" Integrating Social Emotional Learning in School Curriculum: Importance, Challenges and Barriers Towards Implementation - A Qualitative Study in Selected Schools in Bangladesh"

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Abstract

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is becoming increasingly recognized as an important component of holistic education, promoting the development of essential competencies that contribute to students' overall well-being and academic success. This qualitative study used an ethnographic approach to investigate teachers' and educational leaders' perceptions and experiences with the importance, barriers, and strategies for incorporating SEL into the school curriculum in Chattogram, Bangladesh.The study was conducted at two English-speaking international schools with 24 participants, including teachers and educators. Personalised questionnaires and focus group discussions were used to collect data, which was then analyzed using thematic analysis. The study looked at teachers' perceptions of the role of SEL in students' overall development, the challenges of incorporating SEL into the curriculum, and strategies for overcoming implementation barriers.

The findings revealed several key themes, including students' perceptions of SEL's benefits in fostering collaboration, confidence, self-awareness, empathy, and problem-solving skills. The study also identified challenges, such as limited resource allocation, cultural barriers, underdeveloped SEL curricula, and gaps in teachers' ability to deliver SEL content effectively. Parental involvement, cultural adaptation, activity-based learning, comprehensive teacher training, and modeling desired behaviors were among the strategies employed to address these challenges.The study adds to our understanding of the complexities involved in implementing culturally responsive SEL programs in educational settings, particularly in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh. This study's findings can help to shape and implement effective SEL initiatives that promote students' holistic development while taking into account the unique cultural, social, and economic contexts.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study:

There is a severe lack of mental health services in Bangladesh. There are only 1.17 mental health workers per 1,00,000 people in Bangladesh. "There are 350 psychiatrists and fewer than 100 psychotherapists for the 16 crore people of our country. These doctors live in Dhaka, Rajshahi, and various divisional cities"(Jasim & Tajmim, 2022). A 2018-2019 door-to-door prevalence survey of a representative sample of Bangladesh citizens found 18.7% of adults and 12.6% of children to meet the criteria for a mental disorder (WHO, 2020). The stigma around Mental Health stops people from seeking help or even acknowledging their issues. Bangladesh has a very negative and stigmatized view of mental health issues. The Bangladesh public schools do not have guidance counselors, school psychologists/social workers, or nurses. The suicide rate among students is quite high and increasing alarmingly day by day, last year 101 students died in 2021 ("101 college, university", 2022). yet the topic of mental health is still not an important discussion here. The public education system in Bangladesh has not addressed the challenges of mental health issues among adolescents/young adults. Most students don't have any knowledge or awareness about mental health issues let alone the ability to recognize their struggles and issues with their mental well-being. Although Social Emotional Learning (SEL) originated in the early twentieth century, formal integration into Bangladeshi school curricula is a relatively recent development. In Bangladesh, very few schools implemented SEL in their curriculum. SEL is not incorporated in most schools and the very few schools that have implemented some version of SEL are private schools. The concept of SEL is relatively new to Bangladesh's educational system. Educators and policymakers in Bangladesh acknowledge that meeting students' social and emotional needs is equally important as meeting their academic needs. In recent years,

Bangladesh's government has worked to incorporate SEL into the national curriculum. The Education Policy 2010 emphasizes the development of students' social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making (Ministry of Education, 2010). However, due to issues such as a lack of funding, insufficient teacher preparation, and a traditional emphasis on academic achievement, implementing SEL programs in schools across the country remains difficult. Despite these obstacles, a number of private and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have worked to promote SEL in Bangladeshi schools. The American Institute for Research is implementing SEL components in selected Bangladeshi schools managed by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC-IED) is promoting social-emotional skills through PlayLab, but both of these initiative is on a very small scale (Himel, 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Young people in Bangladesh have a growing concern and struggle regarding mental health. The increasing rate of suicide among students year by year indicates that we have an underlying problem. There hasn't been a lot of research done on the mental health issues of young people in Bangladesh as well. There is an urgent need to address student emotional well-being and teach young people to build healthy relationships. From personal experience working as a teacher as well as my preliminary research, it was clear that a lot of schools in Bangladesh are not equipped with the resources to foster their student's emotional well-being. Many students lack even the basic social and emotional skills which makes their academic as well as personal life difficult.

School students spend the majority of their time at school but most schools don't have any programs or practices in place to foster their student's emotional development.

1.3 Objectives of the Study:

● To assess the impact of integrating Social Emotional Learning into the school curriculum.

● To highlight the importance of mental health awareness and counseling in educational institutes.

● To analyze the current state of mental health resources available among students and suggest an improvement

1.4 Research Questions:

1. How can we integrate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into the school curriculum to benefit students and ensure holistic development with better emotional and academic advancement?

2. What are the barriers and challenges faced in integrating SEL into the school curriculum and successfully implementing it in the targeted schools?

1.5 Significance of the Study:

This study will shed some much-needed light on this important but often neglected issue which is the emotional development of school (K-5) students. Acquiring proficiency in socio-emotional competencies is linked to improved academic achievement and increased well-being, whereas lacking these abilities can result in a range of challenges related to social, personal, and academic domains (Weissberg et al., 2015). Hence, understanding the problems school students face

regarding mental health and the issues teachers face will give us insight into what kind of curricula are needed. Learning about the challenges and barriers to integrating Social Emotional Learning into the school curriculum can help us build a curriculum to promote students' social and emotional development. By assessing the available resources or lack of resources that are there in schools this research will help start the conversation on how to mitigate the problem and discuss possible solutions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Social-emotional learning (SEL) as a teaching strategy has received a lot of attention in recent years because of its potential to improve students' emotional intelligence, social skills, and overall well-being. SEL initiatives aim to help students improve their emotional understanding and control, as well as their ability to form positive interpersonal connections and make ethical decisions. SEL has gained significant attention in the field of child development as it plays an important role in shaping children's emotional, social, and cognitive growth. It is a holistic approach to education that focuses on developing the emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills of students. Over the years, there has been a growing body of research examining the impact of SEL programs on students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes. The purpose of this literature review on social-emotional learning is to investigate and synthesize the body of knowledge, with a focus on the benefits, approaches to implementation, and success of social-emotional learning in various educational contexts. It will provide an overview of the current research on how SEL programs and strategies impact various aspects of child development, including emotional regulation, social competence, and cognitive functioning as well as an overview of the current research on SEL and its effects on students' well-being, academic performance, and overall success.

2.1 Definition of Social-Emotional Learning:

Social-emotional learning, as defined by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), refers to the process through which individuals acquire and apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2020). SEL programs often include a curriculum that

addresses these key competencies, which are essential for personal growth and success in various life domains.

SEL is an educational approach that emphasizes developing children's social and emotional skills. These skills encompass self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, interpersonal relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. SEL programs are designed to foster emotional intelligence and support children in their journey toward becoming well-adjusted, emotionally resilient, and socially competent individuals.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of SEL:

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is an educational approach that has gained significant attention in recent years due to its potential to enhance students' emotional intelligence, social skills, and overall well-being. SEL programs aim to foster students' abilities to understand and manage emotions, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

SEL programs hold great potential for developing affective, cognitive, and behavioral abilities in all students. Recent meta-analyses show that universal SEL interventions are effective in enhancing a wide range of outcomes, including social skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011). The advantages of SEL curricula are well documented. A framework for classifying SEL competencies and systematically locating well-crafted, research-based SEL initiatives was released by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2020). Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making are the five interrelated sets of competencies that the framework groups the skills that SEL programs are designed to develop. The guide lacks information on the specific competencies addressed in SEL curricula and the "core components"

that comprise these broad competencies. Choosing an SEL program is challenging due to the numerous programs targeting each CASEL competency and the similar curricular content across programs. Barriers to SEL program adoption and implementation include individual-level, school-level, and macro-level factors. Low-cost resources for teaching SEL skills are necessary for flexible and short-term use. The distillation method, which aggregates findings from multiple studies, presents the frequency of treatment components in evidence-based mental health interventions. Core components can be distilled from practices other than traditional psychotherapy, and real-world implementation of evidence-based interventions often includes significant variation in fidelity, dosage, and quality, often with adaptations.

2.3 Components of SEL:

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a multifaceted educational approach designed to help individuals develop essential skills and competencies for emotional intelligence and interpersonal relationships. SEL programs typically consist of several key components, each of which plays a crucial role in fostering personal and social growth. This literature review provides an overview of these fundamental components of SEL.

Self-Awareness: Self-awareness is a foundational component of SEL, encompassing the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and values. It involves introspection and self-reflection, enabling individuals to gain insight into their feelings and behaviors. Developing self-awareness is essential for emotional regulation and effective decision-making (CASEL, 2020).

Self-Management: Self-management refers to the capacity to manage and control one's emotions and behaviors, especially in challenging situations. This component of SEL involves strategies

for impulse control, stress management, and adapting to changing circumstances. Effective self-regulation allows individuals to respond thoughtfully rather than react impulsively (Elias et al., 1997).

Social Awareness: Social awareness pertains to the ability to understand and empathize with the emotions and perspectives of others. This component involves recognizing and appreciating diversity, showing empathy, and demonstrating a genuine interest in the well-being of those around you. Social awareness is foundational for building positive relationships (Zins et al., 2004).

Relationship Skills: Relationship skills within SEL involve establishing and maintaining healthy and positive connections with others. These skills encompass effective communication, active listening, cooperation, conflict resolution, and teamwork. Developing strong relationship skills is vital for building supportive and fulfilling relationships in both personal and professional life (Jones et al., 2015).

Responsible Decision-Making: Responsible decision-making is the capacity to make sound choices that consider ethical, social, and emotional factors. It involves problem-solving, critical thinking, and evaluating the potential consequences of one's actions. Responsible decision-making contributes to ethical behavior and good judgment (Durlak et al., 2011).

