



SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING: A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS OF TEACHER EDUCATORS' UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This paper examines the understanding and awareness of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) among teacher educators in universities across Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan, through the lens of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) framework. Despite SEL's international recognition as essential to holistic pedagogy, teacher educators often lack the conceptual clarity and practical skills needed to model and integrate SEL into teacher preparation curricula. A quantitative survey design was employed, using purposive sampling to collect data from seventy-nine teacher educators across seven universities. A validated, self-developed instrument with high reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.841$) measured participants' conceptual understanding, perceived importance, and awareness of SEL-related pedagogical practices. Descriptive and inferential analyses revealed consistently low levels of SEL awareness and understanding, with mean scores significantly below the scale's neutral point. Findings also indicated no statistically significant gender-based or inter-institutional differences, suggesting that SEL deficits are systemic rather than demographic. Correlation and regression analyses underscored that perceived importance strongly predicts awareness of instructional practices, emphasizing the link between belief and implementation. The study concludes that institutional gaps in pre-service and in-service training, along with insufficient curricular integration, are primary barriers to SEL adoption. It recommends systemic reforms, including embedding SEL standards into accreditation frameworks, enhancing institutional support through dedicated resources and communities of practice, and providing sustained, experiential professional development to empower teacher educators as effective SEL facilitators and role models.

Keywords: Knowledge and Belief of SEL, CASEL, Contemporary Analysis, Pre-service training, wellbeing.

Introduction

SEL has gained significant attention in education for its potential to develop not only students' academic achievement but also overall wellbeing (CASEL, 2023). It has become crucial to understand SEL and also teachers need to be aware of such competence particularly in teacher education where these skills needed to impart in future prospective teachers (Puspitasari, 2025). This study focused to teacher education where understanding and awareness of SEL investigated.

These two variables i.e. understanding and awareness are conceptually different but closely connected. Understanding implies the conceptual understanding of teacher educators (self-awareness, self-management,



social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making) about the core competencies of SEL, theoretical frameworks (e.g., CASEL), effects of learning and wellbeing, and pedagogical approaches to instructing SEL. Awareness implies how teacher educators interpret SEL as an institutional priority, and how they meaningfully interpret its role to teacher preparation and perceive contextual forces and constraints (policy, school culture, resources) to facilitate or hinder SEL work. These variables are interacting cognitive and perception variables, in which, more profound conceptual knowledge will result in beliefs in the possibility and significance, and greater institutional or contextual knowledge will lead to understanding being transferred into program design, curriculum, and modelling among pre-service teachers (CASEL, 2023; Nanda et al., 2025). By placing both knowledge and belief/awareness at the centre, the study will enable the researcher to connect between individual cognition (what teacher educators know) and implementation propensity (what they are likely to teach and model), which is vital in systemic SEL uptake in teacher education programs.

It has been reported in international studies that the knowledge and beliefs of educators have a strong impact on the quality of SEL implementation. Based on qualitative studies, buy-in, practical knowledge, and perceived constraints (time, training, leadership support) of teachers and school leaders are the determinants of whether SEL will transition to isolated and isolated lessons to coordinated and sustainable practice (Dyson et al., 2023). The recent syntheses and mapping research also suggest that this base of evidence of the positive impact of SEL on academic and psychosocial outcomes is growing, and at the same time, the competence of teachers and program fidelity are still the major moderators (Nanda et al., 2025; Durlak et al., 2011; Akhtar et al., 2019). Specific studies of teacher education indicate promising practices (e.g., explicit modelling, reflective narrative, practicum integration) but also indicate the inconsistency in the extent to which SEL is entrenched among institutions via standalone workshops all the way up to systematic curricular-level integration (Shalev & Gidalevich, 2024; Brackett et al., 2015).

In Pakistan and overall the region, the recent empirical research attests to interest and substantial implementation gaps associated with SEL. Social-emotional competence among students and the perception of teachers of emotional wellbeing has also been investigated in Pakistani studies, which emphasize the identified necessity to incorporate the concept of SEL into curricula (Zahid et al., 2024; Khan et al., 2024). Specific analysis of teacher-educator awareness in Pakistan stated that although some facets of the competencies (e.g., self-awareness, social awareness) are broadly recognized among teacher educators, other aspects (self-management, responsible decision-making, explicit pedagogical strategies) are under-represented which provokes calls towards curriculum change and professional development in specific dimensions (Yasir & Mahmood, 2025). Collectively, the national literature indicates increasing interests in policy and practice with unreliable preparation practice sentiments to the teachers-in-training trainers according to international trends.

Literature Review

SEL can be described as the processes by which people learn and can successfully use the knowledge, attitude, and skills to know and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, have sympathy and express empathy, build and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions. The framework suggested by CASEL identifies such competency areas as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023). The competencies are not applicable only to students, but they apply to teachers and, more essentially, to those who prepare teachers.

