

Turkish EFL Teachers' Knowledge, Perceptions and Practices Regarding Social and Emotional Learning

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This study aims to portray how Turkish EFL instructors perceive social and emotional learning in their own contexts. The study was primarily based on a mixed-methods research design involving a total of 238 Turkish EFL teachers. The study relied mainly on two distinct sources of data, including a Likert-style questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The data analysis procedure was separated into three stages. First, the quantitative phase of the investigation was analyzed using descriptive statistical analyses on SPSS. As for the second stage, the inferential analysis was carried out using MANOVA. Finally, the focus of the third stage of the data analysis process was centered on qualitative data analysis, which was conducted through content analysis. According to descriptive findings, while teachers' views about their self-efficacy and school culture were moderate, their views regarding their commitment to SEL were at a high level. According to MANOVA results, statistically significant differences existed in how teachers perceived SEL among all other independent variables except age. Lastly, two major categories emerged from qualitative data analysis, including teachers' views about the importance of SEL and factors preventing them from integrating SEL instruction into their curriculum.

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Keywords: Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Social and Emotional Competence (SEC), Turkish EFL teachers, primary school, secondary school, high school

INTRODUCTION

The Concept of Social and Emotional Learning

Researchers who are interested in studying SEL have developed several definitions throughout the years. For instance, Najafi (2006) defines SEL as "the process by which parents and educators teach children the non-academic knowledge and skills that they will need to be successful, productive, and caring individuals throughout their lives" (p. 2).

To broadly define SEL, CASEL, an organization founded to assist students and educators in achieving positive outcomes in every area of their lives, focuses on five core competency areas that significantly affect students' lives (Payton et al., 2000). Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are among the five key competencies identified by CASEL (Seery, 2019). First, previous research has defined self-awareness as the capacity to know about one's emotions, feelings, and ideas (Allison, 2018). Additionally, self-awareness is related to the capacity to accurately assess one's individual strengths and weaknesses (Ziernwald, 2021). Secondly, self-management is regarded as the capacity to take control of one's own actions, thoughts, and emotions (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). Thirdly, social awareness is defined as the capacity to understand the emotions and feelings of others (Zins & Elias, 2007). Relationship skills are defined as the capacity to take the initiative in social contacts and establish positive and healthy relationships with others (Louis, 2020). Last but not least, responsible decision-making is defined as having the capacity to decide on one's own behaviors and social interactions in various contexts (Louis, 2020).

Related Studies About Social and Emotional Learning

Numerous studies were conducted by various researchers to gain a thorough understanding of how foreign language instructors personally interpret SEL in diverse circumstances. The results of these earlier studies showed that most teachers were aware of the important role that SEL plays in many aspects of students' lives, including their academic performance, improvement of mental health, progressive and notable changes in students' behaviors, and the acquisition of necessary life skills (Ee & Cheng, 2013; Fischer, 2017; Humphries et al., 2018).

The participants in prior studies, on the other hand, mentioned several significant obstacles that prevented the incorporation of SEL programs, including minimum length of time, large class size, intense curriculum, insufficient professional SEL training, a lack of self-efficacy, inadequate administrative support, lack of conducive school environment, unavailability of appropriate resources and instructional materials, extensive workload, lack of parental support and an intense focus on cognitive and academic outcomes, all of which served as significant barriers to their attempts to make adjustments in their current teaching methods

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to conform to the requirements of SEL standards and programs (Aygün & Taşkın, 2017; Rakap et al, 2018; Forrester, 2020).

General Background of the Study

For many years, educators focused highly on students' academic success, especially in settings where traditional teaching methods predominated in the classroom (Ağırkan, 2021). However, new demands have emerged for students to reach their full potential due to our era's considerable changes and advances (Buchanan et al., 2009). It is no longer sufficient for teachers to provide their students with a top-notch education by simply equipping them with the knowledge they need to succeed in their careers (Goleman, 2003, as cited in Işık, 2019). A growing need has emerged to consider learners' personal growth and development apart from their academic needs to help them find a place in the community (Ağırkan, 2021). As a result, teachers are more aware that their responsibility in the classroom should go beyond just academics.