2.4 Benefits of SEL:

Emotional Well-being and Mental Health: SEL programs have been shown to have a profound impact on students' emotional well-being and mental health. According to Greenberg et al. (2003), participation in SEL interventions is associated with reduced levels of anxiety,

depression, and other emotional problems. These programs teach students to recognize and manage their emotions, which, in turn, contributes to greater emotional resilience (Durlak et al., 2011). This enhanced emotional intelligence equips students with the skills to cope with stress, develop a positive self-image, and maintain better mental health.

Improved Social Skills and Relationships: One of the primary goals of SEL is to foster positive social interactions and relationships. Research has consistently demonstrated that SEL programs enhance students' interpersonal skills, leading to improved relationships with peers and adults. Jones and Bouffard (2012) found that students exposed to SEL interventions are more likely to display prosocial behaviors, such as cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution. Moreover, SEL helps reduce aggressive and problematic behavior (Taylor et al., 2017). This is essential not only for students' social development but also for creating a positive and inclusive school environment.

Life Skills and Future Success: Beyond academic and emotional benefits, SEL equips students with life skills that are crucial for their future success. Collaborative skills, decision-making abilities, and effective communication are among the competencies that SEL programs cultivate. According to Zins et al. (2004), these skills are vital for success in the workforce and for leading fulfilling lives. The development of these skills at an early age has been linked to better long-term outcomes in areas such as career success and overall life satisfaction (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Emotional Regulation and Well-Being: One of the core components of SEL is emotional regulation, which is crucial for child development. Research has shown that children who receive SEL instruction demonstrate improved emotional regulation skills. In a study by Riggs et al.

(2006), it was found that SEL programs help children identify, express, and healthily manage their emotions. This ability to regulate emotions contributes to lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression in children (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). By enhancing emotional well-being, SEL promotes a more positive and nurturing environment for child development.

Social Competence and Peer Relationships: SEL programs place a strong emphasis on teaching children essential social skills, such as empathy, communication, and conflict resolution. Children who participate in SEL interventions tend to exhibit better social competence and more positive peer relationships (Durlak et al., 2011). These skills are fundamental for forming and maintaining friendships, resolving conflicts, and establishing a sense of belonging within peer groups (Ladd, 1999). Improved social competence also has a positive impact on children's self-esteem and overall self-concept (Elias et al., 1997), further enhancing their social development.

2.5 SEL Implementation Strategies:

To effectively integrate SEL into educational settings, various implementation strategies and approaches have been developed. This literature review provides an overview of the key strategies used to implement SEL programs successfully.

Universal Implementation: Universal implementation involves incorporating SEL into the standard curriculum and school environment for all students, regardless of their background or needs. It typically includes structured lessons, classroom activities, and school-wide initiatives aimed at promoting social and emotional competence universally. The universal implementation ensures that every student has access to SEL instruction (Durlak et al., 2011). It's an essential first step in making SEL a fundamental aspect of the educational experience.

Targeted Interventions: Targeted interventions are designed to provide extra support to specific students who may require additional SEL assistance. These interventions often include small group sessions or one-on-one counseling to address individual needs, such as emotional regulation or social skills development. Targeted interventions are critical for addressing the unique needs of students facing challenges in their social-emotional development (Oberle et al., 2016).

Professional Development: To effectively implement SEL programs, educators must receive professional development and training. This strategy equips teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate SEL into their classrooms successfully. Professional development may cover curriculum selection, teaching methods, and strategies for creating a safe and supportive classroom environment. It ensures that teachers are well-prepared to foster SEL competencies in their students (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Parent and Community Involvement: Involving parents and the broader community in SEL implementation can enhance its effectiveness. Schools often conduct workshops, informational sessions, and outreach programs to engage parents and caregivers in supporting SEL at home. This collaborative approach fosters consistency in reinforcing SEL skills and values both in school and at home (Domitrovich et al., 2017).

Data-Driven Decision Making: Implementing SEL effectively requires a data-driven approach. Schools collect and analyze data to assess the impact of SEL programs and make informed decisions about adjustments and improvements. This strategy helps tailor SEL interventions to the specific needs of students and the school community, ensuring that they are having the desired impact (Jones et al., 2017).

Integration with Academic Curriculum: An effective implementation strategy is integrating SEL with the academic curriculum. By incorporating SEL concepts and skills into subjects like English, mathematics, and science, students learn to apply their social and emotional skills in real-world contexts. This approach reinforces the importance of SEL skills across all areas of learning (Elias et al., 1997).

2.6 SEL and Academic Outcomes:

Impact on Academic Achievement: Research has consistently shown a strong connection between SEL and academic success. Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 studies and found that students who participated in SEL programs demonstrated an 11 percentile point gain in academic achievement. SEL interventions equip students with essential skills such as self-regulation, goal setting, and problem-solving, which are instrumental in their ability to focus on and excel in their studies (Payton et al., 2008). Furthermore, a study by Elias et al. (1997) reported that students who receive SEL instruction exhibit improved attention and concentration in the classroom, leading to higher levels of engagement and enhanced learning outcomes.

Academic Achievement and Cognitive Development: The connection between SEL and cognitive development is increasingly recognized. Research has shown that children who receive SEL instruction tend to perform better academically (Taylor et al., 2017). SEL programs equip children with skills like self-regulation, impulse control, and problem-solving, which are essential for effective learning. In a meta-analysis conducted by Durlak et al. (2011), students who participated in SEL programs showed an 11 percentile-point increase in academic achievement. This suggests that SEL has a significant impact on cognitive development by

facilitating improved concentration, focus, and the ability to set and achieve goals. It has been shown that social-emotional learning (SEL) practices and programs can improve students' academic performance as well as their social-emotional and behavioral functioning.(Durlak et al., 2011)

Long-Term Outcomes: SEL programs not only benefit children during their formative years but also have long-term implications for their development. Children who receive SEL instruction are better equipped to navigate the challenges of adolescence and adulthood (Weissberg et al., 2015). They tend to experience fewer behavioral problems, less substance abuse, and lower rates of involvement in criminal activities (Greenberg et al., 2003). Furthermore, SEL has been associated with better job performance, increased job satisfaction, and higher overall life satisfaction in adulthood (Taylor et al., 2017).

2.7 SEL and Equity:

Incorporating an equity lens into SEL is crucial. CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) emphasizes that SEL programs should be designed and implemented with a keen awareness of diversity, equity, and inclusivity. Such an approach recognizes the unique experiences and needs of all students, including those from marginalized and underrepresented backgrounds (CASEL, 2020). SEL programs can help reduce the disparities that exist in education. Research has shown that SEL interventions can narrow the achievement gap between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities (Durlak et al., 2011). By fostering emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and social skills, SEL can equip students with the tools they need to thrive academically and emotionally, regardless of their circumstances.

Culturally Responsive SEL: A critical component of equity in SEL is cultural responsiveness. Culturally responsive SEL practices acknowledge and respect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students. This approach recognizes that one-size-fits-all SEL programs may not meet the unique needs of students from various cultural backgrounds. Culturally responsive SEL ensures that programs are inclusive and culturally relevant, making them more effective in reaching all students (Gay, 2002).

Inclusive and Supportive School Climates: SEL initiatives can contribute to the development of inclusive and supportive school climates. When students feel emotionally safe and connected to their schools, it enhances their learning experience. Schools that prioritize SEL are more likely to create environments where every student feels valued and respected, fostering a sense of belonging and equity (Payton et al., 2008).

Empowering Student Voice: Empowering students to actively engage in their own SEL experiences is another important aspect of equity. Providing opportunities for students to have a say in their social and emotional learning helps ensure that their specific needs and experiences are addressed. Student voice and agency in SEL can lead to more equitable outcomes (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Teacher and Staff Training: Equity in SEL also involves preparing educators and staff to implement SEL effectively, recognizing that not all educators may be equally equipped to address the diverse social-emotional needs of students. Professional development should include training on culturally responsive SEL practices and equipping teachers with strategies to create equitable and inclusive classroom environments (Domitrovich et al., 2017).

Policy and System-Level Support: To promote equity in SEL, educational policies and systems need to prioritize SEL initiatives. This includes allocating resources, developing guidelines, and setting standards that ensure that all schools, regardless of their location or demographics, can effectively implement SEL programs (Taylor et al., 2017).

In conclusion, Social-Emotional Learning, when approached with equity in mind, has the potential to reduce educational disparities and provide all students with the social and emotional skills needed for success. An equity-focused approach to SEL emphasizes culturally responsive practices, support for students from marginalized backgrounds, and inclusive school climates. By adopting and implementing these principles, educators, and policymakers can work together to create a more equitable and inclusive educational system.

2.8 Challenges and Future Directions:

SEL has gained widespread recognition for its potential to enhance students' emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and overall well-being. However, like any educational initiative, SEL faces various challenges and opportunities for future growth and development.

Challenges -

Implementation Consistency: Implementing SEL programs consistently and effectively across diverse educational settings remains a challenge. Variability in resources, teacher training, and support can lead to uneven access to high-quality SEL instruction, leaving some students at a disadvantage (Durlak et al., 2011).

Assessment and Measurement: Measuring the impact of SEL is complex. Assessing the development of skills like self-awareness and empathy is not as straightforward as evaluating

academic achievement. Developing reliable and valid measures for SEL outcomes is an ongoing challenge (Zins et al., 2004).

Cultural Responsiveness: Ensuring that SEL programs are culturally responsive and relevant to the diverse backgrounds of students is a priority. Overcoming cultural biases and adapting SEL materials to resonate with students from various cultural contexts can be challenging (Elias et al., 1997).