The faculty of teacher-education institutions, teacher educators, trainers, and professors are also in a vantage position to instil SEL in pre-service teacher programs (Puspitasari, 2025). Their comprehension is based on the level of their knowledge of the SEL competencies, theoretical basis, evidence of effectiveness, and teaching practices (Wigelsworth et al., 2024). Their awareness refers to the extent to which they are aware of the relevance of SEL to teacher preparation, institutional limitations, policy environments, and systemic facilitations (Rodriguez et al., 2020). The conceptual knowledge and awareness among teacher educators cannot be fully decoupled: on the one hand, beliefs about the value of SEL are shaped by conceptual knowledge, and on the other hand, how (or whether) educators place SEL in the curriculum, model competence, or institutional support is advocated is dependent on awareness (Usgaonker, 2024; Rodriguez et



al., 2020).

As can be observed, teacher educators educate the future generation of teachers, their attitude toward SEL is very important. Without profound knowledge or institutional sensitivity, SEL can be marginalized to the teacher preparation programs (Hussein, 2025). On the other hand, when they are informed and conscious, they can apply SEL effectively to coursework, practice, and institutional culture, thus, making sure that a future teacher starts his or her classroom prepared to create social-emotional competence in students (Donahue-Keegan et al., 2019).

Teacher Beliefs, Knowledge and Implementation of SEL: Global Perspective

The amount of research on SEL in general education has increased significantly, yet the role of teacher educators has not yet been well studied. Nonetheless, there are various research that form a basis upon which knowledge and beliefs in teacher-education faculty could be analysed.

Schonert-Reichl (2017) noted that the lack of social-emotional competence and positive beliefs about SEL in teachers is the reason which compromised program reliability. The stress of teachers, self-efficacy beliefs, as well as institutional support influences the effectiveness of teachers in terms of their ability to provide SEL. The article sheds light on the impact of the belief of teachers (comfort, commitment, and support) on SEL implementation in schools.

Teacher beliefs have been measured on the basis of empirical studies. Brackett et al. (2012) designed a teacher SEL beliefs scale that comprises of three dimensions that are reliable: (1) comfort in teaching SEL, (2) intentions to learn about SEL and (3) perceptions of school culture provision. Their writing provided evidence that these dimensions can be measured and is different in contexts and that those teachers with higher scores on these dimensions will apply more faithfully to SEL and report higher job satisfaction and reduced stress levels on being supported.

A cross-country mixed-method study was conducted by Schiepe-Tiska et al. (2021) to identify the SEL familiarity, beliefs, training, and perceived school culture of teachers in a number of countries. Their results indicated that teacher familiarity with SEL, teacher personal beliefs, and the quantity and quality of their training, as well as the extent to which SEL is integrated into school culture, have a strong impact on practice of SEL. It is noteworthy that an essential obstacle is the incompatibility between the knowledge of SEL and the school culture that teachers have, in which case the teachers who demonstrate a good knowledge of SEL may be reluctant to engage in SEL practices when they do not feel that the institutions they work at promote SEL.

More recently, in a qualitative study, Masry-Herzallah (2023) investigated a SEL teacher-level 30-hour tailored professional development course. This research demonstrated that teacher training on SEL structured training enhanced teacher knowledge on social-emotional competencies, transformed teacher beliefs on SEL relevance, and amplified teacher preparedness to incorporate SEL in instruction. The present study highlights the role played by professional development in influencing conceptual knowledge as well as belief systems.

Soutter (2023) investigated the personal development of the teacher educators. In a qualitative study, she discovered that teacher preparation courses at universities do not pay much attention to the social-emotional wellbeing of teacher educators themselves. Teachers reported transformative experiences when SEL was integrated into the training of teachers, in which emotional competence was related to teacher longevity, teacher efficacy, and teacher equity-focused teaching.

In theory, Zieher et al. (2024) presented a Framework of the Pedagogies of SEL according to which the teachers can assist in the successful SEL among the students. They suggest the following pedagogical modalities: reflective dialogue, co-regulation, relational practices, and narrative practices which have the potential to promote the development of SEL among students and also among teacher educators. This framework links theory to practice since it emphasizes the processes and not just content delivery.

National Overview of SEL

Within the framework of Pakistan, SEL research is quite recent but scanty. A number of topical studies indicate the opportunities and challenges in SEL comprehension among educators.



In one of the most recent works, Yasir and Mahmood (2025) explicitly investigated teacher educators in Pakistani institutions of teacher education against SEL competencies awareness. As a quantitative questionnaire, they discovered that teacher educators consider self-awareness and social awareness, yet they do not consider self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The authors propose a balanced approach to the incorporation of all SEL dimensions into teacher education programs, capacity-building of teacher educators, and involving the stakeholders in curriculum change.