Statement of the Problem

Social and emotional learning has been the subject of intense research in Turkey over the years (Kabakçı, 2006; Uğur, 2015; Gürkan, 2018). However, much research in Turkish literature has been mostly based on student outcomes, with a strong focus on their SEL competencies. When we aim to specialize on how much Turkish EFL teachers have acquired awareness of SEL in their own context, the literature does not provide enough research papers. (Buchanan et al., 2009; Madueke, 2014; Forrester, 2020; WenLing & Sidhu, 2020).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

It is imperative to gather more information to understand better how much foreign language teachers in Turkey know about SEL and assess the extent of importance and value placed on SEL in language classes. Therefore, the current study aims to portray how Turkish EFL instructors perceive their knowledge, experiences, and practices about SEL in three distinct contexts, including elementary, secondary, and high school. Thus, the study will attempt to find an answer to the following research questions in order to fulfill our objectives and throw some light on the problem of the paucity of research on this topic.

- 1) How do foreign language teachers perceive SEL in the Turkish context?
- 2) Do demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education, training field, employment status, school type, grade level, and years of experience influence teachers' views about SEL?
- 3) How do teachers evaluate the place of SEL in their own context?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research study was primarily based on a mixed-methods research design, with an initial quantitative data collection phase in which 238 English instructors took part in a questionnaire and a subsequent qualitative data collection phase in which 22 English instructors were involved in semi-structured interviews.

Participants and Setting

The study selected 105 schools in Izmir. The research sample population consisted of 238 English instructors. 67 (28.1%) taught in elementary schools, 68 (28.5%) taught in secondary schools, and 103 (43.2%) taught in high schools.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Independent Variables	Sub-Groups	N	%
Gender	Male	30	12.6
	Female	208	87.4
Age	20 to 29	13	5.5
	30 to 39	90	37.8
	40 to 49	100	42
	50 and over	35	14.7
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	205	86.1
	Master Degree	33	13.9
Field of Training	English Language Teaching	142	59.7
	Faculty of Letters	96	40.3
Employment Status	Permanently Employed	198	83.2
	Temporarily Employed	40	16.8
Type of School	State School	188	79
	Private School	50	21
Grade Level	Elementary School	67	28.1
	Secondary School	68	28.5
	High School	103	43.2
Years of Experiences	1 to 10	35	14.7
	11 to 20	104	43.7
	More than 20 years	99	41.6

For the quantitative part of the study, teachers were selected non-randomly. Convenience sampling, one of the types of nonprobability sampling, was used to select the sample group. On the other hand, proportional stratified random sampling was used to determine the sample group for the subsequent qualitative phase of our investigation.

Data Collection Sources

The study relied mainly on two distinct sources of data. Initially, a Likert-style questionnaire created by Brackett et al. (2011) was used to accumulate the quantitative data. The final version of the questionnaire ended up with three reliable subscales: comfort, commitment, and schoolwide support. The overall Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was 0.79. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews served as the centerpiece of the qualitative part of the research.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Findings

Our data analysis procedure was separated into three stages: descriptive statistical analyses, inferential analyses, and qualitative data analysis. Firstly, the descriptive findings were reported, considering three different domains of teachers' beliefs: self-efficacy, eagerness to improve themselves in the field of SEL, and school culture.

Table 2. Mean Scores Obtained for Three Subscales

Aspects of teachers' beliefs regarding social and emotional learning	Mean	Standard Deviation
Comfort	3.72	.59
Commitment	4.15	.71
Schoolwide support for SEL	3.34	.81
TOTAL	3.74	.51

N=238

As observed in Table 2, the mean score for responses about teachers' self-efficacy is 3.72, that of the responses about teacher willingness is 4.15, and that of the responses about school culture is 3.34. As shown in Table 2, the commitment sub-scale yielded a mean score greater than the mean scores obtained for the comfort and school culture sub-scales.

