

Teachers' Strategies in Implementing Social Emotional Learning to Improve Student's Wellbeing

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*Neneng Oktriani, Eka Titi Andaryani, Sri Sumartiningsih, Agus Yuwono^{abcd} 

¹²³⁴Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia.

Corresponding Author: nenengoktriani294@students.unnes.ac.id

ABSTRACT

A holistic education demands attention not only to the academic aspect, but also to the emotional and social development of students. *Social Emotional Learning* (SEL) is a strategic approach that has been proven to support the overall well-being of students. This study aims to analyze the strategies used by teachers in implementing SEL to improve *students' wellbeing*. The method used is qualitative descriptive with a literature study approach, which involves the analysis of fifteen articles from national and international journals published from 2020 to 2025. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed thematically to identify patterns of SEL implementation strategies by teachers and their relationship with the dimension of student welfare. The results of the study showed five main categories of strategies: integration of SEL values in the curriculum, reflective learning practices, creation of an empathetic classroom environment, provision of counseling guidance services, and teacher professional competency training. These five strategies contribute to strengthening emotional regulation, social relationships, confidence, and student learning motivation. This study concludes that effective SEL implementation requires strong teacher competence, a supportive school culture, and consistent implementation at all levels of education.

Keywords: *Social Emotional Learning, Teacher Strategy, Student Well-Being*

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INTRODUCTION

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is an educational framework designed to help students develop five main competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Nisa & Abdullah, 2023; Ferreira et al., 2020). According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), these five competencies support students in recognizing and managing emotions, building healthy social relationships, and making ethical decisions in daily life. The integrated implementation of SEL in the learning process not only has an impact on students' personal development, but also encourages the creation of a positive classroom climate, increased learning motivation, and better academic achievement (Afifah & Nasution, 2023).

On the other hand, student wellbeing is an important indicator in assessing the success of the educational process as a whole. This well-being includes the emotional, social, and psychological conditions of students that allow them to feel safe, accepted, and empowered to learn and thrive. Amid the complexity of social life and increasing academic pressure, particularly in the post-COVID-19 pandemic, many studies report increased levels of stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation among students. This situation emphasizes the importance of systematic efforts in creating a learning environment that is not only academically conducive, but also emotionally safe and supports students' social well-being (Faizah & Dewi, 2025; Green et al., 2021).

In Indonesia, the discourse on the importance of SEL is gaining ground, especially in line with the increasing awareness of the urgency of character education and the psychosocial well-

being of students. However, the implementation of SEL at the education unit level still faces challenges, both from a structural and cultural perspective. One of the main challenges is the lack of explicit integration of SEL in the national curriculum and in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) prepared by teachers (Listina, 2021). In addition, teachers' ability to internalize social-emotional values into daily learning strategies varies widely, depending on each educator's training, institutional support, and pedagogical understanding (Gimbert et al., 2023). This creates a gap between the conceptual ideals of SEL and the reality of its practice, especially in Indonesia's plural and complex socio-cultural context.

The lack of evidence-based studies and practices related to SEL implementation strategies by teachers also hinders efforts to institutionalize social-emotional education in schools. In fact, various studies show that teachers' social-emotional competencies have an important role in the effectiveness of SEL implementation and the improvement of students' school wellbeing (Huang & Zhang, 2022; Fatimah et al., 2023). Teachers who have high social-emotional skills tend to be more responsive to students' psychosocial needs and are able to create a supportive and empathetic learning climate (Susilowati & Haryati, 2024). Meanwhile, schools that successfully implement SEL comprehensively generally do not only rely on formal programs, but also build a collaborative and well-being-oriented school culture (Nisa & Abdullah, 2023).

Several studies have confirmed the importance of the role of teachers in encouraging the success of SEL in schools. For example, Susilowati and Haryati's (2024) research highlights the role of Pancasila Education teachers in building *school wellbeing* through learning that is full of social and emotional values. Fatimah et al. (2023) also show that teacher training in creating an empathetic learning environment can improve students' overall social-emotional development. Research by Wijayanti, Hayat, and Ichsanudin (2023) emphasizes the importance of a *whole-school approach* in the implementation of SEL—namely through synergy between teacher strategies, school culture, and institutional policies. These findings confirm that the success of SEL implementation is highly dependent on concrete strategies carried out by teachers, both explicitly through learning activities, and implicitly through example and affective communication.