Teacher Competency: Not all educators are equally equipped to teach SEL effectively. Professional development is essential to ensure that teachers have the necessary training to implement SEL programs and address the diverse social-emotional needs of their students (Oberle et al., 2016).

Policy Support: Achieving systemic change in education requires policy and system-level support for SEL. Ensuring that SEL is prioritized in educational policies, resource allocation, and professional development opportunities is a significant challenge (Taylor et al., 2017).

Future Directions -

Integration with Academic Curriculum: A promising future direction for SEL is further integration with the academic curriculum. Embedding SEL concepts and skills within subjects like mathematics, science, and language arts not only reinforces their importance but also connects them with real-world applications (Elias et al., 1997).

Technology and Digital Platforms*:* Leveraging technology and digital platforms can expand the reach and impact of SEL programs. Online resources, apps, and gamified content can make SEL

more engaging and accessible to students, while data analytics can provide insights into individual progress (Durlak et al., 2011).

Research and Data-Driven Decision-Making: Having ongoing research in the field of SEL is critical for its future development. A focus on data-driven decision-making allows for continuous improvement and customization of SEL programs to meet the specific needs of students (Weissberg et al., 2015).

Parent and Community Engagement: Collaborative efforts with parents and the broader community are essential for reinforcing SEL principles beyond the classroom. Schools can provide resources, workshops, and initiatives that support SEL practices in students' daily lives (Jones et al., 2017).

Teacher Training and Support: Focusing on teacher preparation and support in SEL is a key future direction. Offering ongoing professional development, resources, and mentorship can ensure that educators are well-equipped to foster students' social and emotional growth (Payton et al., 2008).

Global Perspective: SEL is not limited to specific regions or countries. The global expansion of SEL and the exchange of best practices internationally can further enrich the field, promoting a shared understanding of the importance of social and emotional skills in education (Elias et al., 1997).

2.9 Limitation and criticism of SEL:

The cultural relevance and appropriateness of SEL programs have drawn criticism, especially from those with diverse student populations, as noted by Hoffman (2009), "many existing SEL programs have been developed with a predominantly white, middle-class perspective, potentially limiting their effectiveness for students from other cultural backgrounds." Because social-emotional skills are subjective and there are no standardized assessment methods, it is difficult to evaluate how SEL programs affect students' social-emotional learning, as noted by Renshaw and Olinger Steeves (2016). Concerns have been raised by certain scholars, like Zins and Elias (2007), over the possibility that SEL programs would pull instructional time and resources away from academic subjects, especially in light of high-stakes testing and accountability requirements. Schonert-Reichl (2017) points out that "effective implementation of SEL programs requires ongoing professional development and support for teachers, which can be resource-intensive." This means that the readiness and training of teachers is a critical component of this success.

Furthermore, some researchers have called for more thorough research and evaluation efforts, noting the absence of rigorous evaluation and evidence-based methods in many SEL programs (Domitrovich et al., 2010). As stated by Durlak et al. (2011), "more research is needed to understand the variables that contribute to the long-term sustainability of SEL programs' effects." Research on the long-term sustainability of SEL program's effects and the possible need for ongoing intervention or reinforcement has been limited.SEL programs have also come under fire for possibly emphasizing individual accountability for social-emotional growth at the expense of larger systemic and environmental elements that can affect students' success and well-being (Hoffman, 2009; Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

2.10 Conclusion:

Social-emotional learning plays a critical role in child development by fostering emotional regulation, social competence, cognitive development, and long-term well-being. The research reviewed here highlights the importance of integrating SEL programs and strategies into the educational system to support the holistic development of children. SEL not only enhances emotional intelligence and social skills but also prepares children for academic success and a fulfilling life beyond their formative years. This literature review indicates that SEL programs can positively impact school students' academic achievement, behavior, and overall well-being. By considering cultural responsiveness, effective implementation strategies, and rigorous evaluation methods, educators and policymakers can maximize the benefits of SEL interventions and create more inclusive and supportive learning environments for all students. Further research is needed to continually refine and improve SEL programs, ensuring that they remain relevant and effective in addressing the ever-evolving challenges faced by students in diverse educational settings. SEL is important in promoting student well-being, academic success, and overall personal development. By understanding the theoretical foundations, implementation strategies, and research findings, educators and policymakers can better incorporate SEL practices to create nurturing and supportive learning environments for all students.

SEL is a powerful educational approach and current research consistently demonstrates the positive impact of SEL programs on academic achievement, mental health, social skills, and life outcomes. As educators, policymakers, and stakeholders continue to recognize the importance of SEL, it is essential to invest in and prioritize its implementation in schools to help students thrive in all aspects of their lives.

Chapter 3: Materials and Methodology

This chapter outlines and discusses the materials and methods employed in conducting

my qualitative research utilizing an ethnographic approach to investigate the importance and the

barriers of integrating Social Emotional Learning into the school curriculum in Chattogram,

Bangladesh. Qualitative research emphasizes exploring and understanding "… the meaning

individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2014; Holliday, 2007).

A qualitative approach is also described by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) as a way to gain a

perspective of issues by investigating them in their own specific context and the meaning that

each individual brings to them. This research aimed to explore the perceptions and experiences

of teachers and education leaders regarding SEL within three different schools. Employing a

qualitative research design within the applied framework, this study aims to provide a

comprehensive understanding of the complex socio-emotional landscape of the learning

environment and child development in school. To facilitate the exploration of the state of the

current curriculum and the gaps it might have, thematic analysis was employed to support the

qualitative data. Data collection methods involved personalized questionnaires and focus groups,

while data analysis was done using thematic analysis.

3.1 Research Location and Participants

The research was conducted targeting 2 English-speaking International Schools in

Chattogram, Bangladesh. Participants for this research were all in-service teachers and educators

who are currently working in an international school for grades K-12. A total of 24 educators

participated in this study. Participants of this research were 10 teachers and 2 educators

(Academic Coordinator, and Principal) from each school. Both schools follow a British curriculum with a mix of their own academic and extracurricular areas of focus. School 'A' is an English-speaking international school that emphasizes spiritual and moral education along with academic development, while School 'B' is an English-speaking school inclusive of special needs children that focuses on a child-centric environment and emotional growth of the students along with academics. School 'B' also has a specific program called " Congloms" in its curriculum to cater to the Social Emotional Learning of students. Both of the school have programs placed to cater to students social and emotional need in their curriculum that are not explicitly build as a SEL program but has components of SEL as major objectives of those program.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Duration and Method

The data collection process took place over 5 months from August 2023 to December 2023 with a follow-up as needed later. The personal interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in a mix of Bangla and English language with the Focus Group Discussions being done via Zoom for better record-keeping purposes and the personal interviews were conducted by face-to-face meetings. I started every FGD with a short 10 minutes presentation on SEL and each FGD lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and was recorded for future reference and transcription. The participant-led interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes and were recorded for future reference and transcription.

3.2.2 Personalized Questionnaires

I conducted personal interviews with educators (Senior Teacher, Academic Coordinator and Principal) with extensive experiences in the education sector for at least more than 10 years. I created Personalized questionnaires to gather initial insights into the participants' perspectives on various aspects of Social Emotional Learning and its importance and integrating SEL into the curriculum. I developed a set of questions focusing on various aspects of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) within the field of education. The questions were open-ended and tailored to elicit detailed responses concerning their experiences, challenges, and perceptions within their respective school contexts. As open-ended questions allow participants to express their thoughts freely, enabling a deeper understanding of their perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The questions explore the impact of SEL on students' overall development, its role in education, its importance in curriculum inclusion, effectiveness in addressing mental well-being and cognitive development, obstacles to implementation, alignment with other educational initiatives, evaluation strategies, cultural sensitivity, integration with digital tools, community partnerships, long-term benefits, ethical considerations, policy changes needed, and emerging trends in SEL research and implementation. Overall, they aim to gather insights into best practices, challenges, and future directions for SEL integration in educational settings, particularly in diverse contexts and amidst evolving educational landscapes.

3.2.3 Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

For this research, I have conducted multiple Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) from each of the targeted schools with different groups of teachers. Focus groups were conducted to facilitate in-depth discussions among participants from each of schools. This method encourages

interaction and collective exploration of themes and issues pertinent to the research objectives (Krueger & Casey, 2014). The semi-structured nature of focus group discussions allows for flexibility while ensuring key topics are addressed consistently across groups (Morgan, 2014). For the FGDs, I developed two sets of questions, one for teachers familiar with SEL and who may have already implemented various SEL components in their teaching practices and the other for teachers who may not be so familiar with SEL.

The first set of questions focused on the teacher's thoughts, considerations, challenges, and potential outcomes related to incorporating SEL into their teaching practice. They explore perceptions of SEL's impact on students' learning and well-being, barriers to implementation, challenges in integrating SEL, relevant aspects for specific student groups, anticipated changes in classroom dynamics, necessary support and resources, potential positive outcomes, starting points for implementation, alignment with existing educational goals, and personal and professional growth opportunities for both educators and students through SEL integration. Overall, they aim to dive into the teacher's perspective, experience, and potential strategies for implementing SEL effectively in their educational context.

The second set of FGD questions focused on various aspects of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in education, covering definitions, importance, implementation, training, challenges, observed impacts, collaboration among educators, promotion strategies, long-term effects, specific areas of interest, and personal experiences related to integrating SEL into the classroom. Overall, they aimed to explore the understanding, practice, challenges, and outcomes of SEL implementation in educational settings.

Through these FGDs and Personal Interviews, I investigated the various aspects of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and its implementation in educational settings in the unique

context of these two schools in Chattogram, Bangladesh. I sought to investigate what might be

the impact of SEL on students' development, its role in education, effectiveness, challenges,

alignment with other educational initiatives, evaluation strategies, cultural sensitivity, community

partnerships, long-term benefits, ethical considerations, policy implications, and emerging

trends. By asking these questions, I aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of SEL's

current status in these two schools, as well as the best practices, challenges, and future directions

in education, to contribute to the advancement of SEL research and practice especially in the

context of Bangladesh.