Inferential Findings

Our second research question focused on identifying the critical findings that emerged from the inferential analysis. A one-way MANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of demographic characteristics on teachers' interpretations of their self-efficacy, willingness, and school culture regarding SEL implementation.

Table 3. MANOVA Analysis Results

Independent Variables	Wilks' Lambda	F	df	p
	Age	.931	1.865	9
Employment Status	.918	7.000	3	.000
Grade Level	.784	10.048	6	.000
Years of Experience	.924	3.137	6	.005
	Pillai's Trace	F	df	p
Gender	.042	3.409	3	.018
Education	.039	3.175	3	.025
Type of school	.132	11.911	3	.000
Department	.035	2.819	3	.040

As Table 3 shows, MANOVA findings demonstrate that all the other independent variables, excluding age, resulted in statistically significant differences in teachers' interpretation of SEL. The process was followed by looking more closely at these observed differences in a multivariate test evaluating each dependent variable independently, as reflected in Table 4.

Table 4. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Independent Variables	Comfort		Commitment		Schoolwide support	
	F	p	F	p	F	p
Age	.711	.546	5.146	.002	.232	.874
Employment Status	16.633	.000	5.147	.024	9.906	.002
Grade Level	10.736	.000	2.985	.052	28.313	.000
Years of Experience	.266	.766	8.796	.000	.357	.700
Gender	.088	.767	7.800	.006	.618	.433
Educational Level	.401	.527	7.209	.008	.396	.530
Type of school	7.800	.006	2.100	.149	35.513	.000
Department	5.080	.025	3.365	.068	4.868	.028

In order to avoid coming up with outcomes that might lead to a type 1 error, the Bonferroni correction method was used to calculate the p-value. As seen in Table 4, the analysis of the comfort subscale revealed a statistically significant difference among teachers with different employment statuses and grade levels and those working in different school types. The analysis of the commitment subscale revealed a statistically significant difference among teachers with different ages ($F= 5.146, p= .002$), years of experience ($F= 8.796, p= .000$), genders ($F= 7.800, p= .006$), and educational levels ($F= 7.209, p= .008$). The analysis regarding schoolwide support for SEL revealed a statistically significant difference among teachers with different employment statuses ($F= 9.906, p= .002$), those working with different grade levels ($F= 28.313, p= .000$), and those working in different school types ($F= 35.513, p= .000$).

Table 5. Post-Hoc Test Results for Age, Grade Level and Years of Experience

Independent Variables	Sub-Groups		Comfort	Commitment	Schoolwide support
			Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
Age	20 to 29	30 to 39	.747	.794	.983
		40 to 49	.516	.074	.961
		50 and over	.811	.073	.881
	30 to 39	40 to 49	.881	.014	.995
		50 and over	1.000	.048	.912
	40 to 49	50 and over	.934	.980	.962
Grade Level	Elementary school	Secondary school	.001	.580	.000
		High school	.000	.044	.000
	Secondary school	High school	.986	.383	.942
Years of Experience	1-10 years	11-20 years	.755	.251	.849
		More than 20	.903	.001	.680
	11-20 years	More than 20	.919	.007	.910

In post hoc analysis, a statistically significant difference was noted in the comfort subscale between elementary and secondary school teachers ($p=.001$) and between elementary and high school teachers ($p=.000$). As for the commitment subscale, a statistically significant difference was observed between teachers aged from 30 to 39 and those aged from 40 to 49 ($p= 0.14$), between teachers with years of experience ranging from 1 to 10 and those who had over 20 years professional experience ($p= .001$) and between those with years of experience varying from 11 to 20 and those who were working for more than 20 years ($p= .007$). Finally, a statistically significant difference existed in the subscale related to schoolwide support between teachers aged 30 to 39 and those aged 40 to 49 ($p=.000$) and between elementary and high school teachers ($p= .000$).

