



Participatory Educational Research (PER)
Vol.12(2), pp. 183-204, March 2025
Available online at <http://www.perjournal.com>
ISSN: 2148-6123
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17275/per.25.25.12.2>

Id: 1574722

Designing, Implementing, and Evaluating the Social Emotional Learning Professional Development Program

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Article history

Received:
28.09.2024

Received in revised form:
16.11.2024

Accepted:
14.12.2024

Key words:

Social emotional learning,
Professional Development,
Teacher Training

In this study, a Social Emotional Learning Professional Development Program (SEL-PDP) was designed for teachers. The program was structured as a 40-hour training process, incorporating practice-based workshops and an in-class application sharing day. Implemented in the 2023-2024 academic year, the program involved 12 primary and preschool teachers working in Istanbul, Türkiye. A nested mixed-methods design was employed, and qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed to evaluate the program. A pre-test and post-test design was utilized to assess cognitive gains, with data analyzed via the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, revealing a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores ($Z = -3.059$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, an average increase of 66% was recorded in participants' total percentage success scores. The findings indicated that the methods teachers intended to implement in their classrooms were related to the practices conducted in the workshops. During the sharing day, it was observed that the methods applied by teachers in their classrooms bore similarities to those presented during the workshops. Descriptive analysis of the 18-item SEL-PDP Evaluation Form demonstrated that the average item scores fell within the highest range of 4.21–5.00 ("Strongly Agree"). These results suggest that SEL-PDP was evaluated by participant teachers as an effective, practice-based, and goal-oriented professional development program.

Introduction

With the moment of birth, an infant takes the first step on the journey of life. From this starting point, human beings encounter a complex process filled with numerous detours, obstacles, and fluctuations rather than a straight path. In today's rapidly changing world, navigating this journey in a peaceful, meaningful, and successful manner requires individuals to acquire certain skills through education. According to Erişen (2024), education is a process that facilitates self-actualization and leads societal development and reform by empowering individuals through the experiences of the past, the opportunities of the present, and the vision of the future. Goleman (2006) describes the skills needed by individuals capable of self-

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actualization and societal transformation as an ability to adapt to any condition, awareness of personal strengths and areas for growth, goal-setting and planning, empathy, and high problem-solving skills. The essential question is how children can develop these skills in educational settings and thereby become life-ready individuals.

The question of whether it is possible to intentionally develop life skills within educational settings has been one of the core debates surrounding education systems since the 19th century. One of the central issues here is the traditional focus of schools on academic knowledge and the view of academic success as the sole measure of achievement (Robinson, 2018). However, over the past forty years, the emergence of the concept of emotional intelligence (EQ) and extensive research in this area have demonstrated that true life success cannot be measured solely by academic intelligence (IQ) (Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Bar-On, 2006; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Rexhepi & Berisha, 2017). Numerous studies have shown a strong correlation between emotional intelligence (EQ) and life success (Palmer et al., 2002; Bastian et al., 2005; Amdurer et al., 2014; Colomeischi, 2014),

Studies that highlight the relationship between emotional intelligence and life success have brought about notable changes in the field of education. Educators have increasingly recognized that students' life success encompasses more than academic competencies and high scores on standardized tests (Zins & Elias, 2007; Francis et al., 2019). As this perspective has gained global acceptance, many countries have sought to reform their education systems, reshaping national curricula to foster life skills that promote both professional and social success in children (OECD, 2018; MEB, 2018; TUSIAD, 2019; MEB, 2024). Within this framework, there has been a marked increase in interest and demand for educational practices aimed at developing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and the skills defined within its scope (CASEL, 2017).

SEL is a learning approach that nurtures skills children will use to navigate various situations throughout their life journey. SEL encompasses skills such as emotional awareness, empathy, building and maintaining positive relationships, and making responsible decisions. Zins and Elias (2007) define SEL as “the capacity for emotional awareness, emotion management, problem-solving, and forming positive relationships with others.” SEL is an educational process that seeks to enhance individuals’ emotional and social skills, thereby boosting both their academic success and quality of life. emphasizing how this process contributes to more fulfilling and successful lives. CASEL (2020) describes SEL as the development of abilities to understand oneself, form healthy and effective relationships with others, manage emotional states, and exhibit positive behaviors when faced with challenges. In summary, SEL can be regarded as a learning approach that serves to cultivate a range of skills children will employ in any situation they encounter throughout their life journey.

As these definitions illustrate, the SEL approach outlines essential life skills. According to the SEL Competencies framework developed by CASEL, there are five core skill areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2017).



Figure 1. CASEL 5-Competency Model for SEL

The skills represented in this model are noted as competencies that can be imparted to individuals through various methods. This model also serves as a framework guiding the integration of SEL competencies into educational settings, facilitating holistic practices to develop students' SEL skills. According to the approach developed by CASEL, there are five fundamental areas of competency within the SEL scope that can be cultivated. As seen in the figure above, although SEL competencies are divided into five distinct areas, they maintain an inherent unity. Developing one or a few competencies does not imply mastery of SEL skills overall; therefore, it is essential for an individual to possess balanced competencies across all five areas.

While SEL competencies are primarily skills developed at an early age within the family, they can continue to be cultivated at later stages. This indicates that SEL competencies encompass skills that can be nurtured within educational settings. The critical role that SEL programs play in student development is extensively discussed in the literature. Research conducted by CASEL demonstrates that social emotional competencies bolster both students' academic success and the social competence they can sustain throughout life (Durlak et al., 2011). Studies on the impact of SEL programs on behavioral and social skills show substantial benefits for children from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, a study incorporating the PATHS curriculum reported behavioral improvements among children, with these gains maintained for up to two years (Calhoun et al., 2020). Additionally, long-term SEL programs like the Fast Track PATHS program have been found to reduce aggression levels and enhance social competence in schools (Bierman et al., 2010). The COPE-Resilience program also yielded significant improvements in emotional resilience and empathy, contributing to children's academic and social success (Wu et al., 2020). Moreover, longitudinal studies indicate that students participating in SEL programs experience positive effects on career and life achievements, as these programs not only improve school success but also develop essential life skills that endure into adulthood (Jones et al., 2017).