Based on the above phenomenon, the formulation of the problem that is the focus of this study is: what is the teacher's strategy in implementing Social Emotional Learning to improve students' wellbeing in a formal education environment? This problem is fundamental, considering that teachers play a central role as facilitators, models, and agents of shaping an emotionally healthy classroom climate. Therefore, the strategies used by teachers in the context of SEL not only reflect pedagogical competence, but also become indicators of the quality of social interaction in the school environment (Khairunnisa, Khadijah, Araminta, Sa'adah, & Batubara, 2023). In this context, teachers' strategies can be in the form of developing an emotionally responsive curriculum, involving students in reflective discussions, to the use of formative assessments that focus on students' social and affective growth (Susilowati & Haryati, 2024).

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze teachers' strategies in implementing SEL based on literature review from various relevant scientific journals published in the period 2020 to 2025. The literature study approach was chosen to explore the diversity of practices and models of SEL application from various educational contexts, both national and international. By analyzing best practices from the academic literature, this study is expected to be able to formulate a comprehensive picture of strategies that have proven to be effective and applicable in the context of learning in primary and secondary schools (Ahmed, Hamzah, & Abdullah, 2020; Khairunnisa et al., 2023).

The benefits of this research are both theoretical and practical. From the theoretical side, this research strengthens the conceptual basis regarding the importance of social-emotional competence in the development of character education. On the other hand, the practical benefits lie in providing strategic references for teachers, principals, and other education stakeholders in designing and implementing SEL-based programs that are contextual and

have a real impact on student well-being (Faizah & Dewi, 2025; Blewitt et al., 2020). In addition, this research can also be a starting basis for further research oriented towards measuring the long-term impact of SEL implementation on well-being indicators, such as learning engagement, school satisfaction, and student psychological resilience (Afifah & Nasution, 2023; Green et al., 2021).

METHOD

This research is designed as a qualitative descriptive study using the library research method. The main objective of this study is to explore and analyze the strategies used by teachers in implementing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and its impact on students' wellbeing. The qualitative descriptive design was chosen because it allows researchers to explore the meanings, patterns, and tendencies of various findings contained in the literature, without manipulating variables or conducting direct interventions in the field.

The research data was collected from national and international scientific journal articles published between 2020 and 2025. The articles analyzed were selected purposively based on inclusion criteria, namely: (1) discussing the implementation strategy of SEL by teachers in the context of formal education; (2) include concrete practices or approaches related to SEL; and (3) available in full-text form so as to allow for thorough analysis. Articles that are only opinionated, blog, or do not explicitly highlight the role of teachers in SEL are excluded from the analysis. The data analysis technique is carried out through a thematic approach, which includes the process of coding data, identifying and grouping the main themes based on the strategies found, and interpreting the meaning of the strategies in the context of learning and social-emotional development of students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Based on the results of a review of fifteen articles in national and international scientific journals published between 2020 and 2025, it was found that teachers' strategies in implementing *Social Emotional Learning* (SEL) vary greatly but have a consistent pattern of linkages to *the dimensions of students' wellbeing*. Each strategy implemented by teachers shows a close relationship with the main competencies within the SEL framework as formulated by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), and has a direct impact on the psychological, social, and academic aspects of students. To detail the relationship, a table was prepared that represents the mapping between teachers' strategies, SEL competencies honed, and the dimensions of student well-being that are specifically affected, as presented in the following table:

Table 1 The Relationship between Teacher Strategy and the Students' Wellbeing Dimension			
Teacher Strategy	Related SEL Competencies	Affected Wellbeing Dimensions	Reference Articles
Integration of SEL values in the lesson plan	Self-awareness, decision-making	Academic well-being, emotion regulation	(Ferreira et al., 2020; Listina, 2021; Nisa & Abdullah, 2023)
Reflective activities and open discussions	Social awareness, self-management	School satisfaction, emotional resilience	(Ahmed et al., 2020; Susilowati & Haryati, 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2023)
Empathetic learning environment	Relationship skills	Confidence, social relationships	(Faizah & Dewi, 2025; Gimbert et al., 2023; Huang & Zhang, 2022)
Group counseling by BK teachers	Self-awareness, empathy	Social support, mental health	(Ahmed et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021)
Teacher Social Competency Training	All 5 CASEL competencies	Healthy classroom climate, motivation to learn	(Fatimah et al., 2023; Gimbert et al., 2023; Khairunnisa et al., 2023)



The results presented in the table show that the SEL implementation strategy by teachers not only reflects a variety of approaches, but also shows specific directions and effects on student development.