Table 6. Mean Scores and Standard Deviations for Each Subscale

Independent Variables	Sub-variables	Comfort		Commitment		Schoolwide support	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Age	20 to 29	3.92	.51	4.51	.64	3.46	.90
	30 to 39	3.74	.59	4.32	.69	3.37	.86
	40 to 49	3.68	.61	4.01	.66	3.34	.76
	50 and over	3.75	.60	3.96	.82	3.26	.83
Employment	Permanently	3.65	.57	4.10	.70	3.27	.78
	Temporarily	4.06	.58	4.38	.76	3.71	.86
Grade Level	Elementary	4.00	.56	4.30	.62	3.92	.70
	Secondary	3.62	.60	4.18	.72	3.14	.75
	High school	3.61	.56	4.03	.75	3.10	.74
Experience	1-10 years	3.78	.56	4.46	.60	3.44	.91
	11-20 years	3.70	.58	4.24	.69	3.35	.79
	Above 20	3.73	.62	3.94	.73	3.30	.80
Gender	Male	3.75	.72	3.81	.82	3.45	.80
	Female	3.72	.58	4.20	.69	3.33	.81
Education	Bachelor's	3.73	.59	4.10	.72	3.33	.81
	Master's	3.66	.62	4.46	.57	3.43	.83
School Type	State	3.67	.55	4.12	.71	3.19	.73
	Private	3.93	.69	4.28	.71	3.92	.85
Department	ELT	3.65	.52	4.08	.71	3.25	.77
	Literature	3.83	.67	4.25	.72	3.49	.86

As can be seen in Table 6, differences in employment status, grade level, and school type created a statistically significant effect on teachers' comfort level in favor of those in temporary positions ($M= 4.06, SD=.58$), elementary school teachers ($M= 4.00, SD=.56$) and those working in private schools ($M= 3.93, SD=.69$) respectively. Also, in our current study, gender, age, years of experience, and educational level resulted in a statistically significant difference in teachers' commitment level in favor of female teachers ($M= 4.20, SD=.69$), in favor of those aged from 30 to 39 years ($M= 4.32, S.D=.69$) compared to those aged ranging between 40 and 49 ($M= 4.01, S.D=.66$), in favor of those with years of experience ranging between 1 and 10 years ($M= 4.46, SD=.60$) compared to those who taught for more than 20 years ($M= 3.94, SD=.73$), in favor of those with years of experience ranging from 11 to 20 years ($M=4.24, p=.69$) compared to those who had experience of teaching for over 20 years ($M= 3.94, SD=.73$) and in favor of master's degree holders ($M= 4.46, SD=.57$) respectively. Finally, differences in school type, employment status, and grade level created a statistically significant effect on teachers' perceptions regarding schoolwide support for SEL in favor of those working in private schools ($M= 3.92, SD=.85$), those in temporary positions ($M= 3.71, SD=.86$) and elementary school teachers ($M= 3.92, SD=.70$) respectively.

Qualitative Findings

Our third research question served as the basis for reporting the qualitative findings. The crucial qualitative findings were gathered under two distinct primary categories. The responses were partitioned into subcategories in which several codes were developed through content analysis.

Teachers' perceptions of the significance of SEL in students' lives is the first major category. This category was comprised of two distinct subcategories. The first subcategory is identified as the significance of SEL on students' academic lives. First and foremost, 36.3% of the participants believed that SEL influences students' attitudes toward learning a language in a positive way. Participant 15 states, "If we take action to serve our students' SEL demands by administering specific strategies in our language classrooms, we can increase our students' eagerness to learn a language." Secondly, 45.4% of the participants agreed that SEL is essential for promoting students' academic achievement. Participant 21 notes that "we can enable students to make significant academic progress by encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning through assignments that focus on developing their SEL skills."

The significance of SEL in students' personal development serves as the subject of the second subcategory. Initially, 40.9% of the instructors believed that integrating SEL into language classrooms would assist students in developing self-awareness. Participant 9 points out, "If we give our students the means to practice their SEL skills through some helpful classroom activities, they can realize their weaknesses and take action to improve them." Secondly, 31.8% of participants believed including SEL education in language classrooms would help students build their coping skills. Participant 15 states that:

Some of our elementary school graduates experience anxiety and tension when they start secondary school because they must adjust to a different learning environment. On the other hand, students who are socially and emotionally competent are more likely to learn how to restrain their frightened emotions.