3.2.4 Ethical Considerations:

Throughout the data collection process, consent forms, information sheets, and ethical

assessments from the Asian University for Women's Ethical Review Committee were completed.

Oral and written consent was obtained from participants before the FGDs, in-depth interviews,

and voice recordings. Transcripts and audio recordings of interviews have been kept confidential

in accordance with ethical standards.

3.3 Data Analysis

In this section, I explain how I conducted a thematic analysis on FGDs and in-person

interview transcripts. Other than an immense amount of manual note-taking and translating the

data analysis was carried out using Descript (an editing software for video and podcast) to

transcribe data and MAXQDA Analytics Pro (a software tool designed to help with the

organization and analysis of qualitative data) to analyze data.

3.3.1 Data Transcription

The first step to analysis was to transcribe the data, all interviews were translated into English and transcribed using Descript (www.descript.com). Translation from Bangla to English were done manually, and English Interviews were transcribed using the transcribing tool Descript, each transcript was manually proofread by going back and forth between the audio recording and the transcript.
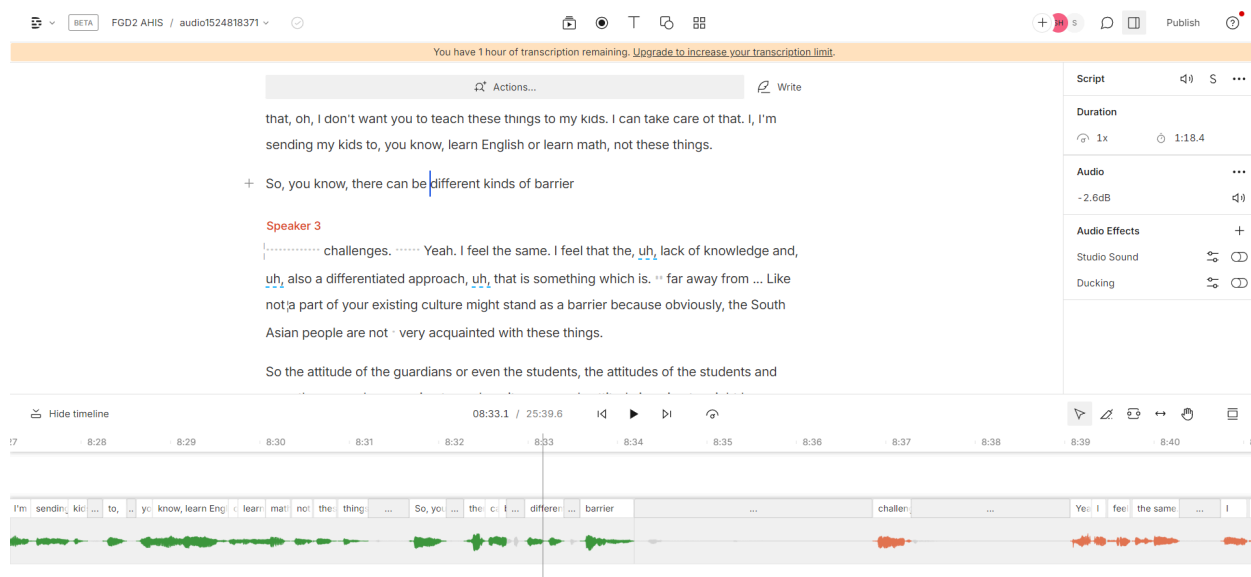
Picture 1: Transcription process of generating transcript from the recorded audio from the FGDs.

After transcribing and creating transcripts for each of the FGDs and in-person Interviews, I imported all of the transcripts into MAXQDA Analytics Pro to facilitate data administration and organization for data analysis.

3.3.2 Thematic Analysis

To analyze the large script of data I employed thematic analysis to identify patterns, similarities, and differences within the large volume of qualitative data obtained from transcripts of both the personalized questionnaires and focus group discussions. First, using MAXQDA Analytics Pro I categorized and organized my transcripts. Then I followed the six steps of thematic analysis to analyze my data.

Familiarization with the data

Generating codes

Generating themes

Reviewing themes

Defining and naming themes

Creating the report
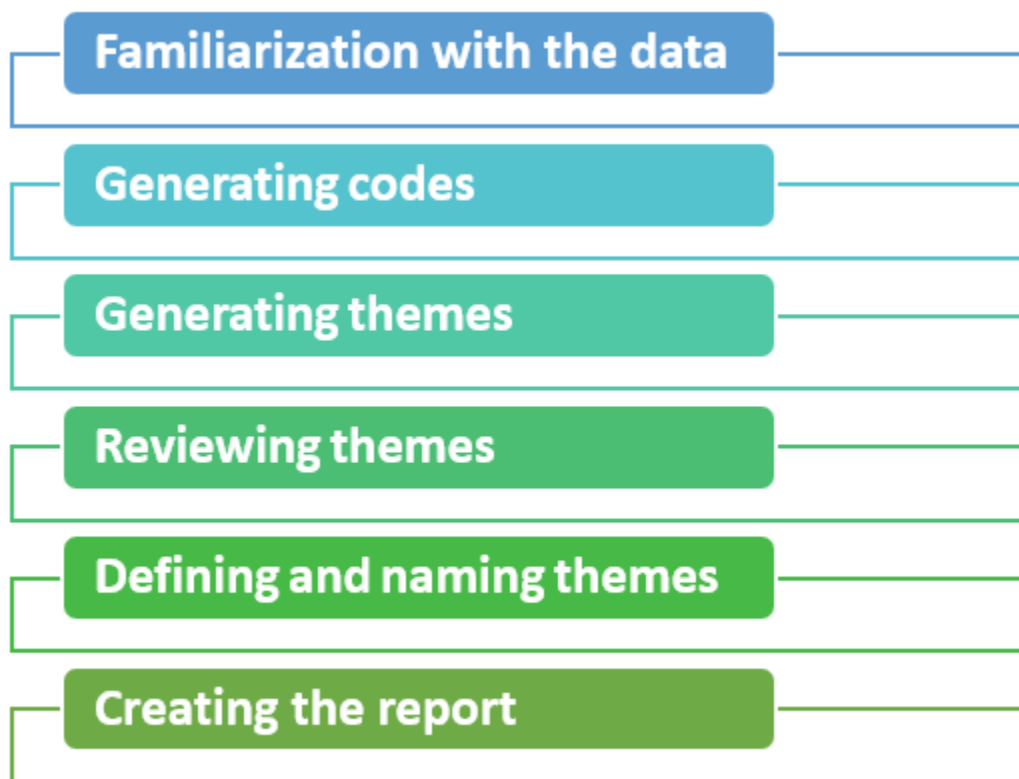
Figure 1: The process of data analysis using thematic analysis

Step 1: Familiarization with the Data

The initial stage in the analysis was to upload all transcripts into MAXQDA Analytics Pro, which helped with data structure and administration. Following that, I conducted a thorough study of the transcripts, reading each one several times to familiarize myself with the

information. Throughout the reading process, I actively highlighted and color-coded noteworthy quotes and discussion points in the participants' responses. This technique enabled me to locate key data points and gave me a comprehensive grasp of the material recorded in the transcripts.

Step 2: Generating Codes - The Coding Process

After the initial process of familiarization with the data, in the second step, I went on to label quotes and phrases from the transcripts using numerous codes.
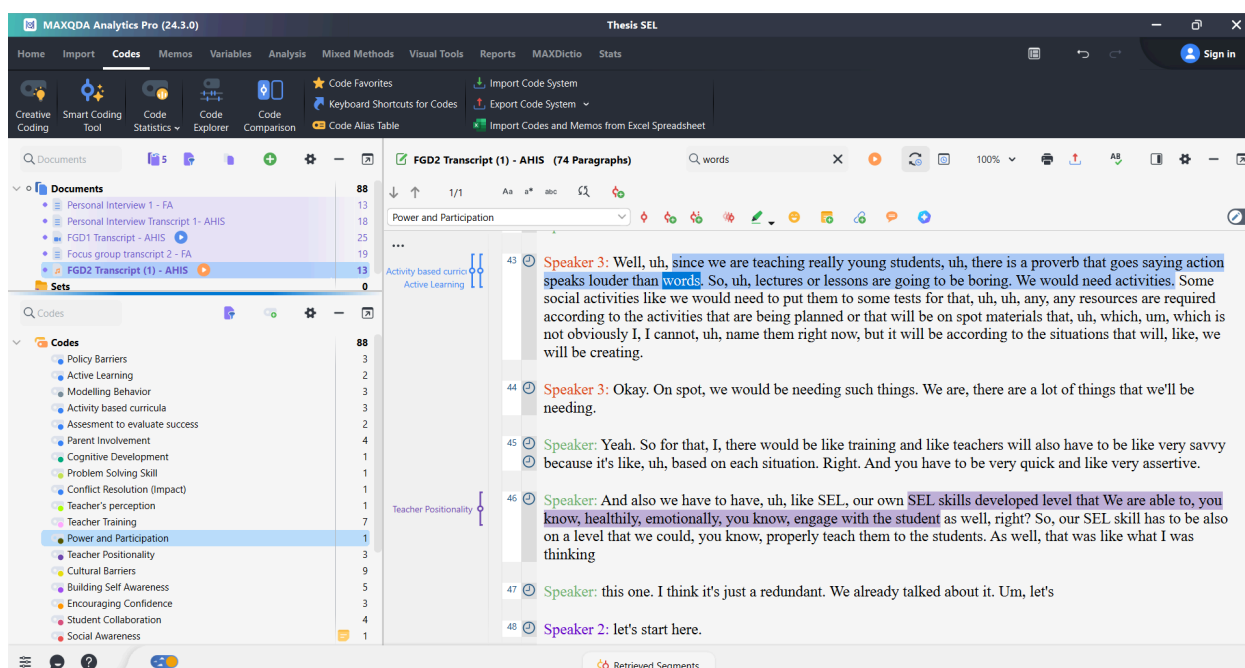
Picture 2: Initial process of creating codes using MAXQDA Analytics

The codes were generated to capture significant concepts and ideas. They were labeled by drawing insights from the main topic and ideas of the highlighted transcript. A code is a brief description of what is said during the interview (Mortensen, 2020). I wrote down a code whenever I noted and highlighted interesting statements in my dataset. The codes were simply a description of a statement or discussed point, not an interpretation. I used the codes as a way to begin organizing the data into meaningful categories. This coding method required careful

consideration and analysis to ensure that all relevant information was properly captured. I went back and forth in the data sheet to cross-reference and confirm the codes, and to reduce the possibility of missing critical insights.