Ahmed and Khan (2024) examined SEL perceptions and practices in primary-grade teachers in Karachi at the school level, which entailed understanding of SEL and its application in schools. They discovered that teachers do not think of SEL as a developmental process, but as a behaviour management and academic improvement tool. The qualitative data that they provided showed that the SEL practice in Karachi schools is mostly behaviour control and conflict resolution and teacher-led intervention based, whereas the deeper relational or self-regulatory competencies are under-emphasized.

The works in early childhood settings also demonstrate local SEL interactions. Lasi et al. (2023) reviewed the attitudes of teachers that work with preschool students on SEL in Pakistan urban and rural. Their results show that there exist significant urban-rural differences: teachers in urban schools are more likely to describe richer meaning of SEL such as school preparation and emotional regulation whereas teachers in rural schools are less equipped with the formal meaning of SEL. Themes like the role of parental involvement, curriculum, and teacher training were found as important facilitating or inhibiting factors of SEL in early years education.

Besides, Zahid et al. (2024) compared social-emotional competence in Pakistani Muslim and non-Muslim secondary school students. Bulletin of Business and Economics They found that there were notable disparities in emotional management, motivation, and engagement and suggested that SEL models should be officially implemented into Pakistan educational programs to facilitate fair emotional progress.

All these national and regional investigations indicate that SEL is becoming more popular in the Pakistani education discussion, yet its implementation into teacher training is not systematized. They point out significant deficiencies in teacher education, institutional provision, and curriculum.

Theoretical Foundations of SEL

The current research has its basis on Collaborative Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework, among the most popular and empirically valid models of SEL. The CASEL framework presents five fundamental competencies self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making that can be used as a basis to the social-emotional development of students and educators (CASEL, 2023). These competencies focus on the skills of understanding emotions, behaviour, different views, building meaningful relationships with others, and making morally sound decisions. As the teacher educators influence the beliefs, attitudes and professional practices of the pre-service teachers, they are in the centre stage to model and teach the competencies. Hence, their conceptualization and awareness of SEL have a direct implication on the practice of SEL-infused pedagogy in teacher preparation programs.

The CASEL model is also powerful since it considers the ecological systems theory and the principles of organizational learning to place SEL in the classroom, institutional, and community settings (Osher et al., 2016). This implies that SEL is not viewed as a collection of skills in isolation but rather as the competencies that are engaged within a wider context of relationships, school culture and instruction practices. Studies have established that the SEL knowledge of educators plays a major role in determining their ability to establish conducive learning environments and deliver practices that are supportive of SEL (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). In this regard, the framework offers a solid theoretical framework to study the competencies of teacher educators in the area of SEL. It helps to substantiate the argument suggesting that the enhancement of teacher education programs in terms of educator knowledge and awareness is a key to successful and sustainable SEL integration.

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of the proposed study assumes that the awareness and knowledge of teacher educators related to SEL should be viewed as the key determinants of general knowledge and beliefs of teacher



educators regarding SEL. It relates to the CASEL model that has a definition of SEL as the set of core skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). The framework locates the knowledge base of teacher educators as their intellectual comprehension of SEL principles and theoretical foundations, whereas awareness constitutes their awareness of its importance, practicality, and use in the teacher education situations. The two variables are connected since a more profound conceptual knowledge is likely to raise awareness of SEL benefits in instructions, socio-emotional, and developmental. The combination of the two concepts, understanding and awareness, defines the beliefs of the educator regarding the inclusion of SEL in teacher preparation programs and their willingness to model and promote SEL competencies in pre-service teachers. The framework thus presupposes that the increased level of knowledge and comprehension among the teacher educators enhance the possibility of successful implementation of SEL at the university level.

Research Gap

Though this work has accumulated, it still demonstrates certain gaps, which justify the current study. To begin with, a significant portion of the literature assumes the teacher (in-service or pre-service) as the unit of analysis, and fewer studies have been systematic that look at the knowledge, beliefs, and institutional awareness of the teacher educators themselves, as the agents who design the curriculum and model the professional practice to trainee teachers (Dyson et al., 2023; Nanda et al., 2025). Second, in those cases when teacher-educator studies are present, they tend to conceptualize awareness or attitudes generally; less frequently studies can employ conceptual differences between cognitive understanding (what they know about SEL frameworks and evidence) and contextual awareness (perceptions of institutional readiness, policy alignment, barriers). Third, in Pakistan the new empirical research records requirements and suggestions but does not show a current, mixed-scope study which contrasts the notion knowledge, teaching ideology and perceived institutional limitations in the identical sample of teacher educators. Such a combination of knowledge and beliefs/awareness and the association of the two with the reported curricular and PD practices is necessary to develop specific interventions that enhance the SEL capacity of teacher education programs (Yasir and Mahmood, 2025; Zahid et al., 2024).

