



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
MODERN EDUCATION
(IJMOE)
www.ijmoe.com



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) AWARENESS OF UNDERGRADUATES IN MALAYSIA: A CASE OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 24.03.2025

Revised date: 05.04.2025

Accepted date: 15.05.2025

Published date: 23.06.2025

To cite this document:

Ahmad Feisal, A. A., & Singh, S. K. S. (2025). Social And Emotional Learning (Sel) Awareness Of Undergraduates In Malaysia: A Case Of A Public University In Malaysia. *International Journal of Modern Education*, 7 (25), 633-646.

DOI: 10.35631/IJMOE.725043

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Abstract:

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has become widely recognised as an essential component of education, equipping students with life skills such as self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making. Although SEL is generally used in Malaysian special education, there is still little integration of this approach in higher education. A study by Ganasan et al. (2022) examined the implementation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies among speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL) within the Malaysian higher education institution context and the findings indicated that while SEL interventions, such as enhancing self-awareness and self-management, positively impacted students' public speaking anxieties, such practices are not practiced extensively across tertiary institutions. This study aims to describe the present SEL levels among Malaysian undergraduates. Self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are the five fundamental SEL aspects evaluated via the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework survey. The results show that students' SEL competencies vary, with significant strengths in relational and social awareness skills but has potential for growth in self-management and responsible decision-making. The findings also highlight how SEL integration allow students to become more emotionally resilient, achieve better academic results, and be more prepared for the workplace.

Keywords:

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL); Higher Education; Malaysia, Malaysian Undergraduates

Introduction

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has emerged as a crucial component of holistic education, equipping students with the essential tools for self-awareness, effective interpersonal interaction, and informed decision-making. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL is critical for promoting academic and personal growth, particularly in higher education settings. The incorporation of SEL into educational settings has gained momentum, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic. SEL has been shown to promote student mental health by increasing emotional control and resilience. These skills are becoming increasingly important as institutions attempt to provide supportive learning environments that foster desirable behaviours like self-discipline, ethical decision-making, and empathy while reducing classroom issues and absenteeism (OECD, 2023).

Despite its well-recognised benefits, various barriers prevent SEL from being fully integrated into higher education. A key gap in the existing body of literature is the lack of research especially focussing on SEL integration within higher education lesson design, with most current studies focussing on elementary or preschool settings. For example, while Yee and Jiar (2019) emphasise the broader need for comprehensive SEL integration techniques beyond primary schooling, studies such as Yahya Don et al. (2013) focus on SEL's application in community colleges, frequently overlooking its structured integration within universities or other institutions of higher learning.

Similarly, Norazlinda Mohamad et al. (2022) emphasise the significance of outdoor play for kids' socioemotional development while providing limited information on how planned SEL class design affects students in higher education. Furthermore, Nor Aizal Akmal Rohaizad et al. (2020) focus on improving toddlers' emotional intelligence rather than tackling SEL integration at the postsecondary level. Even research such as Usman Jaffer et al. (2023), which investigate SEL in special needs students in elementary schools, do not generalise their findings to higher education or other SEL applications. The lack of standardised lesson plan formats for higher education is also a significant concern, as Gallagher and Savage (2020) highlight the lack of a unified SEL lesson planning strategy in higher education institutions, owing primarily to definitional and conceptual challenges resulting from the use of multiple frameworks and hybrid approaches.

Furthermore, there is a significant gap in the global contextualisation of SEL in higher education. Most previous research, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts, focuses on basic education levels, which limits its applicability to various higher education settings. To provide a more balanced and thorough view, this study will include current findings from Western contexts that provide useful insights into adaptable SEL frameworks and pedagogical techniques. For example, recent work by Karakose, T., Tülübaşı, T., & Papadakis, S. (2022) in the *Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, and Tülübaşı, T., Karakose, T., & Papadakis, S. (2023) in the *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology, and Education*, provide contemporary perspectives on SEL and related constructs that are highly relevant to advanced educational settings and demonstrate broader applicability beyond specific regional or foundational educational.