Step 3: Generating Theme -

As the coding process advanced, I started to see patterns and similarities among the codes. This helped to identify and group related codes into larger topics. After finishing the coding process the codes were then organized into overarching themes, reflecting common threads across participants' responses. As I identified the pattern to generate the theme I put emphasis on prioritizing codes that were most relevant to the study, to assure the relevance and significance of the themes that emerged.

Step 4: Reviewing Themes -

To validate the themes created, I conducted an extensive comparison of the themes with the statements made by the participants in the dataset. I reread and refined the themes I had previously established. I went through every code-related section to see if it supported the theme, if there were any inconsistencies, and if any themes overlapped. The continuing validation and enhancement process improved the themes' accuracy and applicability.

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes -

I defined the themes using clear and relatable terminology after I was confident in the validity of the themes. As I worked on naming and describing the theme, I observed what story it was trying to tell and how it related to other themes and to my overall research questions. I made an effort to organize and connect the themes according to its relevance and build a coherent story about the themes.

Step 6: Creating the Report -

The last step of the data analysis was to write up my report based on my findings. Presenting the themes in my result and discussion section using quotes from what the participants said to demonstrate the findings.

3.4 The limitations

One limitation of the data collection process was that the FGD data was collected using the Zoom online platform. Conducting online interviews proved challenging due to some participants' lack of familiarity with the online platform. Also, due to poor internet connections, one FGD was interrupted several times as some participants got disconnected. I re-narrated the context to the participants so they didn't lose the flow of the conversation.

3.5 Conclusion

The methods outlined in this chapter provided a comprehensive framework for collecting and analyzing qualitative data from different groups of teachers within an ethnographic research paradigm. By combining personalized questionnaires and focus groups, a rich and diverse range of perspectives was captured from teachers and education leaders across two distinct school contexts. The data analysis incorporating thematic analysis, ensured a rigorous and nuanced exploration of the research questions, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in educational practice and the challenges regarding incorporating SEL into the school curriculum.

Chapter 4: Result

The data analysis of the transcript using thematic analysis resulted in multiple major

themes emerging from the dataset. They are defined into three categories based on my research

questions - 1) Teachers' perceptions on how Social Emotional Learning (SEL) aids in the holistic

development of the students. 2) The barriers to integrating SEL in the school curriculum. 3) The

challenges educators face regarding implementing SEL in their curriculum and the strategies to

mitigate them. All of the themes in these three categories are described below. One additional

section with minor themes of what I considered interesting and important data points that

emerged in a few but not majority of the transcript is also added at the end of the chapter.

4.1 Teachers' Perception of the Role of SEL for Students' Holistic Development:-

1. **Student Collaboration:** It was emphasized that SEL components like self and social

   awareness have helped students build community and rapport with each other. Teachers

   from both School A and School B mentioned that through various group activities that

   focused on social awareness, their students were able to learn from each other. One

   teacher mentions "... so sometimes we have seen that their friends can actually, um, can

   be very good teachers, often they listen to their friends more than the teachers" (FGD 2B,

   Teacher 6).

2. **Encouraging Confidence:** All of the teachers mentioned that SEL strategies will help

   boost students' self-confidence and elevate their self-esteem. It helps students develop a

   positive self-image and confidence in their abilities through activities that promote

   self-expression, goal-setting, and reflection. This confidence enables students to face

challenges, advocate for themselves, and pursue their goals with determination. One

teacher states, "...doing activities that boost their confidence and make them feel positive

can really make a difference. I envision their self confidence getting a boost resulting in

better engagement in class and better academic performance"(FGD 2A, Teacher 3).

3. **Building Self-Awareness:** SEL fosters self-awareness by encouraging students to
   recognize and comprehend their emotions, thoughts, and values. Teachers mention that
   through activities such as mindfulness exercises, journaling, and self-reflection, students
   develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their motivations which help them
   with academic goals as well as improves their emotional state. One educator during
   Personal Interview states, "By providing students with tools to understand and regulate
   their emotions, cope with stress, and empathize with others, SEL helps create a conducive
   learning environment where students feel safe, valued, and engaged."

4. **Building Empathy:** All of the teachers mention or agree on the importance of building
   empathy as an essential skill for the students and mention various activities through
   which they could foster this skill. Teachers from School B mentioned that they implement
   a program called, 'Citizenship Model' every year where they collaborate with social
   welfare organizations to target one sector such as 'Old Age Homes' and take their
   students to help out and try to encourage students to build empathy towards through
   various activties.

5. **Problem-solving Skill:** The Teachers mention that SEL activities help students develop
   their problem-solving abilities by encouraging students to approach problems with

creativity, resilience, and resourcefulness. It gives students the confidence to take on challenging assignments, adjust to change, and successfully negotiate obstacles in both their personal and academic lives. One teacher mentions, "I prefer activities that focuses on problem solving skills, like different social scenarios that the students will need to empathize with and solve"(FGD 2B, Teacher 3).

4.2 Themes in regards to integrating SEL into the curriculum:

1. **Policy Barriers:** The need for policy changes to effectively support SEL integration in the school curriculum is highlighted, as one educator state in the personal interview that, "Integrating SEL into the curriculum can foster a supportive learning environment and contribute to students' holistic development. But implmenting it might need a shift in how we teach and current school policy." Another teacher mentions regarding school policy that, "School policy needs to change. Teachers should be trained properly and given enough freedom to handle SEL integration into their classroom successfully." The data also showed suggestions for policymakers to provide funding, resources, and professional development opportunities for educators and incorporate SEL standards into educational frameworks.

2. **Alignment with Other Initiatives and Existing Practices:** The integration of SEL with other educational pedagogy like individualized learning, as well as moral and character education, and mental health support was mentioned, highlighting how they need to align and complement each other to promote students' overall well-being. Teacher from School A mentioned their weekly Moral Education lessons that relates to SEL component and teachers from School B mention a program called 'Congloms' that teaches values and

SEL component. There were other existing extra curricular practices mentioned as well that could align and boost SEL practices.

3. **Evaluation of SEL:** Strategies for evaluating the success of SEL interventions are mentioned, emphasizing the importance of using qualitative and quantitative measures to assess their impact on students' academic, social, and emotional development comprehensively. One educator states, "It's very important to assess the impact of SEL on students' academic, social, and emotional development comprehensively so that we know what works and what doesn't as it would help us to improve our curricula. (Personal Interview, 1B)"

4. **Ethical Considerations:** Ethical issues such as students' privacy, informed consent, and the potential unintended consequences of emotional assessment in SEL implementation were mentioned to be areas to improve on while integrating SEL into the Curriculum. Schools need to emphasize the importance of prioritizing students' privacy and well-being while building curricula to uphold ethical standards. It was also metioned to be an important factor in gaining parents trust and support.

5. **Staying Informed:** Educators and policymakers are encouraged to stay informed about new developments in the field of SEL, including emerging trends, implementation strategies, and research directions, to ensure that SEL initiatives remain responsive to the evolving needs of students and communities. All of the teachers and educators emphasized on the importance on staying up to date with the current trends and implementation strategies as SEL is still somewhat a new element and schools need guidance to successfully integrate SEL to their curricula.

4.3 Themes in regards to the implementation of SEL: -

Themes regarding challenges in implementing successful SEL programs -

1. **Limited resources allocated for SEL content due to emphasis on academic performance:** One of the important challenges mentioned throughout all the interviews and FGDs was how SEL lessons might not be taken as seriously as other academic lessons resulting in SEL programs not being emphasized or given the proper care or resources. 17 teachers emphasized that too much emphasis on academic results while not considering SEL as a path to academic success is a big barrier to SEL implementation. One teacher mentioned " …. rather than mental health, we are more focused on academic goals and academic results. If you're getting the first place, or if you're getting a star on this, what kind of achievement you can make, like if you're the best on subjects like science, math, etc. We are focusing on that and we are focusing on how, uh, well they're learning and putting out academic achievement" Another teacher mentioned that, "We have weekly classes dedicating to teaching student empathy and self-awareness and self management, these classes are often not taken as seriously as other academic classes…" In this instance teachers also expressed the lack of care from management and academic co-ordinator towards these classes. Other academic classes were always priorotized and perceived as more important.

2. **Lack of Collaborative Spirit:** Implementing SEL is complicated and multifaceted. It requires collaboration and cooperation from every level including administrators, parents, teachers, and students, which was mentioned as a difficult challenge. One educator states, "A strong collaboration among educators, parents, and the community is required for the successful implementation of SEL initiatives as it promotes a common understanding of

SEL goals and ensures consistent support for students overall development" (Personal Interview, 1A). Some teachers also mentioned facing disinterest from Admin and Academic Coordiantor while talking about SEL practieces as not a first priority.