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To assess the level of understanding and awareness of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) among teacher educators in selected universities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan.
2. To examine the relationships between teacher educators' conceptual understanding of SEL, their perceived importance of SEL, and their awareness of SEL-related pedagogical practices.
3. To compare SEL understanding and awareness between male and female teacher educators.
4. To determine whether significant differences exist in SEL perceptions across different teacher education institutions.
5. To identify the predictive role of understanding and perceived importance of SEL on educators' awareness of practical implementation strategies.

Methodology

The following research methodology used to solve the research problem.

Research Paradigm

The study followed positivist paradigm, which prioritizes objective measurement and quantification of variables as well as systematic data collection procedures (Creswell et al., 2017). Positivist approach is suitable since the study seeks to establish the knowledge and awareness of SEL among teacher educators through the use of a structured, self-report questionnaire and statistical tests. Positivism holds that the knowledge is observable, measurable and can be analysed by the use of empirical techniques, which is in alignment with the aim of establishing measurable levels of SEL-related constructs among teacher educators (Mertens, 2019). This paradigm promotes explanatory and comparative studies based on numerical data, especially where the differences are aimed at studying between demographical groups like gender.

Research Design and Rationale

The research design was quantitative survey study research. Survey design is often considered to be



helpful in gathering standardized data in large population under the natural environment (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990). It enables researchers to collect information on attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and understanding in a very efficient and generalizable way. The chosen method of survey was suitable since the study aimed at measuring two variables i.e. knowledge and awareness of teacher educators on SEL in various universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi region. It is also a design that can be used to compare across groups of gender using statistical tools like t-tests (Cohen et al., 2002). The survey research is particularly applicable in an educational context where the researcher wants to understand the trends, patterns and differences between populations.

Population of the Study

The sample included teacher educators (N = 79) who were employed in the Education Departments of seven universities located in twin cities of Pakistan. These institutions are a mixture of both the public and the private sector universities in which educational programs to teach are available. This choice of population would be consistent with the research aim, which will be to learn about SEL-related competencies in people that prepare future teachers.

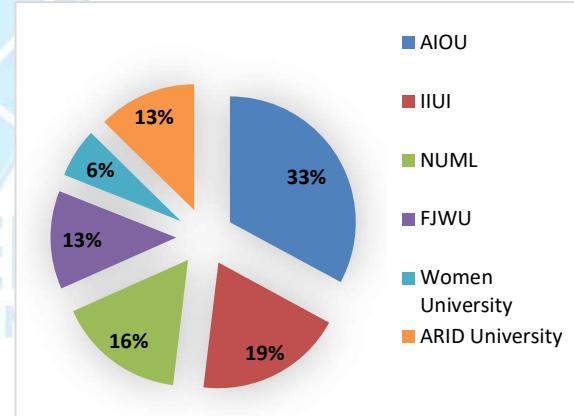
Sample of Study

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling suits the method where the respondents should comply with a certain set of criteria that apply to the research objectives (Etikan et al., 2016). All the 79 teachers' educators in the seven universities were included in the sample (Male = 19; Female = 60). The following table represents sample distribution across multiple universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi region.

Table 1

Sample Size of Study

Universities	Sample Size
AIOU	26
IIUI	15
NUML	13
FJWU	10
Women University	5
ARID University	10
Total	79



Research Instrument

A self-administered questionnaire was used to find out the perception of teacher educator about understanding and awareness about SEL. This questionnaire contained three sub-categories. Each category contained four statements incorporating total twelve statements. The first category measured general understanding of SEL, the second one inquired importance of SEL and finally the third one investigated awareness of SEL practices. A four-point Likert-scale i.e. strongly disagree to strongly agree was used.

Validity of Research

The questionnaire was checked by a panel of professionals among whom were the higher members of the teaching staff of the educational institutions and the researchers working on the issues of teacher-education and SEL to prove the content validity. There was expert review, which made the reviews clear, relevant, and consistent with SEL theory (Haynes et al., 1995). The feedback led to the changes in the wording of items, deletion of unnecessary statements, and improvement of construct definitions.

Reliability of Study

Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. A pilot test was done among a limited number of teacher educators. The reliability coefficient of the total instrument $\alpha = .841$ shows



high internal consistency which is agreeable to the recommended levels in research in the field of education (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Data Collection Procedure

Each university have its respective department where formal permission was taken. The study was briefed to the participants and made voluntary. The questionnaires were being distributed in real life and in the digital form where needed. The respondents were also allowed sufficient time to fill the instrument. The completed questionnaire was stored safely and ready to analyse them.