The significance of applying SEL research to the context of higher education is shown by these gaps that have been found. Universities that include SEL in their course designs not only have higher student satisfaction and retention rates but also play an important role in building well-rounded individuals who can manage complicated personal and professional issues (Frontiers in Psychology, 2023). This study seeks to address these crucial challenges by describing the current condition of students' Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and carefully examining potential integrations into higher education lesson plans. This study aims to bridge existing knowledge gaps by leveraging the CASEL paradigm and incorporating insights from recent global studies, thereby contributing significantly to the ongoing discussion about improving higher education through comprehensive SEL integration and promoting both academic achievement and emotional well-being.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a quantitative research design using a survey-based approach to gather data on university students' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) abilities. The survey approach was chosen because it is effective in gathering a wide range of responses from many participants, allowing for statistical examination of SEL abilities across several domains.

Population and Sampling

This study's target group included all undergraduate students enrolled at a Malaysian public institution (N = 6782). To achieve enough statistical power for the investigations, a sample size of 300 students was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator.

Participants were chosen via convenience sampling. This non-probabilistic strategy was chosen largely due to logistical limitations and participant convenience inside the university context, allowing for rapid data collection from readily available students. While this method enabled practical data collection, it is recognised that convenience sampling raises the possibility of sampling bias, as the selected sample may not completely reflect the total target population. The consequences of this sampling technique for the study's generalisability are further explained in the Limitations section.

Year of Study	Population	Sample
Year 1	1950	90
Year 2	2300	100
Year 3	1500	70
Year 4	1032	40
Total	6782	300

Table 1: Population & Sample

Data Collection

Data was gathered through self-report surveys using an instrument adapted from the CASEL Framework's "Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills Survey (2016)". The survey included measurements for key SEL competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. While self-report surveys provide direct insight into people's assessments of their SEL abilities, the

possibility of social desirability bias is a known issue, as mentioned more in the Limitations section.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analysed using a comprehensive approach, combining both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to determine the current participants' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) levels and explore the relationships between different SEL competencies. SPSS software was utilized for all statistical analyses.

Firstly, descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were calculated to provide an overview of the participant's demographic characteristics as well as their self-reported proficiency in the various SEL competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). This offered preliminary information about the patterns and distributions of SEL competencies among the surveyed students.

Advanced statistical analyses were used to enhance the analytical rigour and provide deeper insights into the interrelationships among the SEL components. Specifically, correlation analysis (e.g., Pearson's r) was employed to examine the strength and direction of linear relationships between the different SEL competencies, and multiple regression analysis was utilised to identify which specific SEL components might predict overall SEL proficiency or others.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed rigorous national and international ethical research guidelines for studies involving human subjects, which were governed by concepts such as respect for people, beneficence, and fairness. The research protocol was carefully developed to protect the rights and well-being of all participants.

Before taking part in the survey, all potential participants were given a complete informed consent form. This document clearly stated the study's purpose research procedures, expected time dedication, and any possible risks or advantages of participation. Furthermore, participants were expressly informed that their participation was fully voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw from the research at any time without consequence or explanation. They were also given several opportunities to ask questions before deciding to join. Consent was gained either by signing a consent form or by clicking the affirmative response button at the beginning of the online survey, indicating comprehension and readiness to proceed.

To maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all responses, rigorous safeguards have been implemented. Data were gathered anonymously, which means that no personal identifying information (e.g., name, student ID) was captured on the survey instrument that might be used to link responses to specific participants. The acquired data was securely kept on password-protected university servers accessible only to the primary investigators. Only aggregated and anonymised data were utilised for statistical analysis and distribution of study findings, ensuring that no individual responses from participants could be recognised or linked.

Before data collection, the entire research protocol, including the informed consent process, data collection methods, and data management plan, was thoroughly reviewed and approved by the university's designated ethical committee (e.g., Institutional Review Board, Research Ethics Committee). This oversight confirmed that the study followed all applicable institutional and national ethical norms.