3. **Cultural barriers:** Cultural barriers and socioeconomic disparities were one of the most frequently mentioned challenge. In the dataset 18 out of 24 teachers mentioned various culture barriers to implementation. One was that in the context of Bangladesh where societal and familial structures heavily influence students' lives, it becomes harder for teachers to implement SEL practices and make students stick to it and internalize it if it's not supported at home. As one teacher states, "Because ultimately, the students will listen to their parents. Parents, not the teachers" (FGD 1A, Teacher 1). Another barrier mentions cultural gap of SEL practices and activities developed overseas, where common practices in the US might not be fit to practice in a classroom in Bangladesh. One teacher states, "... context matters a lot, right? So what is normal culturally in the US might not be normal here. And then how people think is also different from, you know, country to country, from society to society. Their perspective is not the same as ours. Their cultural programs are different from ours. We cannot take things so easily. In fact, it becomes very difficult for us"(FGD 3A, Teacher 2). So common communication style can also become an issue and need to be adapted according to the context of the local culture.

4. **Underdeveloped SEL curriculum:** One common concern mentioned by teachers is that the different backgrounds of students can make it difficult for every student to relate to or internalize SEL lessons. So SEL lessons should be made considering the students ability and background. Teachers from both schools also emphasized that SEL lessons need to

be more hands-on rather than being lectures on morals. All of the teachers emphasized that SEL lessons need to focus in activity-based learning.

5. **Teachers' Capability to Deliver SEL:** A barrier teachers mentioned is that often teachers are not properly equipped to deal with delivering SEL lessons to their students. There is a gap in the teacher's knowledge as SEL is not a concept that has been part of their teaching practices for long and most teachers haven't been trained adequately on the concept of SEL and its practices. Teachers and educators mentioned that a proper teacher training program needs to be made for their SEL knowledge and teaching competencies to be up to per.

Emerging themes regarding strategies to mitigate implementation challenges:

1. **Parent Involvement - Partnership and Collaboration:** involving the parents and community was mentioned to be important. The necessity of strong partnerships between educators, parents, and the community in the successful implementation of SEL initiative is emphasized, highlighting how collaboration fosters a shared understanding of SEL goals and consistent support for students' social-emotional development.

2. **Cultural Context:** Adapting SEL strategies to suit the cultural context. Cultural Sensitivity was mentioned to be one of the most important to build and implement a curriculum. The teachers stresses the importance of cultural sensitivity in designing and implementing SEL strategies, suggesting the incorporation of culturally relevant content and the involvement of community stakeholders.

3. **Need for Activities and Problem-Solving Focus:** Educators emphasize the importance of engaging in activities rather than lectures or passive learning methods. They advocate

for activities that focus on problem-solving skills, such as dealing with different social scenarios to enhance empathy and decision-making.

4. **Teacher Training:** Providing training and support to educators was a major theme that emerged. There is a consensus on the necessity for proper training and evaluation of both educators and SEL programs to ensure effectiveness. Some teachers mentioned that government should facilitates and mandate such training for all teachers along with integrating SEL into the national curriculum for government schools.

5. **Modeling Behavior:** Teachers need to model the behavior that they are asking students to display was mentioned as one way of making sure students internalize SEL practices in The interview data. "Often children learn by mimicking, by watching our parents, how they're acting with other people, by watching their friends, teachers and observing what kind of behavior they're expressing. …. that's how kids' understanding of how the world works essentially gets built inside them." Essentially kids emulate what they see and it was emphasized that they need to see the teachers practice what they are teaching.

4.4 Additional minor themes that emerged:

The themes mentioned below are considered minor as it was not found common across all or majority of the transcript of the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) or Personal Interviews. These discussion points were raised in only one FGD or Personal Interview but I found it to be an interesting and important enough to voice out.

1. **Unintended Consequences of SEL Implementations:** The unintended consequences of SEL programs can be difficult to predict or quantify. A negative consequence of SEL came up as some teachers raised concern that SEL might subject some students to

excessive stress or anxiety due to the nature of deep personal emotional exploration it requires. In one of FGDs a teacher states that, "Approaching SEL practices without caution might backfire if there are students who have unique issues and traumas." This bring out a concern that without knowing the personal psychological history of each student and personalizing the SEL program to cater to their need the SEL program will not be successful.

2. **Oversimplification of complex issues:** Another interesting discussion points found in raised in some of the interview was that complex social and emotional issues may be oversimplified in SEL programs. Especially if we chalk up every issues student face under the 5 main SEL component and fail to address the root causes or systemic elements that contribute to students' emotional distress.

3. **Increase in labeling and stigmatization:** Students who are thought to have emotional or behavioral issues may become the target of labeling or stigmatization as a result of careless SEL assessments or interventions. One teacher states,"One of my student in Grade 2 displays minor unusual behaviors and is somewhat isolated by her classmates, especially during playtime, students like her might be labelled and isolated even more if her behaviorial issues gets highlighted in the eyes of her classmates , as a teacher we can only stop teasing or bullying but can not force kids to be friends."

Chapter 5 - Discussion

The findings from the data in Chapter 4 highlight the importance of SEL in many aspects of students' overall development. It presented the way educators perceive the importance of social emotional learning (SEL) for students' overall development, the challenges of incorporating SEL into the curriculum, and strategies for overcoming implementation barriers. The findings revealed a number of key themes that advance our understanding of how SEL is implemented in classrooms.

5.1 Teachers perception on how SEL promotes students holistic development -

Teachers acknowledge SEL's effectiveness in developing student collaboration, confidence, self-awareness, empathy, and problem-solving abilities. They emphasize how SEL activities foster student community, with one teacher pointing out that peers frequently serve as effective teachers to one another. It has been shown that social-emotional learning (SEL) practices and programs can improve students' academic performance as well as their social-emotional and behavioral functioning (Durlak et al., 2011). Teachers also emphasize how SEL strategies promote students' confidence, self-esteem, and resilience through activities centered on self-expression, goal-setting, and reflection. Furthermore, the participant emphasized the importance of SEL in developing empathy and providing students with the problem-solving skills required for personal and academic achievement. Children can acquire appropriate coping and problem-solving techniques with the aid of social-emotional abilities, which operate as both motivating and protective elements (Eklund, 2018). Research indicates that fostering abilities like self-discipline, compassion, and critical thinking might avert more severe issues including disengagement from school, the emergence of mental health disorders, and poor academic

performance (Payton et al., 2008; Zins & Elias, 2007). The findings from the present study supports existing literature that SEL helps students achieve a holistic growth with academic and emotional development .

5.2 Barriers regarding resources allocated for SEL

When it comes to implementing SEL, the study found that the teachers face a variety of challenges. One of the significant barriers to implementing successful SEL programs identified in the study was a lack of resources for SEL content due to an overemphasis on academic achievement. This finding is consistent with the broader challenge faced by educational institutions worldwide, where academic achievement is frequently prioritized over holistic student development (Elbertson et al., 2010). The findings of the present study presents that teachers perceived SEL lessons to be overlooked or taken less seriously than other academic subjects, with a lack of support and resources dedicated to these programs. The lack of awareness of the strong evidence connecting social-emotional competencies to enhanced academic performance and the restricted focus on academic outcomes are the main causes of this reluctance to fund SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011; Weissberg et al., 2015) To overcome this challenge, the educational system must adopt a new perspective that sees SEL as an essential component of a well-rounded education rather than an optional activity (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). To ensure the successful implementation of SEL programs, policymakers and educational leaders must prioritize resource allocation, including funding, professional development opportunities, and dedicated instructional time (Oberle et al., 2016). Raising awareness of the benefits of SEL among stakeholders, such as parents and communities, can also help to increase appreciation and demand for these initiatives, incentivizing resource allocation.

5.3 Building Culturally Responsive SEL programs

One of the major themes that came out from the data was Cultural Context, both in terms

of integration and implementation of SEL into school curriculum. The data analysis showed that

the majority of the teachers mentioned cultural barriers as a challenge to successful

implementation of SEL curriculum. This is consistent with previous research that emphasizes the

importance of considering cultural contexts and involving community stakeholders in the

implementation of SEL (Jagers et al. 2019). Cultural barriers included influences from society

and families, which complicated the implementation of SEL and make it difficult for teachers to

obtain support from students' families as well. For SEL programs to be effective, they must be

both inclusive and culturally sensitive. However, creating culturally appropriate content that

caters to a wide range of needs and backgrounds can be challenging, requiring careful evaluation

and adjustment. Culturally responsive teaching is an essential component of SEL instruction, as

it allows teachers to develop students' knowledge, abilities, and competencies in light of their

identities and cultures. Culturally responsive teaching includes knowing, comprehending, and

identifying with students' backgrounds, values, beliefs, and home culture in order to educate

them more effectively. Bangladesh's cultural context emphasizes collectivistic values such as

interdependence, respect for elders, and family loyalty. These ideals can be emphasized in SEL

lessons, as well as social skills that aid in the development of peaceful relationships in families

and communities. It is also important to incorporate religious values like etiquette, patience, and

gratitude. As Bangladesh is a country where age hierarchy and respecting elders is an important

part of the culture, it is critical to teach indirect communication strategies that respect elders and

authority figures. The SEL programs must address the socio-economical state of the community

and include issues faced within the communities that students can relate to. This study was conducted in two international private schools and did not have diverse socio-economic differences, but it is an important factor in public schools where the student body is more diverse in terms of background and socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic differences have a significant impact on students' emotional and social experiences. For schools situated in rural area of bangladesh or even schools in the city in a poorer area like slums, it is imperative to consider socio-economic disparities. In addition to addressing issues such as poverty, inequality, and resource access, culturally sensitive SEL should help students develop resilience and coping mechanisms that are appropriate for their specific circumstances. Another aspect of what culturally responsive SEL in the context of Bangladesh is considering the gender steoreotypes and gender roles.