Research also supports the positive impact of SEL programs on academic achievement, in addition to supporting children's life processes. Numerous studies have confirmed that school-

based SEL programs enhance students' SEL skills, attitudes, behaviors, and academic achievements. For example, Durlak and colleagues' (2011) meta-analysis of 213 interventions showed that these programs provide an 11% improvement in students' social emotional development and academic success. Similarly, Ashdown and Bernard's (2012) study of the early childhood SEL program "You Can Do It!" found significant effects, particularly among students performing poorly in reading skills. Additionally, McCormick and others' (2020) experimental study investigated the long-term academic impacts of SEL programs, revealing that these programs produce lasting positive outcomes in certain academic areas for children.

As discussed above, the widespread implementation of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) programs in educational settings is considered to potentially contribute to the development of various skills that students may need throughout their lives. It is increasingly acknowledged that such programs should be valued in school settings as much as academic skills. A critical aspect is considered to be the attitudes, behaviors, and competencies of the teachers who implement these SEL programs. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) assert that teachers' own social emotional competencies influence the development of these skills in students. Teachers must first develop these competencies themselves to implement SEL programs effectively (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Therefore, teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and the degree to which they internalize the program emerge as key factors in the success of SEL programs. Jennings and Greenberg's (2009) Prosocial Classroom Model highlights the significant contributions of teachers' social emotional competencies to student development. Students' SEL skills can be cultivated not only in early childhood but also within educational settings. This model emphasizes the importance of creating conducive learning conditions in the classroom to promote social emotional skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Schonert-Reichl (2019) asserts that teachers and learning environments can develop SEL skills and that these competencies contribute to students' emotional development as much as to their academic achievements (Schonert-Reichl, 2019). Additionally, shared professional development opportunities grounded in SEL principles positively impact teacher-student relationships and classroom management strategies (Robertson et al., 2017).

Durlak et al. (2011) highlight the need to support teachers' professional development in SEL and to enhance their social emotional competencies to ensure the effective implementation of these programs. Studies indicate that teachers' competencies in implementing SEL practices are crucial for children's benefit from SEL programs. However, teachers often report having limited learning experiences in SEL. Most teachers express feelings of inadequacy regarding SEL practices. For instance, according to an ASPEN Institute report (2018), around 90% of teachers believe that teaching social emotional skills would benefit their students, yet 80% indicate a need for support in this area. Therefore, offering practical SEL professional development training for teachers is an essential first step to fostering SEL competencies in learning environments.

When examining the related literature, studies in Türkiye on SEL primarily focus on structuring educational programs and practices aimed at children. However, it is observed that professional development or in-service training programs to enhance teachers' abilities to create a classroom climate that supports SEL, foster supportive attitudes and behaviors, and provide SEL-compatible learning environments are limited. In addition, various studies have been conducted in Türkiye to explore teachers' perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and their level of knowledge regarding this concept. In a study by Göl-Güven (2016), it was reported that teachers value SEL programs. However, the findings also revealed that teachers are hesitant to implement these programs in their classrooms. This hesitation,



despite the importance teachers place on SEL skills, could be attributed to a lack of adequate training in implementing such programs. Similarly, in a study conducted by Esen-Aygün (2017), it was found that the majority of teachers had not previously heard of the SEL concept. These findings highlight the need for a professional development program specifically designed to enhance teachers' understanding and implementation of SEL in Türkiye.

In general, upon reviewing the related studies, there appears to be not a single scientifically designed, implemented, or evaluated SEL professional development training for teachers developed in alignment with program development elements and similar in scope and purpose to the current research. Additionally, in the shared text of the Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Model Curriculum, updated in 2024, it is stated that 'Social-emotional learning skills are an important part of all courses as cross-curricular components,' emphasizing that SEL skills are considered one of the core objectives of cross-curricular components for holistic skill development at all levels (MEB, 2024). In this context, it is considered that teachers tasked with implementing SEL in classrooms may increasingly need comprehensive SEL Professional Development Training models developed on a scientific foundation.

Therefore, this study aims to design a professional development training program for teachers that equips them with conceptual knowledge of SEL, fosters attitudes and understandings to support students' SEL skills, and enhances their competencies in creating SEL-compatible classroom climates and designing SEL-oriented learning experiences. Additionally, the professional development training intends to raise teachers' awareness of the importance of social emotional skills in children's lives and encourage them to implement SEL practices in their classrooms. In this context, a 40-hour, application-based professional development training program was designed by following program development steps, with the goal of implementing and evaluating it among 12 volunteer classroom and preschool teachers in Istanbul.

Method

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed research methodology, which focuses on the collection, analysis, and integration of both qualitative and quantitative data within a single study or a series of studies (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Timans, Wouters, & Heilbron, 2019). To evaluate the SEL Professional Development Program (SEL-PDP), a comprehensive assessment was conducted by integrating qualitative and quantitative data collected with this purpose. In educational applications, analyzing qualitative data for evaluation provides a deeper understanding of outcomes (Saban & Ersoy, 2019). This study utilizes an "embedded mixed design," one of the mixed research designs in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected concurrently and interpreted together. Embedded mixed design allows the combined use of qualitative and quantitative data, thereby strengthening the data collection process, testing the implementation, and gaining a better understanding of participant responses (Creswell, 2017; Battista & Torre, 2023).