Furthermore, the researchers agreed to public reporting of methods and conclusions, in line with the best standards for solid social science research, to ensure the study's replicability and integrity. While specific reporting standards such as CONSORT or PRISMA are normally used for research studies or systematic reviews, the study embraced its spirit by focussing on clarity, accuracy, and completeness when outlining its ethical processes and data management.

Limitation

Several limitations were acknowledged in this study, impacting the generalizability and interpretation of the findings.

Firstly, the use of convenience sampling to enrol participants raises the potential for sampling bias. This non-probabilistic strategy implies that the sample may not adequately represent the different features of the total undergraduate student population at Malaysia's public institutions. As a result, the findings may not be immediately applicable to other students at the university or in other higher education institutions, particularly those from diverse cultural or educational settings. Future studies should focus on more robust statistical sampling approaches (for example, stratified random sampling) to improve external validity and ensure a more representative sample.

Secondly, the use of self-reported surveys for data gathering makes it susceptible to response biases, particularly social desirability bias. Participants may consciously or subconsciously submit responses that they believe are socially acceptable or desirable, rather than truly representing their genuine SEL skills. This might result in an overestimation of SEL competencies among polled students, compromising the accuracy and impartiality of the results. Future research might benefit from incorporating triangulated data collection methods, such as observational assessments, peer evaluations, or performance-based activities, to supplement self-report measures and offer a more complete picture of SEL proficiency.

Lastly, the contextual variability of SEL concepts and their application in various cultural and educational settings could impact the interpretation of the results. The findings of this study are unusual to Malaysian public universities and may not be immediately transferable unless these contextual variables are carefully considered.

Results & Interpretation

Interpretation of Data

The following table provides a guide for interpreting the survey data related to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) levels. The survey utilised a Likert scale, where responses ranged from 1 to 4. These numerical responses have been categorised into levels of SEL competency, ranging from 'Very Low Level' to 'Very High Level,' as detailed below. This interpretation framework is utilised to comprehend the participants' overall SEL levels as well as to discuss any notable findings on individual SEL competencies.

Weight	Scale Range	Description	Interpretation
4	3.25 - 4.00	Strongly Agree	High Level
3	2.50 - 3.24	Agree	Average Level
2	1.75 - 2.49	Disagree	Low Level
1	1.00 - 1.74	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Level

Table 2: Interpretation Data***Profile of Respondents***

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the 300 undergraduate students from the researched university who participated in this study. The table provides a breakdown of the sample by gender, age group and year of study, with the corresponding number of participants and the percentage each category represents within the total sample. As shown in the table, most of the participants were female (60%), with males comprising 40% of the sample. The highest proportion of participants fell within the 18-21 years group (50%), followed by the 22-25 years group (40%). A smaller percentage (10%) of participants were 26 years and above. The distribution of participants across different year levels indicates the following representation: Year 1 (30%), Year 2 (33.3%), Year 3 (23.3%), and Year 4 (13.3%). These demographic characteristics provide context for understanding the result relate to social and emotional learning within this specific sample.

Demographic Category	Number of Participants	Percentage (%)
Total Participants	300	100
Gender		
Male	120	40
Female	180	60
Age Group		
18-21 years	150	50
22-25 years	120	40
26 years and above	30	10
Year of Study		
Year 1	90	30
Year 2	100	33.3
Year 3	70	23.3
Year 4	40	13.3

Table 3: Participant Demographics Table

The assessment of the level of student's Social and Emotional Learning Awareness

Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation	Rank
I am aware of the emotions I feel.	2.80	0.80	Agree	Average	1
I can calm myself down.	2.75	0.78	Agree	Average	2
I know what my strengths are.	2.70	0.75	Agree	Average	3
I am aware when my feelings are making it hard to focus.	2.60	0.85	Agree	Average	4
Composite Mean	2.71	0.80	Agree	Average	-

Table 4: Assessment of Self-Awareness

Table 4 presents the levels of Self-Awareness among the participating undergraduate students (N = 300). The assessment of this competency through four items focuses on the student's ability to recognize their emotions, manage their emotional states, understand their strengths and identify the impact of their feelings on their focus.