Students may become resistant to or fail to internalize SEL principles if cultural differences are not addressed (Collie et al., 2015). Therefore, cultural sensitivity and community involvement in the planning and implementation of SEL programs are critical to their success and acceptance in a wide range of cultural contexts. Finally, close collaboration with local stakeholders is required to ensure that SEL is appropriate for Bangladesh's diverse cultural contexts and values while not encouraging insensitive practices.

5.4 Teachers ability to deliver SEL curriculum

According to the study, one of the most significant barriers to implementing successful SEL programs is teachers' ability to deliver SEL curriculum effectively. Teachers were concerned about their own ability to provide effective SEL, mentioning knowledge gaps and a lack of training as major barriers. This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing

educators' critical role in the successful implementation of SEL programs (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Teachers set the example by incorporating SEL principles into classroom practices and creating a nurturing learning environment that promotes students' social-emotional development. Many teachers reported a lack of adequate training and professional development opportunities, particularly for SEL. Teachers may struggle to adequately model, explicitly teach, and reinforce social-emotional skills as a result of this lack of preparation, jeopardizing the effectiveness of SEL programs (Brackett et al., 2019). To address this issue, a comprehensive approach to teacher support and training is required. SEL competencies should be integrated into pre-service teacher education curricula to ensure that aspiring educators have the necessary skills and knowledge to incorporate SEL into their lesson plans (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). In order to improve their SEL-related instructional skills and stay current with best practices, in-service teachers should have access to ongoing professional development opportunities such as workshops, coaching, and peer-learning communities (Oberle et al., 2016). Effective teacher preparation and support not only improve teachers' ability to implement SEL curricula, but they also help schools develop a culture that values and encourages social-emotional learning (Schonert-Reichl 2017). With the right tools and resources, educators can more effectively model and reinforce SEL principles, creating a positive and encouraging learning environment that promotes students' overall development.

5.5 Activitity based SEL Curricula and Modelling Behaviors

The findings from this study states that teachers emphasize the importance of activity-based learning and problem-solving in SEL initiatives. Traditional lecture-based or passive learning approaches may not be as effective in promoting the internalization and application of social-emotional competencies. Students can also practice and develop their

social-emotional skills in a supportive and engaging environment through interactive activities, role-playing scenarios, and problem-solving exercises (Durlak et al., 2011). Active participation in these activities can help students better understand the relevance and application of SEL concepts to their own lives and experiences.

The data analysis of this study showed us that teachers put emphasis on modeling desired behaviors in front of their students. The need to set an example for students by modeling SEL components is found essencial. Teachers are powerful role models for their students, and their interactions and actions have a significant impact on how they develop socially and emotionally (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Teachers can create an environment that promotes and reinforces the principles of self-regulation, empathy, and positive relationship building by modeling and embodying these qualities on a regular basis. This reflects other SEL studies as well where modeling behaviors was found effective. According to Espelage et al. (2020), positive effects on the entire school environment can be achieved by School Resource Officers (SROs) who exemplify these SEL characteristics in their daily interactions with children as students can use SROs as resources for acquiring and practicing SEL more effectively by observing SROs exhibit these abilities. Furthermore, modeling desired behaviors can help SEL programs become more culturally relevant and popular. Teachers can demonstrate how SEL principles align with their students' cultural backgrounds by incorporating cultural norms, values, and practices into their own behavior. This will make students feel more connected and in control of their education (Jagers et al., 2019). To fully reap the benefits of activity-based learning and modeling, educators must receive extensive training and support. Professional development programs should equip educators with the skills, tools, and resources they need to plan and lead engaging SEL activities

while also setting a consistent example of positive social-emotional behavior (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). These tactics can be made even more effective with ongoing coaching, peer support, and access to top-notch course materials.

5.6 Parental Involvement and collaboration among stakeholders and policy barrier:

The findings of the present study highlights the importance of stakeholder collaboration and parental involvement as a critical strategy for reducing the difficulties in implementing effective SEL programs. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has highlighted the importance of collaboration and mutual understanding among educators, parents, and communities in promoting students' social-emotional development (Jagers et al., 2019). Collaboration is required for the effective implementation of SEL because social-emotional learning occurs in a variety of settings, including schools, homes, and communities. By involving parents and community members, SEL programs can create a stable and supportive environment that promotes the development of social-emotional skills (Oberle et al. 2016). Furthermore, parental involvement can improve the cultural relevance and acceptability of SEL programs by providing valuable information about the cultural quirks and values that should be included (Collie et al., 2015). To enable parents and community members to support and reinforce SEL initiatives at home and in the larger community, efforts should be made to simultaneously educate and engage them (Jagers et al., 2019).

The study findings also discovered that policy barriers are a major impediment to integrating SEL into the curriculum. Current educational policies and frameworks may not adequately address or prioritize social-emotional learning, leaving SEL initiatives lacking the necessary support, tools, and guidelines for implementation (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Because of

the policy barriers, SEL programs may not be implemented as effectively, as teachers and schools may lack the institutional support, funding, or guidance required to incorporate SEL into their curricula and instructional methods. To overcome these challenges, legislators, educators, parents, and community stakeholders must work together in a multifaceted strategy. According to Oberle et al. (2016), policymakers should work to develop comprehensive SEL frameworks and policies that provide a systematic approach to implementation, resource distribution, and accountability measures. In addition to encouraging and facilitating partnerships between families, schools, and community organizations, these policies should foster a shared understanding and collaborative efforts to support students' social-emotional development. And to ensure that collaboration among stakeholders, including educators, parents, and policymakers, is regarded as critical for the successful integration of SEL into the curriculum. Integrating SEL into the curriculum necessitates overcoming policy obstacles and aligning SEL initiatives with existing educational practices. Teachers emphasize the importance of policy changes to promote SEL integration, such as funding, resources, and professional development opportunities. Finally, educational systems can help students develop holistically by creating a supportive environment in which SEL programs are prioritized and successfully implemented. This can be accomplished by removing policy barriers and encouraging stakeholders to form collaborative partnerships.

Additionally, the result of data analysis of the present study also emphasized on additional and often overlooked concerns expreseed by teachers regarding the need to properly evaluate SEL interventions and addressing ethical concerns such as student privacy and informed consent. Finally, educators and policymakers are encouraged to stay up to date on emerging trends and SEL research to ensure the program's continued relevance and effectiveness.

5.7 The context of the study and limitations

Even though this study was carried out in Bangladesh's private schools, it provides insightful information that can help with the integration of SEL into the larger public education system. The study's findings on cultural barriers, resource allocation issues, and the need for extensive teacher preparation are likely applicable to both Bangladesh's private and public educational systems. Furthermore, public schools can boost the effectiveness of SEL programs by implementing suggested strategies for overcoming implementation challenges, such as parental involvement, cultural adaptation, and activity-based learning. It is important to remember, however, that public schools in Bangladesh may face unique challenges due to factors such as larger class sizes, limited funding, and varying levels of teacher training. Therefore, the findings from this study should be interpreted in light of and tailored to the specific circumstances of public schools. Furthermore, the study's focus on private schools in cities may overlook the diverse cultural nuances and socioeconomic differences found in Bangladesh's rural regions, potentially influencing the implementation and effectiveness of SEL programs in those areas. Further research into the implementation of SEL in public schools and rural settings would be beneficial in gaining a better understanding of the challenges and approaches that are relevant to the wider education system of Bangladesh.

Chapter 6

Creating SEL MODULE for UNICEF's Teacher Training Program - A case study

While working on my thesis I had an opportunity to implement what I have learned about Integration and implementation of SEL into curriculum in an ongoing project I am working under UNICEF. I have considered all of the themes detailed in Chapter 4 while working on this project. The findings from this thesis was immensely helpful for the project as we are working on creating a Teacher Training Program for mentor teachers and master trainers under unicef who are working in the education centers in the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Chattogram. While developing the training project, I was working to develop a module that will introduce and integrate Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in teaching with practical activities in all of the Education Centers. The project aims to improve the education quality of Learning Centers in Rohingya Refugee Camps. As we have established in my thesis that SEL programs needs to consider the cultural context to be effective, we have started the project with an evaluation of the context and community culture within the refugee camps. Before starting to develop the training program and modules we had gone to the camps to evaluate the current state of the teaching and learning environment in the camps. We observed classes and conducted interviews with teachers. We also conducted FGDs with Rohingya students currently enrolled at AUW who have received their primary and secondary education in the camps.

Context of the issue before evaluation:

The Rohingya refugee crisis, originating from Myanmar, has led to one of the largest forced displacements of people in recent history. Among the most vulnerable groups affected by this crisis are children, whose mental health and development are profoundly impacted by the traumatic experiences they endure. Since 1948, the Rohingya people, who belong to an ethnic,

linguistic, and religious minority in Myanmar (formerly known as Burma), have faced persecution and forced displacement. About 750,000 Rohingya were forcibly relocated from Myanmar into neighboring Bangladesh by the Burmese military in 2017, and of the one million refugees living in Cox's Bazar at the time of the study, 55% were female and 52% were children (Islam, 2021).