In the quantitative dimension, a quasi-experimental design was used. In the qualitative dimension, a "reflection day" was organized for participants to apply the SEL activities introduced during the SEL workshops in their classrooms and to reflect on their experiences. During the reflection day, participants shared their activities based on specific criteria, and

these reflections were recorded as anecdotal observations by an observer for later analysis.

The research process follows the notation QUAN → qual + QUAN as described by Morse (1991). Additionally, the research flowchart was created based on Creswell & Plano Clark's (2018) model.

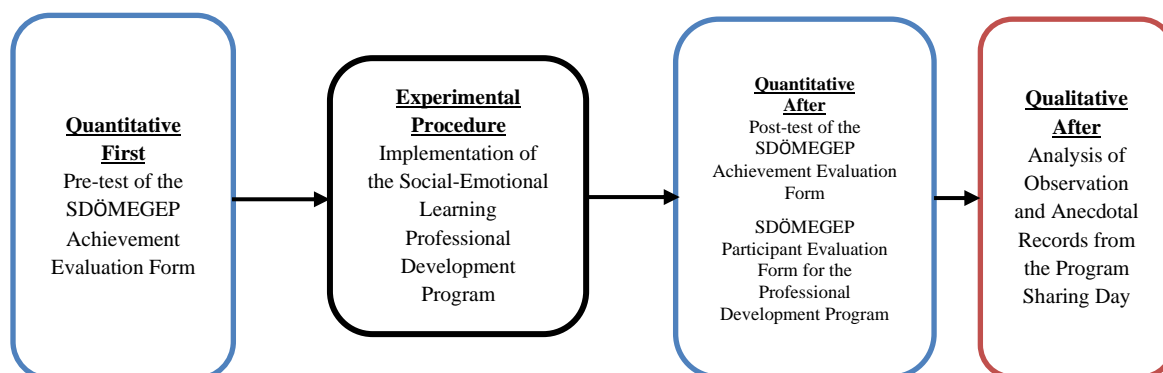


Figure 2. Embedded Mixed Design Research Flowchart

Participant Group

In this study, a purposive sampling method was used to determine the group of teachers participating in the SEL Professional Development Training Program. Purposive sampling allows for the selection of participants who best align with the research's goals and objectives, thus enhancing the study's reliability and the validity of the results. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants based on specific criteria, ensuring alignment with the research methodology, objectives, and the reliability of outcomes (Balçı, 2001; Campbell et al., 2020). Additionally, it allows for the acquisition of the most meaningful and valid data from the targeted specific groups (Büyüköztürk et al., 2012; Denieffe, 2020). In accordance with the purposive sampling method, the selection of participants for the program was based on the following criteria: *being actively employed as a preschool or primary school teacher, working at any school in Istanbul, being available on the dates of in-person workshop sessions, not having previously participated in a training program focused on social-emotional learning, having an interest in social-emotional learning, and being willing to implement social-emotional learning practices in their classrooms.* The purposive sampling method was chosen to accurately evaluate the effects of the SEL Professional Development Training Program and to enhance the study's overall reliability by selecting appropriate participants. Participants selected through this method provided a more accurate and reliable basis for evaluating the program's effects.

A series of processes were followed to determine the participant group based on the criteria established within the purposive sampling framework. First, an application form was created to identify participants who met the group criteria. A total of 29 candidate participants applied to the program. Of these, 15 participants who met the specified criteria were selected. All 15 selected participants met the purposive sampling criteria. All participants (100%) were female, as were all applicants (29 in total). This result suggests that female educators show greater interest in SEL and related professional development fields. Among the 15 participants, 6 (40%) were preschool teachers, and 9 (60%) were primary school teachers. Nine (60%) of the participants had undergraduate-level education, while 6 (40%) held

postgraduate degrees. In terms of professional experience, 3 participants (20%) had 1-5 years, 2 participants (13%) had 6-10 years, 4 participants (27%) had 11-15 years, 4 participants (27%) had 16-20 years, and 2 participants (13%) had 21 or more years of experience.

A total of 12 participants actively participated and completed the SEL-PDP program. Data collected from these 12 participants were included in the study's evaluation process.

Implementation of the Professional Development Program

A comprehensive series of processes was conducted in the design phase of the SEL Professional Development Program. This section details the specific actions taken at each stage of the program's design, using the elements of educational program development as a framework. The process of program development in education can be described through various models, all of which emphasize the key elements of objectives, content, process, and evaluation. As Demirel (2006) notes, program development in education represents a cohesive interaction among these elements, wherein the dynamic relationships between objectives, content, process, and evaluation form an integrated whole. The design process for the professional development program is summarized below in accordance with this framework.