Data Analysis

The data have been analysed based on descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the study objectives. To summarise the level of understanding and awareness of SEL among the teacher educators, descriptive statistics, such as means, and standard deviations, were calculated. An independent samples t-test was used to test gender variations based on the scores of male and female teacher educators on the two variables under study. This test allowed to check whether there were statistically significant differences between the groups, and concluded on the possible gender-related differences in the perceptions and the knowledge of SEL.

Ethical Considerations

The research was carried out according to the necessary ethical standards, where participants were given informed consent and allowed to take part in the research, as well as to withdraw at any point without any repercussion. The maintenance of confidentiality was possible through anonymity of responses and the safe storage of the data that was collected. Data collection was done with institutional permission, and respondents were convinced that the information would only be utilized in conducting research. Ethics of conducting educational research, including those provided by BERA (2018), were adhered to in the study to protect the dignity, privacy, and professional integrity of participants.

Analysis and Findings

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27, encompassing descriptive, inferential, and multivariate statistical techniques to evaluate teacher educators' understanding and awareness of Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The findings are presented in a series of tables, each addressing specific research objectives related to knowledge, perceived importance, awareness of practices, gender comparisons, and predictive relationships among SEL constructs. Reliability analysis established the robustness of the measurement instrument, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding .70 across all subscales, confirming internal consistency. Descriptive statistics revealed consistently low mean scores across SEL dimensions, indicating limited understanding and awareness among respondents. Further inferential analyses, including t-tests, correlation, ANOVA, and regression, provided deeper insights into the nature and scope of these deficits, highlighting systemic rather than demographic or institutional variations in SEL engagement. The following sections detail these analyses and their implications.

Table 2

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) for Subscales

Subscale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
General Understanding	4	0.792
Importance of SEL	4	0.815
Awareness of Practices	4	0.801
Overall Instrument	12	0.841

The reliability analysis confirms the internal consistency and robustness of the measurement instrument. Cronbach's alpha for the overall 12-item scale is .841, which is considered excellent reliability in social science research. The subscales also demonstrate strong reliability: General Understanding ($\alpha = .792$), Importance of SEL ($\alpha = .815$), and Awareness of Practices ($\alpha = .801$). All values exceed the acceptable threshold of .70, indicating that the items within each subscale consistently measure the same underlying construct. This high reliability ensures that the survey results are stable and that the observed low scores and correlations are trustworthy reflections of the participants' perceptions, not artifacts of a poorly constructed



instrument.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics regarding perception of teacher educators about understanding and awareness of SEL (N=79)

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation
General Understanding	1.00	3.00	2.0127	.07748	.68862
Importance of SEL	1.00	3.00	1.9873	.07954	.70699
Awareness of SEL Practices	1.00	3.00	2.0253	.07848	.69752
Total	1.33	3.00	2.0084	.05130	.45597

The table 3 depicted descriptive statistics regarding perception of teacher educators about understanding and awareness of SEL. Teacher educators reported disagreement about general understanding (Min = 1.00, Max = 3.00, Mean = 2.0127, SE Mean = .07748, SD = .68862). In addition, importance of SEL also reported disagreement (Min = 1.00, Max = 3.00, Mean = 1.9873, SE Mean = .07954, SD = .70699). Moreover, teacher educators revealed that they do not have awareness of SEL practices as (Min = 1.00, Max = 3.00, Mean = 2.0253, SE Mean = .07848, SD = .69752). The overall perception of teacher educators also reported disagreement as (Min = 1.33, Max = 3.00, Mean = 2.0084, SE Mean = .05130, SD = .45597). The following histogram normal distribution of data showing that most of the responses lies 2.00 depicting disagreement about understanding and awareness of SEL.

Figure 1

Histogram showing Normal Distribution of the Data

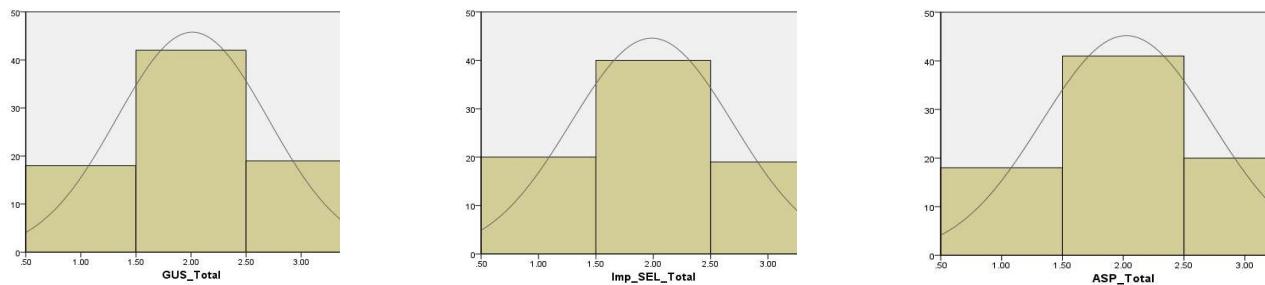


Table 4

Gender comparison of Teacher Educators about Understanding and Awareness of SEL

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean	t	Sig.
General Understanding of SEL	Male	19	1.8947	.56713	.13011	-.855	.395
	Female	60	2.0500	.72311	.09335		
Importance of SEL	Male	19	2.0526	.70504	.16175	.460	.647
	Female	60	1.9667	.71228	.09196		
Awareness of SEL Practices	Male	19	1.7895	.85498	.19615	-1.712	.091
	Female	60	2.1000	.62977	.08130		

