade 8	2.72	Competent	2.41	Low Competent	2.55	Competent	2.72	Competent	2.60	Competent
Grade 9	2.67	Competent	2.36	Low Competent	2.52	Competent	2.67	Competent	2.55	Competent
Grade 10	2.65	Competent	2.33	Low Competent	2.50	Competent	2.66	Competent	2.54	Competent

Table 6 highlights the mean scores of SEL competencies by grade level, showing that students from Grades 7 to 10 demonstrate competence across most SEL competencies, except for self-management. High school students at this stage often face academic challenges, as noted by Duckworth et al. (2016), which can affect their ability to regulate emotions and manage tasks effectively.

The cultivation of SEL competencies in schools plays a significant role in enhancing students' engagement in the learning process, subsequently boosting their cognitive and academic performance (Greenberg, 2023). To address the demands and shifting responsibilities associated with this developmental stage, schools must prioritize interventions to improve self-management skills. Napolitano et al. (2021) stress the importance of fostering these competencies to better equip students for academic and personal success.

Test of Normality

Table 7 – Overall Statistical Analyses on the Significant Difference in terms of Age, Sex and Grade Level

Age			Sex			Grade Level		
Test Statistics	p-value	Interpretation	Test Statistics	p-value	Interpretation	Test Statistics	p-value	Interpretation
47.322	0.000	There is a significant difference	353070.000	0.000	There is a significant difference	85.500	0.000	There is a significant difference

Table 7 presents the overall statistical analyses of significant differences in SEL profiles based on age, sex, and grade level. The Kruskal-Wallis H Test was employed to assess these differences, as it is particularly suited for evaluating potential variations across two or more groups without requiring strict adherence to assumptions about normality or equal variances. This non-parametric test is often utilized when traditional parametric tests, such as T-tests or ANOVA, are not applicable due to violations of their underlying assumptions (Eskici & Cetinkaya, 2019).

Rather than analyzing group means, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test focuses on comparing the relative ranks of data observations to identify significant distributional differences between independent groups. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in the social-emotional learning (SEL) profiles of students across all demographics examined. Specifically, the obtained p-values for the parameters of **age (p = 0.000)**, **sex (p = 0.000)**, and **grade level (p = 0.000)** were all less than the threshold of 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that there are significant differences in SEL profiles when students are grouped by age, sex, and grade level. These findings highlight the importance of tailoring SEL interventions to address the specific needs of different demographic groups.

Table 8 – Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Behavioral Average	.145	1600	.000	.970	1600	.000
Cognitive Average	.104	1600	.000	.980	1600	.000

Emotional Average	.132	1600	.000	.973	1600	.000
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Table 8 presents the normality tests conducted for three independent variables: **Ways Average**, **Cognitive Average**, **Emotional Average**, and **Behavioral Average**. These variables were analyzed using two statistical tests: the **Shapiro-Wilk** and the **Kolmogorov-Smirnov** tests. Both methods evaluated whether the data followed a normal distribution.

The results include degrees of freedom (df), statistical values, and significance levels (Sig.). The null hypothesis assumes that the data is normally distributed. However, for all variables analyzed, the null hypothesis was rejected as the significance level (Sig.) was consistently **.000**, indicating that the data is not normally distributed for the specified variables. These findings suggest that subsequent analyses should account for non-normality when interpreting results, emphasizing the need to use non-parametric methods where applicable.

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive view of the social-emotional learning (SEL) profiles of junior high school students in Manila and highlight both strengths and areas for improvement. Consistently, social awareness emerged as the highest-rated competency across demographics, reflecting students' ability to empathize with others and navigate diverse social contexts. This aligns with previous studies emphasizing the role of empathy and understanding in fostering leadership and harmonious interpersonal relationships (CASEL, 2021). However, the observed gaps in self-management underscore critical challenges, as this competency is essential for time management, emotional regulation, and effective personal growth (Chudari, 2017).

Interestingly, the results reveal variations in SEL competencies by age, sex, and grade level, suggesting developmental and contextual influences on students' social-emotional capacities. Younger students exhibited higher self-awareness and social awareness than older cohorts, indicating a potential decline in these competencies as academic and social pressures increase in higher grade levels. This decline aligns with findings from Lin and Guo (2024), which suggest that adolescence is a critical period marked by complex emotional and cognitive changes. Furthermore, the study revealed slight gender differences, with females demonstrating higher relationship skills and decision-making competencies than males. These findings echo previous research indicating gendered approaches to empathy and interpersonal dynamics (Manousiadou, 2022).

The notable gap in self-management, consistently rated as the weakest competency, deserves particular attention. Poor self-management correlates with challenges such as tardiness, difficulty meeting deadlines, and ineffective coping strategies during stressful situations (Muluk et al., 2021). Given its foundational role in academic and personal success, targeted interventions are necessary to strengthen this area. Schools could implement mindfulness and time-management workshops tailored to students' developmental stages, as recommended by previous research (Stan, 2021).

In light of these findings, integrating SEL into the teaching-learning becomes an imperative. Beyond fostering academic achievement, SEL supports holistic student development by addressing behavioral challenges and promoting resilience. To ensure sustainable outcomes, schools must adopt a systemic approach to SEL, embedding its principles into policies, classroom practices, and community engagement efforts. Moreover, further research comparing SEL profiles in diverse educational settings—such as private versus public schools—could offer valuable insights for tailoring interventions to different student populations. By bridging gaps and enhancing competencies, SEL can significantly contribute to equitable and inclusive education, preparing students to navigate the complexities of modern life.

4. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the diverse social-emotional learning (SEL) profiles of junior high school students in public schools in Manila, highlighting areas of both strength and concern. While competencies such as social awareness and self-awareness are generally strong, self-management consistently emerged as the weakest competency across demographic groups. This finding points to the need for focused efforts in helping students develop better emotional regulation, time management, and mindfulness skills, which are critical for personal and academic success.

The analysis revealed significant differences in SEL competencies based on age, sex, and grade level. Younger students demonstrated higher levels of self-awareness and social awareness compared to older students, while female students performed better in relationship skills and decision-making competencies. These trends suggest the need for targeted SEL interventions that address the specific developmental and contextual needs of different student groups. For example, interventions for older students could focus on enhancing self-management and decision-making, while younger cohorts may benefit from initiatives to sustain their high levels of awareness as they transition to higher grades.

To address the gaps identified, schools should prioritize structured programs that integrate SEL into the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Practical recommendations include implementing regular mindfulness training, peer support systems, and time management workshops to strengthen self-management skills. Additionally, teachers should be equipped with professional development opportunities to effectively model and teach SEL principles in the classroom. Ensuring alignment between classroom practices, school policies, and community-based programs will further create a supportive environment for SEL.

In conclusion, while the findings highlight promising levels of SEL competencies in key areas, they also emphasize the urgency of addressing self-management and other gaps to achieve holistic student development. By embedding SEL as a core aspect of the educational framework, stakeholders can better prepare students to

navigate the complexities of academic, social, and emotional challenges, ensuring their readiness for future endeavors.

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