The highest mean score (M = 2.80, SD = 0.80) was observed for the statement 'I am aware of the emotions I feel,' suggesting that, on average, students tended to agree with this statement. The item 'I can calm myself down' also received a relatively high mean score (M = 2.75, SD = 0.78), indicating a general agreement with this ability. The statement 'I know what my strengths are' had a mean of 2.70 (SD = 0.75), also within the 'Agree' range. The item with the lowest mean score (M = 2.60, SD = 0.85) was 'I am aware when my feelings are making it hard to focus,' still within the 'Agree' range but showed slightly less agreement than the other items.

The standard deviations for all items are relatively similar, suggesting a comparable level of variability in responses across the different aspects of Self-Awareness. The ranking of the items provides a relative comparison of the students' agreement levels across the specific components of this competency.

Self-Management

Self-Management	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation	Rank
I can be patient during lessons that get me excited.	2.80	0.80	Agree	Average	1
I always manage to finish my tasks even if they are hard for me.	2.75	0.78	Agree	Average	2
I can set goals for myself.	2.70	0.75	Agree	Average	3
I complete my assignment even if I do not feel like it.	2.60	0.85	Agree	Average	4
Composite Mean	2.71	0.80	Agree	Average	-

Table 5: Assessment of Self-Management

Table 5 presents the levels of Self-Management among the participating undergraduate students (N = 300). The assessment of this competency through four items focuses on the student's ability to exercise patience, persist with challenging tasks, set personal goals, and complete assignments even when lacking motivation.

The highest mean score ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.80$) was observed for the statement 'I can be patient during lessons that get me excited,' suggesting that, on average, students tended to agree with their ability to be patient in engaging situations. The item 'I always manage to finish my tasks even if they are hard for me' also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.78$), indicating a general agreement with their persistence. The statement 'I can set goals for myself' had a mean of 2.70 ($SD = 0.75$), also within the 'Agree' range.

The item with the lowest mean score ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.85$) was 'I complete my assignment even if I do not feel like it,' still within the 'Agree' range but indicating slightly less agreement with their ability to follow through on tasks when motivation is low.

Similar to Self-Awareness, the standard deviations for all Self-Management items are relatively consistent, suggesting a comparable spread of responses across these different aspects of self-regulation. The ranking of the items highlights the relative strengths in patience and persistence compared to goal setting and task completion without motivation within this competency.

Social Awareness

Social Awareness	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation	Rank
I learn from people with different opinions than me.	2.70	0.88	Agree	Average	3
I am able to tell what people may be feeling.	2.80	0.82	Agree	Average	2
I know when someone needs help.	2.85	0.87	Agree	Average	1
I know how to get help when I'm having trouble with a classmate.	2.75	0.85	Agree	Average	4
Composite Mean	2.78	0.86	Agree	Average	-

Table 6: Assessment of Social Awareness

Table 6 presents the levels of Social Awareness among the participating undergraduate students ($N = 300$). The assessment of this competency through four items focuses on the student's ability to learn from diverse perspectives, recognize others' emotions, identify when someone needs assistance, and know how to seek help in peer-related difficulties.

The highest mean score ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.87$) was observed for the statement 'I know when someone needs help,' indicating the most average agreement among the items for this competency. The item 'I can tell what people may be feeling' also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.82$), suggesting a good level of agreement with their ability to recognize others' emotions. The statement 'I know how to get help when I'm having trouble with a classmate' had a mean of 2.75 ($SD = 0.85$), also within the 'Agree' range. The item 'I learn from people with different opinions than me' had a slightly lower mean score ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.88$), still in the 'Agree' range but indicating relatively less agreement compared to the other aspects of social awareness assessed.

The standard deviations for all Social Awareness items are relatively similar, indicating a consistent level of variability in responses across these aspects. The ranking highlights that recognizing when someone needs help was the aspect of social awareness with which the

students most strongly agreed, while learning from differing opinions showed slightly less agreement on average.