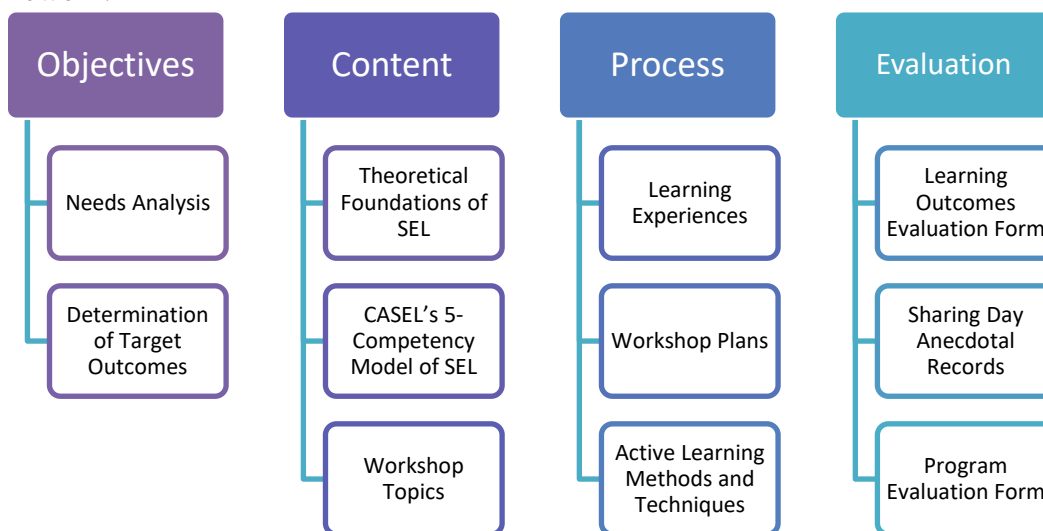


Figure 3. Elements of the Program

A needs analysis was conducted in designing the SEL-PDP. Initially, this analysis was performed through a literature review to determine why teachers require SEL training. Studies in literature were examined to identify the need for teachers to develop SEL skills. Subsequently, in-service teacher training and professional development programs across Türkiye were reviewed to assess the extent to which SEL training is provided to teachers. Lastly, needs analysis forms were created for experts and teachers specializing in SEL, teacher education, professional development, and in-service training. These forms allowed teachers and experts to express their opinions on the needs of the planned professional development program. Based on the findings from the literature review, document analysis, and expert opinions, the program's learning outcomes were established.

Following the establishment of learning outcomes, the content selection process commenced. Content was chosen to focus on the theoretical foundations of SEL, SEL competencies, and practices supporting SEL competencies, teacher attitudes, and classroom climate.

Accordingly, a model for SEL competencies was selected. Although various SEL competency models were observed in the literature, CASEL's Five Competencies Model stood out for its comprehensive scope and clarity.

During the design of the learning processes, the creation of workshop plans began in line with the workshop topics and outcomes. Active learning methods were predominantly employed in planning and implementing the learning experiences for the participating teachers. Active learning is an approach that includes various strategies, methods, and techniques designed to actively involve learners in learning activities and ensure their responsibility in the learning process (Açıkgöz, 2008; Hendrickson, 2019). The primary reason for designing the SEL-PDP workshops around active learning was the recognition that teachers could develop practical skills in this area more effectively through hands-on activities than theoretical instruction. Furthermore, when teachers experience and apply SEL strategies directly in professional development workshops, they are more likely to learn and internalize these strategies, making them more meaningful and enduring. Active participation also increases teachers' motivation and provides insight into how to integrate SEL skills into their instructional processes (Durlak et al., 2011).

The SEL-PDP aimed to equip teachers with practical skills and experiential learning over theory. To this end, the workshops incorporated various active learning methods and techniques, such as educational games, jigsaw, cooperative learning activities, advertising film projects, reading circles, think-pair-share, Socratic questioning, improvisation, role-playing, group discussions, posters, news articles, frozen images, acrostics, debates, letter writing, and snowball techniques.

In conclusion, the SEL-PDP consisted of 12 face-to-face workshops, each lasting 3 hours, along with a 4-hour sharing day meeting, forming a total of 40 hours of training. The final element of the program, the evaluation phase, including the assessment methods, techniques, and data collection tools used, is presented in detail in the data collection section.

Data Collection Tools

In line with the mixed research methodology used to evaluate the SEL-PDP, three different data collection techniques were selected, employing various tools within each technique. These methods and tools are as follows:

SEL-PDP Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form

To assess the learning outcomes of the SEL Professional Development Program, a learning outcomes evaluation form consisting of 10 open-ended questions was developed. Initially, critical learning outcomes covered in the workshops were identified. To ensure that the item structure and evaluation of the open-ended questions accurately measured the targeted outcomes, feedback was obtained from three experts: two measurement and evaluation specialists and one program development expert. Based on their feedback, necessary adjustments were made, and the form was finalized. The learning outcomes evaluation form was administered as a pre-test and post-test at the beginning and end of the SEL-PDP

SEL Classroom Applications Sharing Day Anecdote Record Form

After completing the workshops, a reflection day was organized for teachers to share their experiences with SEL classroom applications practiced during the professional development program. On this sharing day, all teachers were expected to present their



experiences related to SEL activities implemented in their classrooms. During the experience-sharing presentations, an observer used a semi-structured form to take anecdotal notes of the teachers' narratives.

SEL-PDP Evaluation Form

To gather participant teachers' views and evaluations of the program's quality and effectiveness, a program evaluation form was developed. This form was adapted from the Emotional Intelligence Education Program Evaluation Form designed by Sarısoy and Erişen (2018) and tailored to the implemented SEL-DPD. The form includes evaluation items covering all elements of the program, as well as additional items addressing factors that influence the program, such as instructors, technological requirements, and venue, resulting in 18 evaluation items. The form was structured as a 5-point Likert scale, and after receiving input from two academics specializing in measurement, evaluation, and program development, the form was finalized. Upon completion of the professional development program, the form was administered digitally via Google Forms.

Data Analysis

Various analysis methods and techniques were employed during the data analysis process to suit the study's nature and the type of data collected. For analyzing quantitative data, the first step involved examining the results of the SEL-PDP Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form, applied as a pre-test and post-test. A rubric was developed to score responses to the open-ended questions, and all forms were reviewed and scored using this rubric. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test was applied to analyze the participants' pre-test and post-test scores, assessing performance differences before and after the program. This test is appropriate for non-parametric data and is frequently used for comparing pre-test and post-test results in small samples, as it effectively identifies significant differences (Can, 2013; Couch et al., 2018). Additionally, participants' percentage scores for each question were compared to provide a detailed view of the program's impact.

Quantitative data from the SEL-PDP Program Evaluation Form, designed to measure the overall effectiveness of the program and gather participants' feedback, were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics summarize data from large samples and aim to categorize data based on their characteristics (Büyüköztürk, 1993). Frequency distributions and percentage comparisons were conducted for each item, revealing general trends in the data.