Table 4 showed comparison between male and female teacher educators regarding understanding and awareness of SEL. The comparison of general understanding of SEL in which male (N=19, $M = 1.8947$, $SD = .56713$, $SE Mean = .13011$) have marginal lower mean value to that of female as (N=60, $M = 2.0500$, $SD = .72311$, $SE Mean = .09335$) but found statistically non-significant as $t = -.855$, $p = .395 > .05$. In addition, comparison of importance of SEL in which male (N=19, $M = 2.0526$, $SD = .70504$, $SE Mean = .16175$) have marginal greater mean value than female as (N=60, $M = 1.9667$, $SD = .71228$, $SE Mean = .09196$) but found statistically non-significant as $t = .460$, $p = .647 > .05$. Lastly, comparison of awareness of SEL practices in which male (N=19, $M = 1.7895$, $SD = .85498$, $SE Mean = .19615$) have lower mean value than female (N=60, $M = 2.1000$, $SD = .62977$, $SE Mean = .08130$)



=60, $M = 2.1000$, $SD = .62977$, $SE\ Mean = .08130$) but found statistically non-significant as $t = -1.712$, $p = .091 > .05$. T-test analysis showed that there is no significant difference found between male and female teacher educators regarding understanding and awareness of SEL depicting that both showed perceptions.

Table 5
Correlation Analysis between Understanding, Importance, and Awareness of SEL

Variables	1	2	3
1. General Understanding	1		
2. Importance of SEL	.642**	1	
3. Awareness of Practices	.598**	.723**	1

** $p < .01$ (2-tailed)

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationships between the core constructs. The results show strong, positive, and statistically significant correlations among all three variables. The strongest association is between the *Importance of SEL* and *Awareness of Practices* ($r = .723$, $p < .01$), indicating that educators who perceive SEL as crucial are more likely to be aware of related pedagogical strategies. Similarly, *General Understanding* is positively correlated with both *Importance* ($r = .642$) and *Awareness* ($r = .598$). This interconnectedness suggests that these constructs are not isolated; they function as a reinforcing cycle. Enhancing conceptual knowledge may increase perceived value, which in turn can foster greater awareness of practical applications, providing a clear pathway for targeted professional development programs.

Table 6
One-Sample t-test Comparing Means to Neutral Point (2.5)

Variable	Mean	t-value	df	p-value	95% CI
General Understanding	2.01	-6.29	78	.000	[-0.62, -0.36]
Importance of SEL	1.99	-6.44	78	.000	[-0.66, -0.37]
Awareness of Practices	2.03	-6.06	78	.000	[-0.62, -0.33]
Overall Score	2.01	-8.62	78	.000	[-0.60, -0.39]

A one-sample t-test was used to determine if the mean scores for each SEL construct were significantly different from the scale's theoretical neutral point of 2.5. The results are highly significant for General Understanding ($t = -6.29$, $p < .001$), Importance of SEL ($t = -6.44$, $p < .001$), and Awareness of Practices ($t = -6.06$, $p < .001$). All mean scores (ranging from 1.99 to 2.03) fall significantly below the neutral midpoint, with the 95% confidence intervals not encompassing 2.5. This statistical confirmation reinforces the conclusion from the descriptive analysis: teacher educators' perceptions are skewed toward disagreement or low agreement. It objectively validates that the sample's low levels of understanding, perceived importance, and awareness are not due to chance but represent a genuine deficit.

Table 7
Frequency Distribution of Responses on the 4-Point Likert Scale (%)

Statement Category	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
General Understanding	18.2%	52.6%	26.1%	3.1%
Importance of SEL	20.1%	54.3%	22.8%	2.8%
Awareness of Practices	16.5%	55.7%	24.1%	3.7%

The frequency distribution provides a granular view of respondent attitudes. A striking majority of participants selected "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" across all categories. For instance, 70.8% (52.6% + 18.2%) disagreed with statements about their General Understanding, and 74.4% (54.3% + 20.1%) disagreed regarding the Importance of SEL. Conversely, less than 30% of respondents combined "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" in any category. This distribution pattern underscores the depth of the challenge. It is not merely a slight leaning toward disagreement but a pronounced consensus on the lack of SEL integration. The data visually emphasizes that SEL is neither a recognized priority nor a practiced component in the current teacher



education landscape for most respondents.