Relationship Skills

Relationship Skills	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation	Rank
I can respect a classmate's opinions during disagreements.	2.70	0.85	Agree	Average	2
I get along well with my classmates.	2.80	0.88	Agree	Average	1
I always speak to an adult when I have problems at school.	2.65	0.84	Agree	Average	3
I build and maintain healthy relationships within my university community.	2.60	0.86	Agree	Average	4
Composite Mean	2.69	0.86	Agree	Average	-

Table 7: Assessment of Relationship Skills

Table 7 presents the levels of Relationship Skills among the participating undergraduate students ($N = 300$). The assessment of this competency through four items focuses on the student's ability to respect differing opinions, maintain positive peer relationships, seek adult support when facing school-related issues, and build healthy connections within the university community.

The highest mean score ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.88$) was observed for the statement 'I get along well with my classmates,' indicating the strongest average agreement regarding their positive interactions with peers. The item 'I can respect a classmate's opinions during disagreement' also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.85$), suggesting a good level of agreement with their ability to show respect for differing viewpoints. The statement 'I always speak to an adult when I have problems at school' had a mean of 2.65 ($SD = 0.84$), also within the 'Agree' range. The item with the lowest mean score ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.86$) was 'I build and maintain healthy relationships within my university community,' still within the 'Agree' range but indicating slightly less agreement with their overall ability to establish and sustain healthy connections within the broader university context.

The standard deviations for all Relationship Skills items are relatively similar, suggesting a consistent level of variability in responses across these aspects. The ranking highlights that getting along well with classmates was the aspect of relationship skills with which the students most strongly agreed, while building and maintaining broader university relationships showed slightly less agreement on average.

Responsible Decision-Making

Responsible Decision-Making	Mean	SD	Description	Interpretation	Rank
I think about what might happen before making any decision.	2.90	0.88	Agree	Average	2
In a situation, I know what is right or wrong.	3.00	0.90	Agree	Average	1

I can strictly say “NO” to a friend who wants me to break the rules.	2.80	0.87	Agree	Average	4
I always seek advice or feedback from others before making important decisions.	2.85	0.89	Agree	Average	3
Composite Mean	2.89	0.88	Agree	Average	-

Table 8: Assessment of Responsible Decision-Making

Table 8 presents the levels of Responsible Decision-Making among the participating undergraduate students ($N = 300$). The assessment of this competency through four items focuses on the student's ability to consider consequences, discern right from wrong, resist negative peer pressure, and seek advice before making significant choices.

The highest mean score ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.90$) was observed for the statement 'In a situation, I know what is right or wrong,' indicating the strongest average agreement with their sense of ethical awareness. The item 'I think about what might happen before making any decision' also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.88$), suggesting a good level of agreement with their consideration of consequences. The statement 'I always seek advice or feedback from others before making important decisions' had a mean of 2.85 ($SD = 0.89$), also within the 'Agree' range. The item with the lowest mean score ($M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.87$) was 'I can strictly say “NO” to a friend who wants me to break the rules,' still within the 'Agree' range but indicating slightly less agreement with their ability to resist negative peer influence.

The standard deviations for all Responsible Decision-Making items are relatively similar, suggesting a consistent level of variability in responses across these aspects. The ranking highlights that having a sense of right and wrong was the aspect of responsible decision-making with which the students most strongly agreed, while strictly refusing a friend's request to break rules showed slightly less agreement on average.

Discussion & Conclusion

Summary of Social and Emotional Learning Levels Among Undergraduate Students

The aim of this study was to examine undergraduate students' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competency at a Malaysian public institution, revealing crucial insights into their existing skills across five core competencies as specified by the modified CASEL (2020) framework. The results show that the individuals had an overall "average" level of SEL, with subtle strengths and areas that require specific attention. This section will thoroughly explain these findings, compare them to current research, investigate their ramifications, and make practical recommendations for incorporating SEL into higher education in an extensive university context.