For qualitative data analysis, content analysis was employed. This method organizes similar data around specific themes and concepts, arranging them within an understandable framework for the reader (Şimşek & Yıldırım, 2011; Eskawati, 2023). The statements from participants on SEL Classroom Applications Sharing Day were analyzed using content analysis, and sample statements were interpreted under the themes that emerged from the analysis.

Validity and Reliability

The SEL-PDP Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form used in the quantitative portion of this study was designed by the researchers based on the professional development program's outcomes and content. To create this 10-question form, key learning outcomes were identified in alignment with workshop topics, and questions were generated accordingly. To ensure content validity, the designed form was evaluated by a program development expert. Content

validity is a fundamental component in assessing whether a measurement tool aligns with the study's objectives (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). The form was initially evaluated by a program development expert for alignment with target outcomes. Based on feedback from the expert, necessary adjustments were made, ensuring content validity by aligning the questions with program outcomes. Subsequently, the form was sent to two additional experts in measurement and evaluation to assess content coverage and reliability. Reliability refers to the consistency of data and expresses the replicability of research results. Content validity tests whether questions adequately cover the investigated concepts (Erlinawati & Muslimah, 2021).

The rubric developed for scoring the results of the learning outcomes evaluation forms was similarly reviewed by two measurement and evaluation experts, with final adjustments made accordingly. After the researchers completed the scoring using the rubric, they also submitted the scores to another program development expert for reliability verification. Reliability testing, particularly the achievement of high agreement between scores from different raters, i.e. that pertains to interrater scoring, is essential (Vakili & Jahangiri, 2018). Accordingly, the program development expert was asked to evaluate the form results using the same rubric. The mean scores across the two evaluations were calculated to determine final scores. The final version of the SEL-PDP Evaluation Form, adapted from the in-service training program evaluation form by Sarısoy and Erişen (2018), was approved by the researchers. Receiving feedback from experts is a crucial step in ensuring validity, particularly in program evaluations (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Consequently, the form was sent to a researcher specialized in adult and teacher in-service training programs to verify whether it contained an item set that comprehensively covered all program components. Based on the feedback received, the form was revised to align with the SEL-PDP's participant evaluations.

After researchers conducted content analysis on the data obtained from participant statements during the SEL Classroom Applications Sharing Day, the resulting themes, codes, and categories were tabulated. These tables were sent to a researcher specializing in qualitative research to evaluate the alignment of themes, codes, and categories. Consistency between themes and categories is critical in ensuring reliability in qualitative research (Afiyanti, 2008). During this process, consistency and replicability criteria were considered, and adjustments to the themes, categories, and codes were made following the evaluation, preparing the results for interpretation.

Findings

This section presents the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data collected to evaluate the program. The analyses are reported in the sequence outlined in the research flow chart. Accordingly, the analyses presented in this section are as follows: Analysis of the Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form Applied as Pre-Test and Post-Test, Analysis of Observation and Anecdotal Records from the SEL Classroom Applications Sharing Day, and Analysis of SEL-PDP Evaluation Forms. Detailed analyses of these data are provided below.

Analysis of the Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form Applied as Pre-Test and Post-Test

The Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form, consisting of 10 questions, was administered as a pre-test before the program began and as a post-test after the program concluded to assess the cognitive learning outcomes of the SEL-PDP workshops. The 10 questions were designed based on the critical learning outcomes identified to evaluate the cognitive achievements covered in the workshops.



The data collected from the pre-test and post-test applications were analyzed question by question and as overall scores using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to examine the results. Additionally, the pre-test and post-test forms of the 12 participants (n=12) who met the maximum participation criteria were included in the analysis.

The table below provides a comparison of the total pre-test and post-test scores obtained by the participants.

Table 1. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Total Scores on the Learning Outcomes Evaluation Form

Scores	Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Z	P
Pre-test	Negative	0	,00	,00	-3,059	.002
	Positive	12	6,5	78,00		
Post-test	Ties	0				
	Total	12				

According to the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results, there is a statistically significant difference between participants' pre-test and post-test scores ($Z = -3.059$, $p < 0.01$). The substantial difference in mean ranks between pre-test and post-test scores indicates that post-test scores are significantly higher. The obtained Z value of -3.059 reflects both the magnitude and direction of the observed difference, with the negative Z value indicating that post-test scores were higher than pre-test scores, and this difference was not due to chance. The p-value of .002 demonstrates that the results are statistically significant, well below the 0.01 significance level. Additionally, with a Z value of -3.059 and a total number of observations (N) of 12, the effect size was calculated as $r = -0.88$, indicating a large effect according to Cohen's criteria (Cohen, 1988). These findings suggest that the program effectively contributed to participants' acquisition of cognitive outcomes related to the theoretical and conceptual foundation, importance, and applications of SEL presented in the workshops.

Additionally, participants' success percentages based on their total scores for each question were compared, and changes in success percentages (%) based on total scores are reported. The table below presents participants' pre-test and post-test success percentages for each question, as well as the rate of increase in success percentage.

