
IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) TO IMPROVE STUDENTS COLLABORATION SKILLS AT SD IT IQRO MEDAN

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Collaboration Skills, Cooperative Character, SEL, Social and Emotional Learning

This study aims to describe the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in improving students' collaboration skills at SD IT Iqro Medan. The background of this study arises from the low ability of students to work together and communicate effectively during group learning activities. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques consisting of observation, interviews, and documentation. The research subjects included teachers and fourth-grade students. The data were analyzed interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that the application of the five core dimensions of SEL, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, successfully increased the average collaboration skills of students by 48.4%. Students showed significant improvement in cooperation, communication, responsibility, and appreciation of others' opinions. The implementation of SEL also created a learning atmosphere that was positive, empathetic, and participatory. Therefore, social and emotional learning proved to be effective in fostering collaboration skills while strengthening the value of mutual cooperation among elementary school students.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan implementasi pembelajaran sosial dan emosional atau Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) dalam meningkatkan keterampilan kolaborasi siswa di SD IT Iqro Medan. Latar belakang penelitian ini berangkat dari kondisi rendahnya kemampuan siswa dalam bekerja sama dan berkomunikasi secara efektif selama kegiatan pembelajaran kelompok. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data berupa observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian terdiri atas guru serta siswa kelas IV. Data dianalisis secara interaktif melalui tahap reduksi, penyajian, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan lima dimensi utama SEL, yaitu kesadaran diri, pengelolaan diri, kesadaran sosial, keterampilan berhubungan, serta pengambilan keputusan yang bertanggung jawab, mampu meningkatkan rata-rata keterampilan

kolaborasi siswa sebesar 48,4%. Siswa menunjukkan perkembangan yang signifikan dalam aspek kerja sama, komunikasi, tanggung jawab, serta penghargaan terhadap pendapat teman. Implementasi SEL juga menciptakan suasana belajar yang positif, empatik, dan partisipatif. Dengan demikian, pembelajaran sosial dan emosional terbukti efektif dalam menumbuhkan keterampilan kolaborasi sekaligus memperkuat karakter gotong royong pada siswa sekolah dasar.

Kata kunci: Keterampilan Kolaborasi, Karakter Gotong Royong, Pembelajaran Sosial dan Emosional, SEL

INTRODUCTION

Education in the 21st century is no longer focused solely on academic achievement but also emphasizes the importance of developing students' social and emotional competencies. In an increasingly complex and interconnected global context, the ability to understand oneself, manage emotions, empathize with others, and build positive social relationships has become an essential asset for the younger generation. Asdhar & Yoenanto (2024) state that mastery of social and emotional aspects plays an important role in shaping character balance and students' learning success in elementary schools. One approach that has been widely integrated into education systems to achieve this goal is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), a learning approach that focuses on developing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making as part of the learning process (Nuraeni et al., 2023).

Social and emotional learning helps students understand and manage their feelings, build empathy, and develop reflective thinking about their own and others' behavior. According to Waryani et al. (2022), the implementation of SEL in elementary schools is crucial because at this stage of development, children are in the process of forming fundamental character traits. Through learning that fosters social and emotional awareness, students not only gain academic knowledge but also learn to interact positively with peers, appreciate differences, and build healthy relationships within the school environment.

In the context of 21st century learning, one of the competencies closely related to social and emotional learning is collaboration skills. Selvi et al. (2023) explain that collaboration is the ability to work with others to achieve common goals through effective communication, shared responsibility, and collective problem solving. Collaboration skills become an important foundation in creating a positive and productive classroom climate because students learn to support one another, listen, and appreciate their peers'

ideas. Karmina et al. (2024) add that the application of cooperative learning integrated with the principles of SEL can increase students' self confidence, interpersonal communication, and ability to work together harmoniously.

Research results show that consistent implementation of SEL has a significant impact on improving students' collaboration skills. Budiansyah et al. (2025) report that the implementation of SEL programs in elementary schools increased students' collaboration skills by 25 percent from the pre cycle to the first cycle, and by 42 percent in the second cycle. These findings show that learning that emphasizes social and emotional aspects affects not only individual attitudes but also the dynamics of group learning in classrooms. Meanwhile, Tarusu et al. (2025) emphasize that SEL has a broad impact in strengthening the relationship between schools and families because effective collaboration between both parties is the key to fostering children's social and emotional character in a sustainable way.