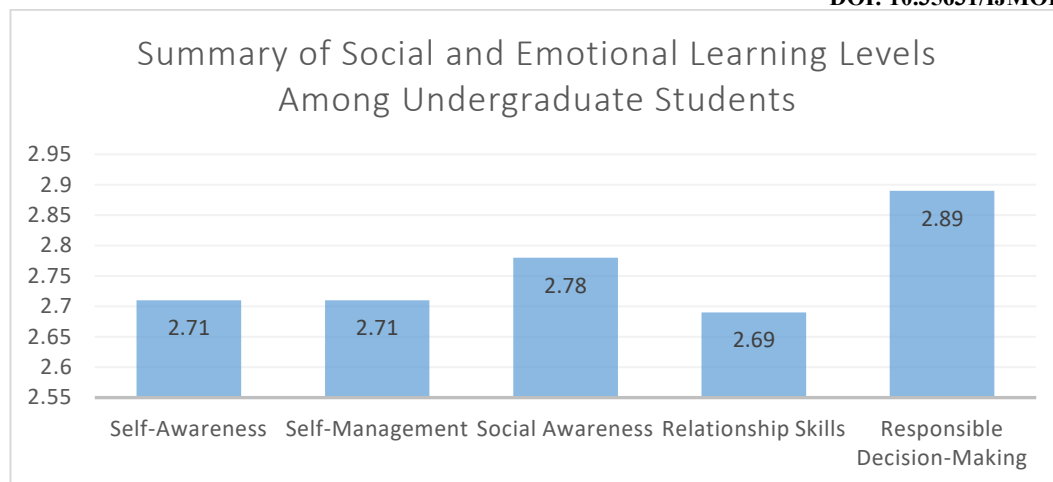


Figure 1: Summary of Assessment

According to Figure 1, this study's findings, which were derived from a survey of 300 undergraduate students at a Malaysian public institution, show an overall "Average" level across all five of the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) core competencies as determined by the modified CASEL (2020) framework.

The overall "average" SEL level reflects a basic grasp and use of these abilities, but it also indicates substantial space for improvement and targeted development. This is consistent with CASEL's argument that SEL is a vital component for both academic and personal growth, emphasising the necessity for purposeful nurturing in higher education settings. The findings indicate that, while Malaysian public university students have a basic set of socio-emotional abilities, there is a significant possibility to improve these competencies for more holistic student development.

Responsible decision-making (mean = 2.89, SD = 0.88): This competence had the most agreement, particularly in exhibiting a sense of right and wrong. This high proficiency implies that students have a strong moral compass and ethical awareness, which is critical for their growth as responsible citizens and future professionals. However, the lowest agreement in severely opposing a friend's request to disobey the rules indicates a possible sensitivity to peer pressure. This is a significant area for focused programs that improve ethical fortitude and give skills for managing tough social situations while emphasising integrity in real-world settings.

Social Awareness (mean = 2.78, SD = 0.86): Participants agreed on the importance of helping others, which is essential for collaborative learning and developing a supportive community. In contrast, the somewhat lower agreement in learning from various ideas suggests a possible problem in embracing other perspectives and engaging in constructive dialogue. In an increasingly globalised and linked society, critical thinking and civic involvement require the ability to understand and interpret many points of view. This conclusion emphasises the need for curricula that promote open-mindedness and empathy in circumstances involving cognitive variety, which is consistent with the larger role of social intelligence noted in recent psychological research (e.g., Tülübaş, Karakose, & Papadakis, 2023).

Self-awareness (mean = 2.71, SD = 0.80) Participants indicated relatively high average agreement in recognising their emotions, but lower agreement in how emotions interfere with attention. This shows a gap between emotional identification and comprehension of its influence on academic achievement, stress management, and general well-being. For university students, knowing and controlling emotional interference with focus is critical for academic performance and personal resilience. This underscores the need of practical solutions that link emotional control to learning results and everyday life issues.