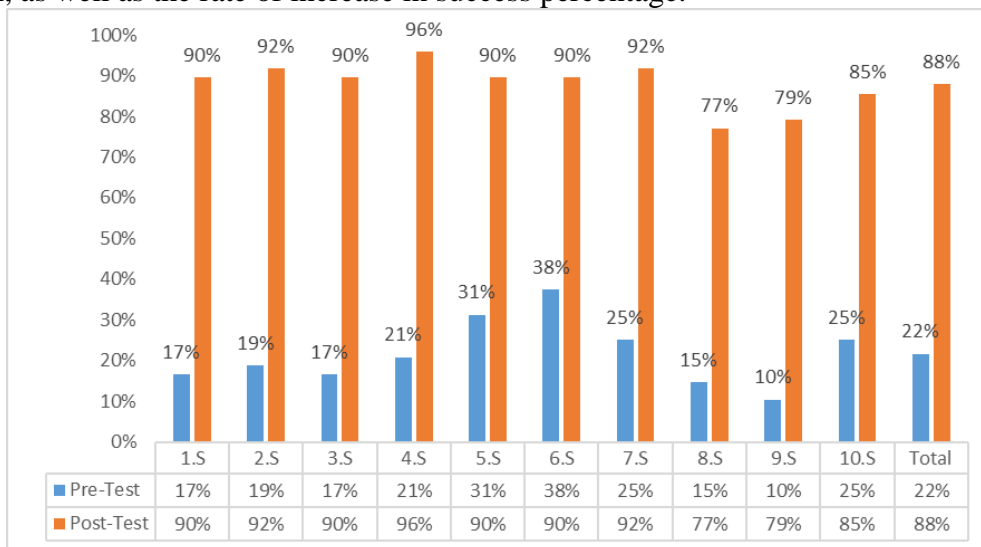


Figure 4. Question-Based Pre-Test and Post-Test Percentage Success Chart

The pre-test and post-test analyses conducted to evaluate the impact of the SEL-PDP on participants reveal a significant increase in their knowledge and skill levels. The pre-test average was 22%, while the post-test average, conducted after the program implementation, was 88%. Overall, the differences between pre-test and post-test results clearly demonstrate the positive impact of the SEL-PDP on participants. The program significantly enhanced participants' knowledge and skills related to SEL topics.

Analysis of Observation and Anecdotal Records from the SEL Classroom Applications Sharing Day

This content analysis evaluates the anecdotes shared by participants about how they applied SEL competencies in their classrooms and the experiences they encountered throughout this process. Participants described how they implemented SEL competencies, routines, challenges, and the contributions these practices made to children's development in their classrooms. The main themes that emerged include self-awareness, relationship-building skills, self-management, responsible decision-making, social awareness, challenges, and opportunities. These themes are presented below.



Figure 4. Themes Emerging from the Content Analysis of Sharing Day Data

The content analysis identified six distinct themes, each detailed below with sample participant statements and commentary.

Theme 1: Self-Awareness and Self-Recognition

Participants implemented activities aimed at developing students' self-awareness skills. These activities allowed students to recognize their own emotions and behaviors and to evaluate their personal growth.

"We created a positive outlook chart inspired by the kindness project. Children designed their symbols and assessed themselves." (Participant 1)

"We addressed areas of self-awareness, strengthened feedback skills, and enhanced their communication with one another through group activities." (Participant 2)



"Children made significant strides in self-recognition and emotion awareness. They started noticing emotional transitions they initially found challenging." (Participant 3)

These statements indicate that self-awareness skills positively developed among students, helping them monitor their growth processes.

Theme 2: Relationship Building and Group Work

Group work activities designed to improve relationship-building skills enhanced students' social interactions and cooperation skills, fostering empathy and understanding.

"We did group activities, which improved their communication and created a more harmonious classroom environment." (Participant 2)

"Through creating stories and working on emotions in groups, students developed listening and understanding skills." (Participant 4)

"I used emotion cards, allowing children to express their needs." (Participant 7)

Work on relationship-building skills shows that students became more sensitive and empathetic toward each other, strengthening their social interactions through group activities.

Theme 3: Self-Management and Responsibility

Activities focused on self-management skills helped students develop self-control, responsibility, and better self-expression. Participants noted that these skills were reinforced through daily routines and practices.

"We worked on self-awareness and self-management. The children developed in terms of self-control and responsibility." (Participant 6)

"I provided opportunities for students to take responsibility and lead tasks in the classroom." (Participant 5)

"Students became more conscious about fulfilling their responsibilities and began expressing themselves." (Participant 6)

These statements highlight the importance of self-management and responsibility skills in fostering students' self-regulation and sense of responsibility.

Theme 4: Social Awareness

Participants implemented various activities to cultivate social awareness among students, enabling them to notice others and strengthen their social interaction and empathy skills.

"We discussed the concept of power, emphasizing that it is not just physical but can include social strengths like love." (Participant 2)

"Students created and role-played stories focused on social awareness to understand and empathize with others." (Participant 4)

"By working with different social roles in the classroom, children learned to recognize the needs of others." (Participant 5)

"Students became more sensitive to their social environment, approaching each other with more care and empathy." (Participant 6)

Social awareness activities show that students improved their ability to understand others and strengthened their social interactions in the classroom.

Theme 5: Challenges in SEL Implementation

Participants also shared challenges encountered during SEL implementation, particularly with establishing routines in the classroom and managing curriculum demands, which affected the sustainability of their practices.

"The feasibility of implementation in just one classroom presented sustainability challenges." (Participant 1)

"The heavy curriculum load and program intensity made it difficult to implement SEL consistently." (Participant 7)

"At the start of the year, I struggled to determine if the implementations were effective." (Participant 6)

These statements highlight that sustainability and curriculum intensity posed obstacles for teachers in implementing SEL practices effectively.

Theme 6: Benefits of SEL Practices for Children and Teachers

The positive effects of SEL practices on children were emphasized, particularly in supporting social skills and emotional development. Teachers also observed their professional growth through these practices.

"As a result of the practices, there was more communication and sharing among the children." (Participant 3)

"The children developed their responsibility-taking and problem-solving skills." (Participant 6)

"A problem-solving atmosphere emerged among the children, creating a more positive classroom environment." (Participant 7)

These statements show that SEL practices helped children develop responsibility, problem-solving skills, and social awareness, and also contributed to strengthening teacher-student relationships.