Thirdly, 77.2% of the participants believed that including SEL instruction in language classes will improve students' interpersonal skills. Participant 13 notes that:

By enabling our students to participate in classroom activities that require them to practice their SEL skills, we can offer a conducive learning environment where they can have the opportunity to form strong bonds with their peers through meaningful interactions and real-life communication.

Finally, 27.2% of the participants thought integrating SEL education into language classrooms fosters empathy in learners. Participant 11 states, "Students who have developed strong SEL skills can learn to use their natural ability to empathize with others."

The second major category is the barriers. Four separate subcategories emerged within this category. To begin with, there are some educational factors that prevented the use of SEL strategies in language classrooms. First and foremost, 95.4% of the participants voiced their irritation and discontent with the intense curriculum. Participant 12 points out that: "Due to intense curriculum, we are sometimes forced to ignore our students' SEL needs." The second problem that participants are worried about is language education. Participant 9 states, "To attain mastery in the language, our students memorize various grammatical rules without being involved in real-world conversation." Thirdly, all the participants (100%) agreed that exams

serve as one of the obstacles standing in the way of their efforts to integrate SEL practices into their curriculum. In line with this common view, Participant 8 notes that:

Sadly, our educational system has encouraged intense competitiveness among students to prove themselves in various exams. The examination system, however, fails to assist our students in discovering their creativity and talents and building upon their skills, thus lowering their self-confidence and adversely influencing their SEL development.

In addition to exams, more than half of the instructors (77.2%) were unhappy with the amount of time allocated to English classes. Participant 3 points out: "We only have two hours of English class each week, and I cannot find enough time to know my students personally." Another significant issue was related to the intense academic workload. Participant 15 states that:

Owing to intense schoolwork, our students always express their discontent with the limited time they have to make time for themselves. As a result, they cannot participate in various social activities such as interacting with peers, spending time with family, or visiting friends, all of which are beneficial for enhancing their SEL skills.

The second subcategory is school-related factors. Firstly, 31.8% of the participants stated that they face some limitations in acting freely within the school environment. Participant 9 notes that:

I have always believed that creating an interactive classroom environment is essential for our students' personal growth and social development. However, the most aggravating issue is that the noise in our language classes frequently becomes the subject of complaint by others.

Secondly, 59% of the participants voiced their dissatisfaction with the lack of schoolwide support for SEL instruction. Participant 2 points out that: "our school does not take any steps to assist us in equipping ourselves with the essential practical skills to embed SEL instruction into our language classrooms." Thirdly, 18.1% of the participants complained about the inadequate school facilities. Participant 9 states: "Unfortunately, we cannot supply our students with the resources required to practice their SEL skills, and as a result, we cope with low student engagement." Additionally, 31.8% of the participants believed that crowded classrooms were one of the obstacles to the successful implementation of SEL. Participant 17 notes that: "Teaching a class full of more than 30 students makes it difficult to set up an appropriate learning environment where I can give all learners the attention they deserve."

The third subcategory is parental-related factors. The first issue was related to parental expectations. Participant 12 points out, "Parents place excessive value on their children's academic achievement. What they merely expect their children to do is to perform well in their tests." Secondly, more than half of the instructors (59%) cited insufficient parental support as a problem preventing students from improving their SEL skills. Participant 21 states, "I find it really difficult to comprehend how some parents do not allocate time for school meetings because, to me, they should give priority to their children over any other thing."

The fourth subcategory is teacher-related factors. 90.9% of the participants reported having displeasure with inadequate training in the area of social and emotional learning. Participant 2 exemplifies this problem by sharing her own personal experiences:

I was not given a course on SEL. It is possible that SEL-related issues might have been covered in other courses, but I do not recall attending a separate course where we learned how to use SEL techniques practically.