Self-management (mean = 2.71, SD = 0.80): The high level of agreement in patience and persistence suggests a strong capacity for self-discipline, which is essential for academic rigour and achieving long-term objectives. However, the lowest agreement in completing things without incentive indicates a dependence on external deadlines or organised surroundings rather than inner desire. This discovery is essential for promoting lifelong learning and flexibility outside of organised academic projects. Developing internal drive is critical for autonomous study, problem-solving, and personal pursuits.

Relationship Skills (mean = 2.69, SD = 0.88) While participants reported great agreement in getting along with classmates, indicating good internal cohesiveness within immediate peer groups for group projects and social interactions, they had the lowest average agreement in developing larger university ties. This shows a possible emphasis on narrower social circles, which may limit prospects for diversified networking, multidisciplinary cooperation, and engagement with the larger campus community. Building larger networks at a public institution is critical for academic enrichment, career advancement, and enjoying the full range of campus life.

The steady standard deviations across competence indicate a consistent amount of response variability, implying that these findings are not distorted by extreme outliers but rather reflect general patterns throughout the sample.

Implications for Integrating SEL in Higher Education:

These findings have significant implications for the systematic integration of SEL into higher education programs at public universities. The found gaps in areas like as learning from different points of view, intrinsic motivation, controlling emotional influence on attention, and developing broader connections demonstrate that a comprehensive educational strategy must go beyond just academic or technical training. According to the broader body of research on SEL (e.g., OECD, 2023; Frontiers in Psychology, 2023; Karakose, Tülübaş, & Papadakis, 2022), SEL is more than just an auxiliary skill; it is a critical component that fosters resilience, adaptability, and overall well-being, which is essential for both academic success and future professional demands.

The study's findings highlight the importance for universities to actively create and execute SEL programs. While previous research has primarily focused on primary and preschool settings (Norazlinda Mohamad et al., 2022; Nor Aizal Akmal Rohaizad et al., 2020; Usman Jaffer et al., 2023), the current study clearly demonstrates the relevance and identified areas for SEL development at the tertiary level. The lack of standardised lesson plan forms for higher education, as noted by Gallagher and Savage (2020), emphasises the importance of individualised, research-informed interventions in this particular setting.

Conclusion

This study aimed to analyse the levels of social and emotional learning (SEL) among undergraduate students at a Malaysian military university. Self-awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making showed minor variances. However, the five fundamental SEL skills assessed by the modified CASEL frameworks' showed an overall "Average" level.

These findings give important baseline data on students' assessed SEL competencies within this particular educational context. The 'Average' levels offer a starting point for the future development of these vital abilities through focused interventions and support initiatives. The specific areas where students reported considerably lower agreement, such as avoiding detrimental social pressure and creating larger university networks, can receive special attention in future educational initiatives.

While the study provides valuable insights, limitations such as the use of convenience sampling and self-reported measures should be taken into consideration when evaluating the results' generalisability. Future studies might look at these SEL competencies using longitudinal designs, adding qualitative data, and investigating the impact of specific university experiences on SEL development in this demographic.

In conclusion, this study adds to our understanding of the social and emotional learning profiles of undergraduate students at a Malaysian military university. The discovered levels and nuances highlight the necessity of recognising and developing these skills to help students achieve academic achievement, personal well-being, and future leadership qualities in the military and beyond.

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to Global Academic Excellence (M) Sdn Bhd for the chance to publish this research. Their dedication to supporting academic research and dissemination through services such as conferences, journal publications, workshops, and training has proven invaluable. This opportunity has allowed authors to communicate their findings with a larger audience, helping to expand knowledge in the field. The authors also express their heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped fund this research. Special thanks to the participants for their participation and thoughtful insights, which formed the foundation for this study. Finally, the authors express their heartfelt gratitude to their family and friends for their constant encouragement, understanding, and moral support during the research and writing process. Their patience and faith in the authors' ability were a source of strength during difficult times. All who have contributed, whether direct or indirect, have been much appreciated, and this research is a testament to the collaborative efforts of many.

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