The strategy of integrating SEL values into the lesson plan allows teachers to explicitly insert social-emotional learning into the curriculum structure. This strategy strengthens self-awareness and responsible decision-making competencies, which have been shown to encourage increased regulation of emotions and student responsibility in academic contexts (Ferreira et al., 2020; Listina, 2021; Nisa & Abdullah, 2023). Several articles note that students who are exposed to SEL-based learning in the curriculum structure experience an increase in the ability to complete independent assignments, express emotions appropriately, and have a positive attitude towards the learning process (Ferreira, Martinsone, & Talic, 2020).

The next strategy that is also widely found in the article is reflective learning activities. In this strategy, teachers facilitate students to actively observe, recognize, and discuss their feelings and social experiences. It is very effective in developing social awareness and self-management competencies, which in turn increases students' satisfaction with school and builds emotional resilience in the face of social or academic pressure (Ahmed et al., 2020; Susilowati & Haryati, 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2023). Fatimah et al. (2023) underline the importance of using reflection in learning as a means to form a healthy and adaptive social identity of students to changes in learning contexts (Wijayanti, Hayat, & Ichsanudin, 2023).

Another strategy that also plays an important role in the development of SEL is the creation of an empathetic learning environment. This environment emphasizes supportive interaction between teachers and students, acceptance of diversity, and non-judgmental communication. This strategy is directly related to the development of relationship skills, which has an impact on increasing students' confidence and ability to establish healthy social relationships (Faizah & Dewi, 2025; Gimbert et al., 2023; Huang & Zhang, 2022). In this context, teachers act as facilitators as well as role models in shaping an emotionally safe classroom climate, so that students feel valued, cared for, and able to thrive without excessive pressure (Huang & Zhang, 2022).

The fourth strategy that is often found in the article is group counseling services by BK teachers, which become a psychosocial space for students to explore their self-identity and strengthen awareness of their social roles. This strategy is closely related to self-awareness and empathy competencies, and has a significant impact on the mental wellbeing dimension, particularly in the context of social support and mental health ((Ahmed et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021). BK teachers play an important role in providing preventive and promotional programs, both individually and in groups, to equip students with conflict management skills and dealing with psychological pressure.

The final strategy analyzed in the table is the strengthening of teacher competence through professional training in the SEL domain. Although not a direct strategy to students, this training contributes greatly to the effectiveness of SEL implementation as a whole in the school environment. Teachers who have participated in SEL training have the ability to structure learning that focuses on students' social-emotional development, manage the classroom empathically, and form a healthy and productive learning climate (Gimbert et al., 2023; Fatimah et al., 2023; Khairunnisa et al., 2023). This strategy also strengthens all five key competencies of CASEL, and has a positive impact on the classroom climate and student learning motivation.

In general, these results show that the SEL implementation strategy carried out by teachers cannot be seen as a single intervention, but rather as an interconnected system, which simultaneously forms an educational ecosystem oriented towards the well-being of students. Through the table compiled, it can be concluded that each strategy has a specific contribution path to improving students' wellbeing, both in the form of self-confidence, emotion regulation, learning involvement, and satisfaction with the school environment. The diversity of these strategies also signals the importance of the role of teachers in designing, implementing, and

evaluating approaches that are not only academic, but also affective and relational (Oliveira et al., 2021; Afifah & Nasution, 2023; Green et al., 2021).

Discussions

The results of this study strengthen the premise that teachers' strategies in implementing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) have a direct relationship with improving student welfare in various dimensions, both emotionally, socially, and academically. These findings confirm that the role of teachers is not only as a content teacher, but also as a facilitator in building a psychosocially healthy relationship system and learning environment. Integrative strategies such as explicitly inserting SEL values in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) have proven to be an effective method to improve students' basic competencies in terms of self-awareness and responsible decision-making. Research shows that strengthening a school culture that places social and emotional values as the foundation of learning can strengthen student participation and build relationships of mutual respect in the learning community (Nisa & Abdulah, 2023). This approach was also found in other studies that stated that lesson plans designed with the affective dimension of students in mind made a major contribution to increasing motivation and meaningful learning (Listina, 2021).

The implementation of SEL that was carried out in a reflective and contextual manner showed higher success in increasing students' emotional resilience. Teacher training to create an empathetic learning environment allows for a healthy process of interpersonal interaction between teachers and students, which ultimately strengthens emotional regulation and lowers the risk of the emergence of destructive behavior (Wijayanti et al., 2023). Teachers are not only required to master the teaching material, but also to build an inclusive and emotionally safe classroom, where students feel free to express their ideas and emotions without worrying about negative judgments. This is in line with the results of a study that states that a relationship-based learning environment and empathy are the main elements in forming social resilience and sustainable academic engagement (Susilowati & Haryati, 2024).