Although the implementation of social and emotional learning has shown positive results, various challenges are still faced in practice. Many elementary school teachers admit that they have difficulty integrating SEL activities into thematic learning due to limited time, lack of training, and insufficient conceptual understanding (Karmina et al., 2024). On the other hand, most collaborative activities applied in learning are still mechanical, where students work together only to complete tasks without really internalizing the values of empathy, open communication, and shared responsibility (Waryani et al., 2022). This condition shows the need for a more structured learning approach in implementing SEL so that it truly impacts the improvement of students' collaboration skills.

Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools (SD IT), as educational institutions based on Islamic values, have great potential in implementing social and emotional learning. The spiritual values taught in Islamic education such as respect, helping others, and cooperation are in line with the main principles of SEL. Therefore, the implementation of social and emotional learning in SD IT environments can be an effective strategy to form students who are not only knowledgeable and accomplished but also have good character, empathy, and the ability to cooperate well.

Based on this, this study focuses on the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) to improve students' collaboration skills at SD IT Iqro Medan. This study

aims to describe how SEL is implemented in Islamic elementary schools, the extent of its influence on students' collaboration abilities, and the supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation process. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of learning practices that are oriented toward a balance between cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual intelligence, while strengthening a collaborative culture in elementary education.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at providing an in-depth description of the process of implementing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) to enhance students' collaboration skills at SD IT Iqro Medan. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding meaning, processes, and social experiences that occur in a natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this approach, the researcher seeks to gain a holistic understanding of how teachers apply SEL-based learning and how students develop their collaborative abilities during the learning process.

The research was conducted at SD Islam Terpadu (IT) Iqro Medan, an elementary school that implements a learning system based on Islamic and character values. The subjects of the study consisted of a fourth-grade teacher and all 25 fourth-grade students. The subjects were selected purposively, considering that students at this level are in a stage of social development where they begin to show the ability to cooperate and interact actively with peers (Miles et al., 2018).

The research process was carried out in three main stages: preparation, implementation, and reflection. In the preparation stage, the researcher coordinated with the school and the teacher to determine the observation schedule and identify learning activities that contain elements of students' social and emotional development. The researcher also prepared research instruments such as observation sheets and interview guides. In the implementation stage, direct observations were conducted on learning activities that integrated SEL principles. The teacher applied learning strategies emphasizing five main aspects of SEL, namely self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making as described by Nuraeni et al. (2023). During the learning process, the researcher observed students' collaborative behaviors, such as the ability to work together, respect others' opinions, share roles, and

solve group problems constructively. After all activities were completed, the reflection stage was conducted through discussions and interviews with the teacher to review the effectiveness of SEL implementation and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in improving students' collaboration skills.

The main instrument in this study was the researcher, who acted as a human instrument in collecting and analyzing data (Sugiyono, 2022). Data were collected using three main techniques: participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted to record students' behaviors and interactions during the learning process, while interviews were used to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of SEL implementation in the classroom. Documentation served as supporting evidence to strengthen field findings, including photos of activities, teacher notes, and students' group work showing collaborative practices.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2018), which includes three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and simplifying information according to the research focus, namely the implementation of SEL and its impact on students' collaboration skills. The reduced data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate understanding of relationships between variables. Conclusion drawing was carried out continuously throughout the research process until valid and meaningful findings were obtained. Data validity was ensured through source and technique triangulation by comparing observation, interview, and documentation results to ensure consistency and reliability (Sugiyono, 2022). Therefore, the results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of social and emotional learning at SD IT Iqro Medan and its contribution to developing students' collaborative skills in the context of 21st-century learning.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to describe how the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) can enhance students' collaboration skills at SD IT Iqro Medan. Data were collected through four weeks of observation, interviews with teachers and students, and documentation of group learning activities.