Secondly, 13.6% of the participants believed some teachers incorrectly conceive their profession. Participant 10 notes that:

Throughout the years, I have observed that some teachers view their jobs as nothing more than a job. They simply work and do their jobs to follow the rules and curricula, earn their living, and satisfy their own needs and expenses. That is all that matters to them.

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Discussion of Descriptive Findings

To begin with, the descriptive findings revealed that teachers perceive their self-efficacy at a moderate level, as verified by the overall mean score of 3,72. Therefore, not all English instructors in focus appear to have attained a sufficient level of competency to master challenges and achieve goals in the field of SEL. This result is also similar to the study of Ziernwald (2021).

Secondly, the overall mean score for the commitment sub-scale was determined to be 4,15, suggesting that a strong majority of our English instructors desire to take action to transform their weaknesses into strengths in the field of SEL.

Thirdly, the overall mean score of teachers' responses about schoolwide support was found to be 3,34, which shows that teachers' views about school culture are moderate. Thus, it can be inferred that not all English instructors in focus have positive feelings about their school culture.

All in all, it was found that teachers view their commitment as more positive than the other two domains of teachers' beliefs about SEL. Ziernwald (2021) also observed higher mean scores for the commitment subscale than those for the comfort and schoolwide subscales. On the other hand, participants in our study perceived administrative support negatively compared to other aspects of teachers' beliefs about SEL.

Discussion of Inferential Findings

To begin with, teachers between the ages of 30 and 39 have a higher desire to improve themselves in the field of SEL than those between the ages of 40 and 49. This result can be attributed to the usual tendency of younger teachers to strive for perfection during their initial years of teaching. On the other hand, older instructors might have already accumulated enough experience and learned specific tactics to cope with the challenging pupils over the years of their teaching careers. Therefore, they might no longer need to invest their time and effort in additional professional SEL training.

Furthermore, elementary school teachers have a statistically significantly greater level of self-efficacy than secondary and high school teachers. This might be because elementary school years are regarded as one of the most crucial times for kids' SEL development. Primary school teachers are assigned more responsibilities to take care of their students' SEL needs than secondary and high school teachers. Our result is also consistent with that of Collie et al. (2015), who found that secondary school teachers had much less confidence in their competency to apply SEL strategies than primary school teachers.

Additionally, primary school teachers perceived their school culture more positively than secondary and high school teachers. This might be because pupils in primary school require more care and attention from teachers than other stages of their life. As a result, it is more likely for elementary school managers to support teaching social and emotional skills by creating the optimal school climate for children. On the other hand, secondary and high school teachers are exposed to more pressure to satisfy students' academic fundamentals rather than serving their SEL needs. This finding is also similar to the study of Collie et al. (2015).

Furthermore, teachers with years of experience from 1 to 10 had a significantly higher level of willingness than those teaching for over 20 years. The desire to increase proficiency in the field of SEL was also much higher for teachers with years of experience from 11 to 20 than those working as English instructors for more than 20 years. This discrepancy in their level of commitment may be because less experienced teachers are more cognizant of their weaknesses. Thus, they might be more eager to seize every opportunity to improve their professional practices in the field of SEL. On the other hand, more experienced educators might believe they have already attained mastery in delivering SEL instruction.

Furthermore, gender differences resulted in a statistically significant impact on instructors' desire for female teachers. This might be because women are inherently more prone to understanding child psychology. Additionally, they experience emotional states more frequently than men, and these feelings are likely to characterize their teaching styles. This finding is also similar to the studies of Collie et al. (2015) and Loinaz (2019).

Additionally, it was discovered that private school teachers had considerably more self-efficacy than state school teachers. This might be because private school teachers are expected to work harder to be well-equipped to deliver a good education. However, in contrast to our findings, Wenling and Sidhu (2020) observed a significant difference in favor of public school teachers regarding their competency to utilize SEL strategies.