Furthermore, the socio-emotional competence of teachers has proven to be a determinant of success in the implementation of the SEL strategy. Teachers who have the ability to recognize their own emotions, understand students' perspectives, and foster healthy social relationships are better able to present learning that touches on students' personal aspects. Research shows that social-emotional education will not be effective if educators themselves do not have good emotional awareness and skills (Gimbert et al., 2023). Teachers with high competence in this field tend to have a tendency to choose teaching methods that are collaborative and responsive to students' emotional needs, including in terms of building confidence, accompanying the decision-making process, and providing moral support when students face psychosocial challenges at school.

Other research makes an important contribution in understanding that character education through subjects such as Pancasila Education can be a strategic medium to instill SEAL values. Teachers who are competent in social-emotional mastery are able to facilitate value discussions and reflective learning, which in turn strengthens school wellbeing and strengthens social bonds between students (Huang & Zhang, 2022). This shows that the integration of SEL in various subjects is not only possible, but also very effective when implemented by educators who understand the basic principles of humanistic learning. In addition, values such as tolerance, empathy, and social responsibility can be systematically instilled through learning scenarios that are relevant to students' real lives.

The role of guidance and counseling teachers (BK) also cannot be ruled out in the implementation of SEL in schools. Preventive counseling services that are carried out regularly can function as a support for students' mental well-being, as well as a means of early detection of potential social and emotional problems faced by students (Ahmed et al., 2020). In practice, BK teachers develop group counseling sessions based on strengthening empathy and self-awareness, which are able to reduce the tendency to social isolation and strengthen students' interpersonal connections. This shows that SEL strategies are not only implemented by

classroom or subject teachers, but also by special educators who focus on professional psychosocial coaching of students.

The link between teacher training programs and the effectiveness of SEL implementation has been proven by several systematic studies. SEL curriculum-based training is able to increase teachers' perception of their self-efficacy in managing the classroom and encourage more empathetic and reflective learning practices (Khairunnisa et al., 2023). This is reinforced by a meta-analysis that found that social-emotional interventions on teachers have a positive impact on emotional regulation, job satisfaction, and the quality of interaction with students (Fatimah et al., 2023). From these two studies, it can be concluded that teacher capacity building is an absolute prerequisite for the success of SEL institutionally.

In addition, it is important to note that the effectiveness of SEL strategies is also influenced by contextual factors such as education level and student development level. It was found that the EMC² model is very suitable for application at the elementary school level because it is simple, concrete, and fun for early childhood students (Faizah & Dewi, 2025). This model combines emotional expression, self-management, social communication, and group cooperation in a structured scheme of learning activities. This is in contrast to the strategies used at the secondary school level, where social complexity and higher academic pressures demand a more reflective and discussion-based approach, as described in a study on the effectiveness of SEL programs in junior high school (Blewitt et al., 2020).

Strengthening social support is also an important dimension that appears in most of the article's findings. The existence of adequate social support from teachers and peers contributes greatly to the subjective well-being of students, especially in the context of online learning during the pandemic (Green et al., 2021). This shows that SEL strategies are not only important in normal conditions, but also in crisis situations, where students need a stable emotional anchor to stay psychologically afloat. Therefore, the SEL program needs to be designed flexibly and adaptively to changes in the conditions of the learning environment, as well as pay attention to the social dynamics of students at each level of education.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the effectiveness of teachers' strategies in SEL implementation is also highly determined by the sustainability of practice and consistency of approach. The development of students' social-emotional competencies requires a long-term, not instantaneous approach, and must be part of a school culture that is consciously shaped by all elements of educational institutions (Afifah & Nasution, 2023). This emphasizes that teachers' strategies in the context of SEL cannot stand alone, but must be supported by institutional policies, continuous training, and a structured evaluation system to ensure that the goal of improving students' wellbeing is maximally achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

The five main strategies found in the implementation of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) by teachers show significant contributions to improving students' emotional, social, and academic well-being. First, the explicit integration of SEL values in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) encourages self-awareness and more responsible decision-making. Second, creating an empathetic and safe learning environment allows students to express emotions freely, build self-regulation, and reduce anxiety and stress. Third, the socio-emotional competence of teachers is the main determinant of the effectiveness of SEL implementation because teachers who are sensitive and reflective are able to establish positive relationships and support students' psychosocial needs. Fourth, strengthening SEL values through character-based subjects such as Pancasila Education encourages the growth of social ties and human values in the classroom community. Fifth, collaboration with Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers and the provision of social support services in a preventive manner have proven to be effective in maintaining students' mental health and forming positive interpersonal connections. These strategies, when implemented consistently and contextually,

are an important foundation in creating a school culture that is oriented towards the holistic well-being of students.

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