Table 8
ANOVA Comparing SEL Understanding and Awareness Across Universities

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
General Understanding	Between Groups	3.214	6	0.536	0.743	
	Within Groups	35.012	72	0.486		
Importance of SEL	Between Groups	4.112	6	0.685	0.661	
	Within Groups	36.882	72	0.512		
Awareness of Practices	Between Groups	5.331	6	0.888	0.511	
	Within Groups	38.449	72	0.534		

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if significant differences existed in SEL perceptions across the seven sampled universities. The results show non-significant F-values for General Understanding ($F=0.536$, $p=.743$), Importance of SEL ($F=0.685$, $p=.661$), and Awareness of Practices ($F=0.888$, $p=.511$). The p-values are all well above the .05 threshold, indicating that the variance in scores within each university is greater than the variance between the different institutions. This finding suggests a consistent, region-wide trend of low SEL engagement that transcends individual institutional contexts. The lack of significant variation implies that the deficiency is not isolated to specific universities but is a pervasive issue across higher education institutions in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Table 9
Regression Analysis: Predicting Awareness of SEL Practices from Understanding and Importance

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	0.451	0.212		2.127	0.036
General Understanding	0.285	0.098	0.281	2.908	0.005
Importance of SEL	0.502	0.104	0.511	4.827	0.000

$R^2 = 0.538$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.526$, $F(2,76) = 44.21$, $p < .001$

Both understanding and perceived importance significantly predict awareness of practices, accounting for 53.8% of the variance. A standard multiple regression analysis was performed to assess whether General Understanding and perceived Importance of SEL could predict Awareness of SEL Practices. The model is statistically significant ($F(2,76) = 44.21$, $p < .001$) and explains a substantial 53.8% of the variance in Awareness ($R^2 = .538$). Both predictors are significant: Importance of SEL is the stronger predictor ($\beta = .511$, $p < .001$), followed by General Understanding ($\beta = .281$, $p = .005$). This result highlights a crucial dynamic: while foundational knowledge is important, the *perceived value and relevance* of SEL is an even more powerful driver of whether an educator becomes aware of practical implementation strategies. This underscores the need for professional development that not only transmits knowledge but also actively builds the case for SEL's critical role in education.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that teacher educators in the sampled universities possess a relatively low level of understanding and awareness of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), as evidenced by mean scores consistently near the disagreement point on the measurement scale. This finding aligns with prior research in Pakistan, which suggests that while teacher educators may be partially familiar with certain SEL domains—such as self-awareness and social awareness—their knowledge of competencies like self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making remains limited (Yasir & Mahmood, 2024). The lack of comprehensive SEL understanding is not confined to the local context; it reflects a global trend where insufficient conceptual grounding impedes educators' ability to integrate SEL meaningfully into pedagogy or to effectively prepare pre-service teachers (Dyson et al., 2023; Wigelsworth et al., 2024). As Schonert-Reichl (2017) notes, educators often recognize the value of SEL but lack the theoretical and practical preparation to implement it in substantive ways.

The statistical analyses provide a clear, multi-layered understanding of the SEL deficit among teacher



educators. Descriptive results (Table 3) and one-sample t-tests (Table 6) confirm that mean scores across all SEL constructs, understanding, perceived importance, and awareness of practices, fall significantly below the neutral point, objectively validating a pervasive lack of engagement. The correlation matrix (Table 5) and regression analysis (Table 9) further reveal that these constructs are interlinked in a reinforcing cycle: greater understanding predicts higher perceived importance, which in turn strongly predicts awareness of practical strategies. This suggests that professional development must simultaneously build conceptual knowledge and cultivate value for SEL to foster pedagogical integration. Moreover, the absence of significant differences across universities (Table 6) and between genders (Table 4) indicates that low SEL awareness is a systemic, rather than contextual or demographic, issue. These findings collectively underscore that isolated workshops or individual initiatives are insufficient; what is required is a coordinated, institution-wide strategy embedded within accreditation standards, curricular frameworks, and ongoing faculty support systems.

Furthermore, the low awareness of SEL-related pedagogical practices among participants underscores a significant gap between recognizing SEL's importance and applying it systematically. This aligns with international studies indicating that educators may view SEL as valuable yet struggle to translate that recognition into structured practice (Masry-Herzallah, 2025; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Such gaps may stem from inadequate institutional support, limited professional development, and insufficient exposure to evidence-based SEL pedagogies, such as reflective dialogue, narrative inquiry, and co-regulation strategies, that are essential for fostering social-emotional competence (Shalev & Gidalevich, 2024; Zieher et al., 2024). This pattern mirrors findings from local studies in Karachi, where SEL is often reduced to a classroom management tool rather than being embraced as a holistic developmental framework (Ahmed & Khan, 2024). Collectively, these results suggest that while SEL is gaining conceptual traction in Pakistani educational discourse, its practical integration within teacher education remains underdeveloped.