The analysis reveals the diversity of SEL (SEL) competencies applied in classrooms following the SEL-PDP and highlights the impact of these applications on students. Efforts to develop skills such as self-awareness, relationship-building, self-management, responsible decision-making, and social awareness positively impacted students' social and emotional development. Participants observed that SEL routines enhanced students' responsibility-taking, self-expression, and empathy skills. Although challenges related to curriculum intensity and sustainability were reported, the overall impact of SEL competencies in classrooms was positive.

Analysis of SEL-PDP Evaluation Forms

This section presents the statistical analysis of data obtained from the "SEL-PDP Evaluation Form," used to evaluate participant feedback on the implemented SEL Professional Development Program. Descriptive analysis of the data was performed using SPSS 27. The form was applied as a 5-point Likert scale, with corresponding scores for each rating presented in the table below:

The data obtained from the SEL-PDP evaluation form were analyzed by expressing each item's frequency (f) and percentage (%). Additionally, each item's standard deviation (sd) and arithmetic mean (\bar{x}) are provided. The analysis of data from the 12 participants (n=12) who completed the form is comprehensively presented in the table below.



Table 2. Analysis of Participant Feedback on the SEL-PDP

Evaluation Items	Never		Very Little		Partially		Quite		Completely		n	Ss	\bar{x}
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%			
	1- The SEL Professional Development Program met my expectations.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12			
2- The objectives and content of the training program were well-organized.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
3- The teaching and learning strategies, methods, and techniques used during the program facilitated active participation in the learning process.	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8	11	92	12	,08	4,9
4- The teaching technologies and materials used in the program were sufficient.	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	25	9	75	12	,13	4,8
5- The physical environment (building, classroom, etc.) where the program was conducted was adequate.	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	17	10	83	12	,11	4,8
6- The assessment and evaluation activities implemented at each stage of the program were sufficient.	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	17	10	83	12	,11	4,8
7- The instructor was knowledgeable about the content delivered in the program.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
8- The instructor's explanations were clear and understandable.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
9- The instructor effectively used body language throughout the program.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
10- I observed that the instructor came prepared for the workshops.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
11- The training program contributed to my personal development.	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	33	8	67	12	,14	4,7
12- The training program contributed to my professional development.	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	25	9	75	12	,13	4,8
13- The training program is beneficial for educators/teachers.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
14- The program provided me with the opportunity to actively experience SEL practices.	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	25	9	75	12	,13	4,8
15- After the training program, my efforts to develop SEL skills in my classroom increased.	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	50	6	50	12	,15	4,5
16- The training program equipped me with the competence to implement SEL activities, routines, and practices in my classroom.	-	-	-	-	1	8	5	42	6	50	12	,19	4,4
17- The program has the quality to contribute to the professional motivation of educators/teachers.	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	17	10	83	12	,11	4,8

18- I would recommend this program to everyone who is an educator/teacher.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	100	12	,00	5,0
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Reference Ranges for Average Scores: 1-1.80: Never / 1.81-2.60: Very Little / 2.61-3.40: Partially / 3.41-4.40: Quite / 4.21-5.00: Completely

The analysis of the SEL-PDP Evaluation Form data indicates that participants evaluated the program very positively. All participants (100%) reported that the program fully met their expectations, as reflected by an average score of 5.0 with a standard deviation of 0.00. Additionally, all participants (100%) stated that the program’s objectives and content were well-organized, with this item also receiving an average score of 5.0 and a standard deviation of 0.00. The instructors were reported to have complete mastery of the content ($\bar{x} = 5.0$, $sd = 0.00$) and were described as clear and understandable in their explanations ($\bar{x} = 5.0$, $sd = 0.00$). Participants also gave high ratings for the instructors’ effective use of body language ($\bar{x} = 5.0$, $sd = 0.00$) and preparedness for the workshops. These evaluations indicate a high level of professionalism and preparation among the instructors.

Participants rated the program as highly beneficial for both educators and teachers ($\bar{x} = 5.0$, $sd = 0.00$) and recommended it to all in these roles ($\bar{x} = 5.0$, $sd = 0.00$). These items show that the program made a significant contribution to educators' professional development. Additionally, the teaching and learning strategies, methods, and techniques used during the program were deemed highly effective in fostering active participation ($\bar{x} = 4.9$, $sd = 0.08$), with 92% of participants responding “Completely,” indicating an interactive and engaging learning environment.

Lower average scores were observed for certain items, notably “After the training program, my efforts to develop SEL skills in my classroom increased” ($\bar{x} = 4.5$, $sd = 0.15$), with 50% of participants rating it as “Quite” and 50% as “Completely.” This indicates that while the program was effective in encouraging participants to develop SEL skills, there is room for growth compared to other items. Examining all items' average scores within the reference ranges places them within the “Completely” range. The overall average score of 4.85 suggests that participants fully agreed with the program’s strengths across multiple areas, reflecting highly positive evaluations throughout.

Conclusion and Discussion

The SEL-PDP comprises a 40-hour applied professional development training process aimed at enhancing teachers’ SEL competencies. Based on the evaluations conducted at the end of the program pre-test/post-test analyses, classroom application reflections, and program evaluation form data the strengths and areas for improvement of the program have been analyzed in detail.

The pre-test/post-test assessments conducted to evaluate the effects of SEL-PDP reveal a significant increase in participants’ cognitive outcomes. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test indicate a statistically significant difference between participants’ pre-test and post-test scores. This finding suggests that the program had a substantial impact on participants; the considerably higher post-test scores confirm that the program significantly enhanced participants’ knowledge levels. This finding aligns with studies demonstrating the contributions of SEL programs to cognitive development (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Bar-On, 2006; Dulewicz & Higgs, 2000; Jones, Bouffard & Weissbourd, 2013; Rexhepi & Berisha,



2017).