In general, the implementation of SEL in the fourth-grade classroom was carried out by integrating five main dimensions: self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The teacher conducted project-based learning activities that encouraged students to work together, communicate effectively, and support one another. The observations of students' collaboration skills are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Collaboration Skills Before and After SEL Implementation

No	Aspects of Collaboration Skills	Before SEL (Average Score)	After SEL (Average Score)	Improvement (%)
1	Ability to work in groups	3,1	4,4	41,9%
2	Communication and idea sharing	2,9	4,2	44,8%
3	Respect for others' opinions	3,0	4,5	50,0%
4	Role and responsibility distribution	2,8	4,3	53,6%
5	Conflict resolution and joint decision making	2,7	4,1	51,9%
Total Average		2,9	4,3	48,4%

Description: Scores were measured using a 1–5 scale based on the observation sheet for collaboration skills.

Based on the data in Table 1, it can be seen that students' collaboration skills improved across all aspects after the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The highest improvement occurred in the aspect of role and responsibility distribution, with an increase of 53.6%, followed by conflict resolution and joint decision making, which increased by 51.9%. This indicates that the application of SEL encourages students to participate more actively in group work and manage their social relationships more positively.

At the beginning of the observation, most students tended to be passive in group work. They often waited for teacher directions, showed little initiative, and easily disagreed when their opinions were not accepted. However, after the teacher implemented SEL-based activities such as emotional reflection, role play, and group projects, students' behavior became more cooperative. They began to divide tasks fairly, listen to others' ideas, and find joint solutions when differences of opinion occurred.

This change is consistent with the teacher's interview statement: "Students are now better at controlling their emotions during discussions. They do not get angry easily or insist on their opinions." The teacher also mentioned that the use of SEL activities such as the "emotion circle" at the beginning of the lesson helped students recognize their own feelings before starting to collaborate. According to Goleman (2020), the ability to recognize and manage emotions is the foundation for developing empathy and social skills that support collaboration.

Documentation results also revealed visible changes in students' interactions. In the first week, only five out of seven groups were able to complete their tasks collaboratively. By the fourth week, all groups showed good teamwork and completed their projects on time. The teacher noted that the classroom atmosphere became more conducive and that conflicts among group members significantly decreased. This finding supports Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who stated that social and emotional learning helps create a safe, empathetic, and productive learning environment.

Furthermore, the 44.8% improvement in communication and idea sharing indicates that SEL contributes to developing healthy two-way communication among students. Through reflection exercises and guided discussions, students became more confident in expressing their ideas and listening to others. Interviews with students confirmed this; one student said, "Now when we work in groups, we don't talk over each other. We take turns sharing ideas." This shows development in relationship skills, one of the core domains of SEL (Nuraeni et al., 2023).

The aspect of respect for others' opinions also increased significantly by 50%. Before SEL was implemented, students tended to reject differing opinions emotionally. However, after participating regularly in SEL activities, they began to show empathy and mutual respect. Activities such as "sharing friends' feelings" and "teamwork games" helped students understand others' perspectives. This aligns with Elias et al. (2021), who found that social and emotional learning helps students develop social awareness and reduce aggressive behavior in learning environments.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that SEL implementation has a positive impact on improving students' collaboration skills. The average score increase of 48.4% reflects a real behavioral change in students' social interactions, cooperation, communication, and decision making. Social and emotional learning has proven effective

not only in strengthening peer relationships but also in fostering a participative and character-based learning culture.

These findings highlight the importance of implementing SEL in elementary schools, particularly in strengthening the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (Pancasila Student Profile), which emphasizes cooperative, independent, and empathetic character. As stated by Trilling & Fadel (2009), collaboration is one of the essential 21st-century skills that should be developed from an early age through holistic and student-centered learning approaches.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) positively influences the improvement of students' collaboration skills at SD IT Iqro Medan. By applying the five core dimensions of SEL, namely self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making, students demonstrated significant progress in teamwork, communication, mutual respect, and constructive conflict resolution. The average increase of 48.4% indicates that SEL effectively fosters a supportive and participatory learning environment. This finding highlights SEL as a strategic approach to developing students' social competence and character in accordance with the values of the Profil Pelajar Pancasila which emphasize cooperation, empathy, and responsibility.

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