Lastly, the type of school created a statistically significant effect on how teachers perceive their school culture in favor of private school teachers. This might be because private schools have better supplies, tools, and technological resources. Consequently, such a favorable learning environment is likely to lead instructors in private schools to have a more positive attitude toward their school climate. Prior research also demonstrated that private school teachers perceived schoolwide support for SEL as significantly more positive than state school teachers (Wenling & Sidhu, 2020).

Discussion of Qualitative Findings

Despite their insufficient professional experience and training, a vast majority of our participants could give a comprehensive account of SEL and reflect their own interpretation of its importance.

First, almost half of our teachers (45.4%) stated that including SEL education in language classrooms helps students achieve their academic goals. Numerous previous studies can also be found in the literature, highlighting the tremendous significance of SEL implementation on academic outcomes (Youngblood, 2015; Calkins, 2019; Forrester, 2020).

Secondly, the majority of our teachers noted that including SEL education may support students' personal development. Self-awareness, coping skills, interpersonal skills, and empathy were among the most important life skills that the participants in our study believed students would develop through effective SEL education. In a similar vein, participants in the study carried out by Ziernwald (2021) elaborated their own understanding of SEL with a high focus on the three skills, including self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness.

On the other hand, in our current study, neither explicit nor implicit references regarding responsible decision-making skills were observed. This might be because our teachers lacked a wide knowledge of SEL, and owing to their inadequate training, they could not discuss all the aspects of SEL during interviews. Another possibility might be that the inability of their students to understand and recognize their own emotions, get over their fears and anxieties, cooperate and work with others, build healthy and positive relationships, and empathize with others may remain among the most frequent issues our teachers face in their classrooms. Evidently, this result is consistent with what Aygün and Taşkın (2017) found in their investigation. Similarly, their participants attempted to define SEL with a high emphasis on four important facets: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills. However, no notable mention of responsible decision-making was noted in their accounts. It is also possible to reach additional research studies in which teachers' definitions of SEL are centered around similar dimensions (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

First and most critically, in our current study, female teachers vastly outnumber male teachers, who make up only 12.6% of our research population. In other words, much of the information we gathered about our research topic was based on the views of female teachers, which makes it difficult to generalize our results to male teachers since they represent a minority throughout all the stages of our research study. Thus, there is a need for further research to accomplish equal involvement of genders.

Conclusion

Our findings conclude that, just like in numerous prior research, our teachers highly regard students' social and emotional needs and demands. However, our results show that our teachers face several challenges that impede their attempts to take the initiative to incorporate social and emotional learning into their curriculum. Taking into account all of these current problems that discourage teachers from improving their learning environment to create opportunities to contribute to their students' social and emotional development, a heavy burden of accountability falls upon school policymakers to innovate educational policy and make the necessary efforts to raise educational standards and ensure the development of an environment that fosters psychological, social, and emotional well-being in students. At this point, it is important to emphasize that adopting a radical educational revolution can fulfill all these goals.

What is more, even though the findings reveal that SEL is regarded as highly important by many of our teachers when considering their medium level of self-efficacy. Our research study strongly highlights the urgent need for effective professional teacher training for educators to strengthen their own SEL skills and acquire the qualifications required to adjust their teaching practices in compliance with students' individual needs, both socially and emotionally. This requirement can primarily be met by providing pre-service teachers with assistance and direction during their teacher training phases through a variety of professional development choices in order to boost their self-efficacy, comfort, and confidence in order that once they begin their careers as in-service instructors, they can feel qualified enough to create a positive learning environment where students' social and emotional needs and demands are given priority over any other thing.

Declarations

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflicts of interest were disclosed by the author(s) with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Ethics Approval

The formal ethics approval was granted by the Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Committee of Cag University. We conducted the study in accordance with the Cag University Institute of Social Sciences Thesis Writing Directive.

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Research and Publication Ethics Statement

The study was approved by the research team's university ethics committee of Cag University (Approval Number/ID: 81570533-044-210008772). Hereby, we, as the authors, consciously assure that for the manuscript, the following is fulfilled:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors provide equal contributions to this work.

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