The low level of knowledge observed among teachers before the program regarding SEL aligns with the literature indicating that SEL is still not widely understood among educators (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2007; Esen-Aygün, 2017; Blewitt et al., 2020). Additionally, the ASPEN Institute Report (2018) highlights teachers' need for support in SEL and its applications, confirming the pre-test findings. The fact that teachers acquired knowledge on how to support social emotional skills through educational interventions is consistent with studies showing the positive impacts of such programs (Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014). These results indicate that the program was generally successful in terms of cognitive outcomes and significantly improved teachers' knowledge of SEL's theoretical foundations, definitions, significance, competencies, and applications. However, offering additional mentorship and in-class support to enhance teacher attitudes and behaviors could further strengthen the program's impact. Zins et al. (2004) emphasize that improving teacher attitudes in SEL programs can lead to a more profound impact on students.

The "Classroom Applications Sharing Day" observations and anecdotal records, conducted to understand the program's practical impact, provide important insights into how teachers applied SEL competencies in their classrooms. Participant teachers encountered both opportunities and challenges while integrating SEL competencies into their classrooms. Teachers particularly highlighted that applying skills such as self-awareness, relationship building, self-management, responsible decision-making, and social awareness positively impacted students' social emotional development. These findings are consistent with studies showing the benefits of SEL application in classroom settings for supporting student development (Greenberg et al., 2003; Lopes & Salovey, 2004; Weissberg & O'Brien, 2004; CASEL, 2005; Durlak et al., 2011; Roeser et al., 2012; Özdemir-Beceren & Zembat, 2016; Bølstad et al., 2023). For example, Jennings et al. (2017) demonstrated that the CARE for Teachers program strengthened teacher-student interactions and had positive effects on students' social emotional development.

Teachers observed improvements in their students' abilities to express themselves, empathize, and take responsibility by implementing SEL routines. This finding demonstrates that the program provided teachers with not only theoretical but also practical skills. As Durlak et al. (2011) note, practice-based SEL teacher training enhances teachers' motivation and provides insights into how to integrate SEL competencies into their teaching processes. Analyzing teachers' reflections on classroom applications revealed themes related to all SEL competencies, indicating that the program supported teachers' knowledge of classroom SEL practices. As Gimbert et al. (2021) note, professional development programs that help educators integrate SEL into daily pedagogical practices are essential for achieving better school-wide outcomes. However, some teachers reported difficulties in maintaining SEL practices sustainably due to curriculum intensity and time constraints. The challenges of sustaining these practices align with research suggesting the need for SEL to become a more integral part of education (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). These findings indicate that while the program was generally effective in classroom applications, teachers require additional guidance and resources to develop more sustainable strategies. Providing a more flexible structure for curriculum integration and SEL continuity could enhance teachers' classroom application competencies. As Zins et al. (2004) suggest, offering greater support for teachers in managing curriculum demands and ensuring the sustainability of classroom applications could increase the success of such programs.

The results of the evaluation form used to assess the overall success of the SEL-PDP indicate that the program was highly well-received by participants. All participants stated that the program fully met their expectations, and they found the program's content and objectives well-organized. The educators' expertise and clarity in presenting the content were among the program's strengths. These findings highlight that the professionalism and preparation level of the educators played a significant role in the program's success, and they align with literature emphasizing the importance of educator expertise in SEL program effectiveness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). However, the program scored lower in terms of equipping participants with classroom application competencies. This result suggests that although the program was successful in building application skills, further guidance is needed regarding classroom-based SEL applications. Half of the participants responded with "Fully Agree" and the other half with "Quite Agree" in this regard, indicating that teachers need more support in the process of integrating SEL competencies into the classroom. The overall mean score for the form falls within the highest rating range, "Strongly Agree", indicating that teachers evaluated the SEL-PDP as an effective professional development program.

Overall, it can be concluded that the SEL-PDP successfully increased teachers' knowledge levels and awareness of the importance of SEL and made a valuable contribution to teachers' professional development and classroom applications in SEL. These results are consistent with researchers such as Creswell (2017) and Battista & Torre (2023), who argue that SEL-focused training programs are effective in contributing to teachers' professional development. On the other hand, the results also indicate that some aspects of the program need to be strengthened to improve teachers' SEL application skills and enhance the sustainability of these skills. Providing more applied practice, mentorship, observation-feedback, and guidance for teachers could be essential to ensure the sustainability of classroom practices and program success. The need for support to ensure the successful continuation of SEL applications by teachers is frequently emphasized in the literature (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Furthermore, as Desimone et al. (2002) highlight, the long-term impacts of such programs may increase with continuous support and opportunities for practice offered to teachers.

In conclusion, the SEL-PDP designed within the scope of this study is expected to serve as a model for holistic, need-based SEL training designed using scientific processes for teachers in Türkiye. Given the emphasis on SEL competencies in the newly updated curriculum under the Türkiye Yüzyılı Maarif Model (MEB, 2024) and the expectations related to the application of this learning model, the design, implementation, and evaluation of the SEL-PDP will serve as a guide for educational planners, professional development leaders, and policymakers.

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Declarations

Acknowledgments:

This study is based on the doctoral thesis of the first author, Barış Sarısoy, titled "Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of the Social Emotional Learning Professional Development Program."

Funding:

This study was supported by the Scientific Research Projects of Yildiz Technical University as part of a doctoral thesis support project. (Project code: SDK-2022-4924)

Ethics Statements:

The ethics approval was gathered on 20.05.2022 from the Ethics Committee for Social and Humanities Research at Yildiz Technical University.

Conflict of Interest:

The authors state that there are no conflicts of interest with any organization or individual related to this study.