The analysis revealed no statistically significant gender differences in SEL understanding and awareness, despite slight variations in mean scores between male and female respondents. This absence of gender-based divergence is consistent with international research indicating that SEL competencies and related beliefs are influenced more by institutional, experiential, and training-related factors than by demographic variables (Schiepe-Tiska et al., 2021; Brackett et al., 2012). This reinforces the notion that efforts to enhance SEL within teacher education must focus on systemic interventions, such as curriculum reform, faculty development, and organizational support, rather than targeting specific demographic subgroups. As Osher et al. (2016) emphasize, SEL development is deeply embedded within ecological and institutional contexts. Thus, the current findings highlight the urgent need for structured, coordinated, and sustained capacity-building initiatives for teacher educators in Pakistan, grounded in the CASEL framework and informed by evidence-based pedagogical approaches.

Conclusion

This study concludes that teacher educators in the sampled universities exhibit notably low levels of understanding and awareness of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), as evidenced by mean scores across all measured dimensions, understanding, perceived importance, and awareness of SEL practices, consistently falling near the disagreement end of the scale (Table 3). These findings indicate that teacher educators are not only unfamiliar with core SEL concepts but also underestimate its relevance to teacher preparation and lack exposure to pedagogical strategies that could support SEL integration. The significant and pervasive nature of this deficit underscores a critical gap in current teacher education programs, pointing to an urgent need for targeted professional development and enhanced institutional support to build SEL capacity.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed no statistically significant differences between male and female teacher educators in their comprehension and awareness of SEL (Table 4). Although slight variations in perceptions were observed, they did not reach statistical significance, suggesting that SEL-related knowledge and attitudes are comparable across genders. This absence of gender-based divergence reinforces the conclusion that the challenges in SEL integration are systemic rather than demographic, rooted in broader institutional and training-related inadequacies rather than individual or gender-specific factors. Consequently, efforts to enhance SEL in teacher education must be designed inclusively and implemented equitably across all educator groups.



In light of these findings, it is clear that improving SEL in teacher education requires a systemic, multi-level approach that addresses curricular gaps, fosters continuous professional learning, and embeds SEL within institutional policy and practice. Without such coordinated and sustained interventions, the potential of SEL to enrich teacher preparation and promote holistic student development will remain unrealized.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on conclusions of research;

For Teacher Educators

1. Participate in professional training opportunities focuses on competencies of SEL and pedagogical practice.
2. Apply the concepts of SEL to the daily practice of teaching, demonstrating the skills of emotional management, empathy, and establishing relationships to pre-service teachers.

Teacher Education Institutions

3. Integrate SEL directly into the curriculum of teacher education in specific courses, practicum experiences and strategies to assess.
4. Facilitate life-long professional learning among the faculty in order to enhance their knowledge and use of SEL.

Higher Education Administration

5. Invest in the SEL-related training and workshops, as well as curriculum modification.
6. Promote the interdisciplinary collaboration in order to establish an SEL-friendly culture in higher education institutions.

For Policy Makers

7. Establish national standards of SEL that would be used to integrate SEL into teacher education programs throughout Pakistan.
8. Further facilitate collaboration among universities, schools and government institutions in a bid to achieve a consistent implementation of SEL both at the teacher preparation level and the classroom.

Limitations of the Study

There are certain limitations to this study, which can be admitted when it is possible to interpret this research. The study was also carried out in a single geographical area among universities, and this limits the application of the findings to other regions of Pakistan, among teacher educators. Even though the sample comprised seven universities, the sample size was small and might not be representative enough to be representative of the perspectives of the broader teacher education landscape. Furthermore, the research was based solely on self-constructed questionnaire and although validity and reliability checks were used, the tool might not have measured the depth and complexity of the SEL knowledge and awareness. There is also the risk of response bias, and in this case, the participants can unintentionally distort their SEL competencies through the use of self-report measures. Lastly, the research utilized a purely quantitative design and had no chance of delving into finer experiences, contextual factors and underlying meanings that would have been offered through a qualitative design.

Future Directions

Future studies can expand the field of the research by incorporating the teacher educators in various provinces so that the findings can be more representative and applicable in the whole of Pakistan. The mixed-method studies could provide a more in-depth and comprehensive investigation of SEL knowledge and awareness, integrating quantitative trends with more in-depth qualitative information. Comparison between public and private universities, or universities with more or less SEL exposure, can also discover contextual factors having a bearing on SEL integration.

Contributions of the Authors

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Informed Consent Statement



The participant in the study gave their informed consent.

Statement of Data Availability

The corresponding author can provide the data used in this study upon request.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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