Context after evaluation:

Many Rohingya children have witnessed or experienced horrific acts of violence, persecution, and displacement, leading to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Communities, homes, and family members are frequently lost as a result of forced displacement. As they struggle with the loss of loved ones and familiar surroundings, Rohingya children undergo deep grief and sadness. The uncertainty of their future magnify feelings of helplessness. Rohingya children face significant barriers to accessing healthcare services, including limited availability of medical facilities, inadequate sanitation, and lack of trained healthcare professionals. This puts them at risk of malnutrition, infectious diseases, and other health-related issues, which can further impact their mental well-being. From our surveys and interviews, it was also evident that the mental health and child development of Rohingya refugee children are deeply intertwined with the challenges they face in the aftermath of displacement. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that prioritizes their psychosocial well-being, educational opportunities, and access to essential services. And we need to include SEL into our program because SEL is particularly crucial for refugee children due to the unique challenges they face and the profound impact of their experiences on their mental health and well-being.

Several reasons that highlight the importance of SEL for Rohingya Refugee kids:

1. **Coping with Trauma:** Many refugee children have experienced or witnessed traumatic events, such as violence, persecution, and displacement. SEL equips them with essential coping skills to manage their emotions, regulate stress responses, and navigate the aftermath of trauma in healthy ways.

2. **Building Resilience:** SEL fosters resilience by empowering refugee children to bounce back from adversity and develop a positive outlook on life. By enhancing their self-awareness, self-esteem, and problem-solving abilities, SEL enables them to overcome challenges and thrive in the face of adversity.

3. **Promoting Mental Health:** Refugee children are at heightened risk of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). SEL interventions promote mental health by providing Rohingya children with tools to identify and express their emotions, seek support, and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

4. **Enhancing Social Skills:** Social isolation and loneliness are common experiences for Rohingya refugee children, especially in unfamiliar environments. SEL helps them develop essential social skills, such as communication, empathy, and cooperation, which are crucial for building positive relationships and integrating into new communities.

5. **Supporting Academic Success:** SEL is closely linked to academic achievement, as it lays the foundation for effective learning and positive classroom behavior. By fostering skills such as self-discipline, perseverance, and goal-setting, SEL will enable Rohingya refugee children to engage more fully in their education and achieve academic success despite the challenges they face.

6. **Facilitating Cultural Adjustment:** SEL interventions can help the Rohingya refugee children navigate the complexities of cultural adjustment and acculturation in their host countries. By promoting cultural awareness, acceptance, and respect for diversity, SEL fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion, which are essential for their social and emotional well-being.

7. **Empowering Agency and Advocacy:** SEL will empower Rohingya refugee children to become agents of change in their own lives and communities. By fostering a sense of agency, leadership, and civic engagement, SEL enables them to advocate for their rights, address social injustices, and contribute positively to society.

Social-emotional learning would play a vital role in supporting the holistic development and well-being of refugee children. By equipping them with essential skills and competencies, SEL not only helps them cope with the challenges of displacement but also empowers them to build brighter futures for themselves and their communities.

Creating the module:

For this project, we needed to train teachers for professional development in the Rohingya camps. Successful completion of the course should also result in teachers being equipped with skills to deliver their lessons while implementing SEL practices in their teaching strategies. The teachers are a mixture of Rohingya facilitators and host community Bangladeshi teachers. The people teaching are not a homogenous group and the skill level of individual facilitators/teachers varies greatly. Our program will train 300 teachers per year, and each of these teachers will go back to teaching in camps for students in upper primary level (Grade 3, 4 and 5). The SEL module was developed to emphasize the critical role of SEL in nurturing the holistic

development of students in challenging circumstances and to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to foster emotional awareness, resilience, empathy, and a supportive classroom environment. The module reflected the themes regrading integration and implementation of SEL curriculum. SEL is a completely new concept for most of the trainee so we wanted to ensure that the teachers know by integrating SEL concepts into their teaching practices and engaging with the community, teachers can enhance the well-being and emotional growth of Rohingya students while also prioritizing their own self-care in this unique context.

Objective and the framework of the modules:

The modules were designed to provide the teachers in the Rohingya camp with a thorough understanding of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and its significance and practical strategies for incorporating SEL into their teaching practices to foster empathy and emotional awareness, promote resilience and self-regulation and create a safe and inclusive classroom environment. We aimed to integrate SEL into the curriculum effectively, encourage community involvement and support as well as prioritize teachers' self-care and well-being. The modules were designed in a capsule of 3 sessions where each session had a specific goal to achieve and each session was heavy on practical implementation of the knowledge the trainees will receive. There are 3 modules with 3 sessions each running for 120 minutes.

The two main focuses while creating the modules were -

1. The modules had to be easy to comprehend and adapt to for the teacher and based on their contextual need while not compromising or losing the core teaching of SEL. The cultural context of the camps should be considered and building culturally responsive SEL practices needed to be emphasized.

2. As the modules are meant to train the teacher to a level so they can go and teach in the camps the modules need to be simple enough and customized to the conditions and resources available in the refugee camp.

The modules emphasize on 2 main principal -

1) Each module should have practical activities with both explicit and implicit learning and SEL needs to be actively learned mostly through -

    a) Observation

    b) Experience

    c) Direct guidance

2) That the trainee teachers are equipped with understanding and skills to implement a long term SEL program to integrate SEL with their curriculum. SEL is a process that requires time, patience and educators that are committed to providing a safe and caring learning environment.

Outcome of the module will ensure -

The trainee teachers will be able to learn -

- The basics fundamentals of SEL

- Effectiveness of SEL and its importance

- How to incorporate SEL practices into their lesson especially through activity based lessons

- Monitor, assess and guide the emotional health and wellbeing of the students and their own

- Enjoy success in the workplace and in life

Successful integration and implementation of SEL in the curriculum will ensure to improve students -

- Academic achievement and attainment

- Attendance, engagement and motivation

- Behavior, with reduced bullying and violence

- Mental health with reduced stress, anxiety and depression

Overall the SEL module of this project reflects all the major themes and findings from my thesis and ensure a quality teacher training program for SEL integration and implementation into a school curricula. This model was well-informed and well-structered due considering all the major themes as we ensured that while integrating SEL into the curricula can successfully navigate policy obstacles of refugee camps to align with Bangladesh Government and UNICEF, also that the project align with existing initiatives in place by UNICEF at the Education Centers, that proper is put in place to evaluate the program, considering ethical implications, and continuous learning. While creating the SEL module I also considered that implementing successful and culturally-relevant SEL programs faces challenges like limited resources diverted from academics, lack of collaborative efforts, cultural barriers, underdeveloped curricula, and gaps in teacher capabilities. We tried to mitigate these issues as we developed this model by collaborating with the stakeholders UNICEF who is funding and playin active role in implementing the teacher training program and Asian University for Women who is leading the project. This SEL module although tailored towards the specific needs of the teachers and students in the Rohingya Refugee Camp can be a model for other Teacher Training Program and projects especially in regards to initiating and developing a culturally responsive SEL program.

The framework and the component considered and used to build this SEL program would be valuable insight for similar projects in the future.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

The integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curricula of a subset of schools in Chattogram, Bangladesh was investigated in this qualitative study using a thorough methodological approach. Using a combination of focus groups with educators and teachers and customized questionnaires, the study design allowed for the gathering of rich and varied viewpoints from various educational settings.

The study issues were thoroughly and nuancedly examined via the data analysis process, which included thematic analysis. With regard to SEL implementation, this multifaceted analytical approach made it easier to comprehend the intricacies that are present in educational practice and leadership. The results of this study provide insight into the perceived value, difficulties, and obstacles associated with SEL integration into Bangladeshi school curricula. Policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders involved in curriculum creation and implementation can benefit greatly from the insights acquired from the experiences and viewpoints of teachers and educational leaders.

Despite certain constraints, including difficulties in conducting virtual focus groups and the possibility of disruptions from inadequate internet connectivity, the study's methodological framework guaranteed a thorough and reliable process of gathering and analysing data. The findings of this study could influence educational practices and regulations, add to the current conversation around SEL integration, and direct more research in this field. In the end, the results of this research can act as a stimulant to advance the development of students' social-emotional skills and to create a more comprehensive and inclusive learning environment in Bangladesh.

Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research:

This research was extensive in data collection and examining the data and further studies can use the themes from the interviews to survey a more broad and representative sample of the schools in Bangladesh to get a more comprehensive view of the challenges in SEL integration in schools. Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the following recommendations and suggestions for future research are made:

1. **Perform long-term studies:** These studies should follow the implementation process and results over an extended period of time to provide a more thorough knowledge of the long-term effects and sustainability of SEL integration in the school curriculum.

2. **Examine the views of parents and kids:** To obtain a more comprehensive picture of the perceived advantages, difficulties, and barriers to SEL integration, future study might include the opinions of parents and students in addition to educators and educational leaders.

3. **Extend the study's scope:** Although this research was limited to two schools in Chattogram, Bangladesh schools, subsequent studies could extend the reach to a wider range of schools, representing various geographic locations, socioeconomic statuses, and types of learning environments (public, private, urban, rural, etc.).

4. **Investigate the effectiveness of SEL interventions:** Future studies should examine if particular SEL interventions or instructional strategies are beneficial in enhancing students' social-emotional skills and general well-being.

5. **Examine the role of professional development and teacher training:** Future research should investigate how well professional development and teacher training programs

provide teachers with the skills, knowledge, and tactics required to successfully implement SEL.

6. **Investigate the cultural relevance and modifications required for SEL programs:** Because SEL concepts may differ across cultural contexts, additional research may be required to determine the cultural relevance and necessary modifications for SEL programs in Bangladesh's diverse educational settings.

7. **Investigate how technology can be used to integrate SEL:** Given the growing importance of technology in education, future research should look into how digital tools, online resources, and virtual learning environments can help students develop their social and emotional skills while also incorporating SEL.

8. **Conduct mixed-methods research:** Future studies that combine qualitative and quantitative methods may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing SEL integration and its impact on various educational outcomes.

These recommendations for future research can help advance knowledge and understanding of SEL integration in school curricula, leading to the development of effective strategies to promote students' holistic growth and well-being.

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