



**THE EFFECTS OF A SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)  
CURRICULUM ON ACADEMIC RESILIENCE AND PROSOCIAL  
BEHAVIOR IN HIGH-POVERTY PRIMARY SCHOOLS  
AT SDN NO.100907 MUARA AMPOLU I  
KECAMATAN MUARA BATANGTORU**

**PENGARUH KURIKULUM SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)  
TERHADAP KETAHANAN AKADEMIK DAN PERILAKU  
PROSOSIAL DI SEKOLAH DASAR KEMISKINAN TINGGI  
DI SDN NO.100907 MUARA AMPOLU I  
KECAMATAN MUARA BATANGTORU**

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**Abstract**

This study examines the effects of a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum on academic resilience and prosocial behavior in high-poverty primary schools, specifically at SDN No. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, Kec. Muara Batangtoru. Employing a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group, 80 students participated, divided equally into intervention and control groups. The 12-week SEL program focused on self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Data were collected using validated academic resilience and prosocial behavior instruments and analyzed through paired and independent sample t-tests. Findings revealed that students in the intervention group demonstrated significant improvements in academic resilience and prosocial behavior compared to the control group. The study highlights the potential of SEL curricula to foster adaptive coping strategies and positive social interactions among students



in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings. Implications for educational policy and school practices are discussed, emphasizing the importance of SEL integration in primary education.

**Keywords:** Social-Emotional Learning, Academic Resilience, Prosocial Behavior, Primary Education, High-Poverty Schools

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh kurikulum *Social-Emotional Learning* (SEL) terhadap ketahanan akademik dan perilaku prososial siswa di sekolah dasar berstatus masyarakat miskin, khususnya di SDN No. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, Kec. Muara Batangtoru. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuasi-eksperimen dengan kelompok kontrol pretest-posttest. Sebanyak 80 siswa ikut serta, terbagi sama rata antara kelompok intervensi dan kontrol. Program SEL selama 12 minggu difokuskan pada kesadaran diri, pengelolaan diri, kesadaran sosial, keterampilan hubungan, dan pengambilan keputusan yang bertanggung jawab. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan instrumen ketahanan akademik dan perilaku prososial yang tervalidasi, dianalisis dengan uji-t berpasangan dan uji-t sampel independen. Hasil menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan pada ketahanan akademik dan perilaku prososial siswa yang mengikuti program SEL dibandingkan kelompok kontrol. Penelitian ini menekankan potensi integrasi kurikulum SEL dalam meningkatkan kemampuan adaptif dan interaksi sosial positif pada siswa di lingkungan berstatus sosial-ekonomi rendah.

**Kata Kunci:** *Social-Emotional Learning*, Ketahanan Akademik, Perilaku Prososial, Pendidikan Dasar, Sekolah Berstatus Miskin

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Education in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas faces persistent challenges that hinder student development and learning outcomes. Students in such contexts often experience limited access to learning resources, overcrowded classrooms, and environmental stressors such as family economic hardship (UNESCO, 2021). At SDN No. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, Kec. Muara Batangtoru, preliminary observations revealed that many students struggle to complete academic tasks independently, exhibit low motivation, and show limited prosocial behavior. These conditions suggest deficits not only in cognitive skills but also in social-emotional competencies, which are critical for adaptive functioning in school environments. Without interventions, these challenges can exacerbate educational inequities and reduce students' long-term academic and social potential.

Academic resilience, defined as the ability to maintain or improve performance despite adversity, has been identified as a key factor in supporting learning outcomes in high-risk environments (Martin & Marsh, 2006). However, at the target school, students demonstrate frequent academic disengagement, low persistence when faced with challenges, and minimal collaborative behaviors in classroom activities. This indicates a pressing need for interventions that enhance both personal coping strategies and social interaction skills. Previous studies show that strengthening academic resilience not only improves achievement but also fosters greater engagement and adaptive learning behaviors (Luthar et al., 2000).



Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) theory provides a framework for addressing these challenges by developing competencies in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020). Empirical evidence suggests that SEL programs can significantly enhance academic resilience and prosocial behavior, especially among students in high-poverty contexts. For example, Durlak et al. (2011) found that SEL interventions increased social-emotional skills, positive attitudes, and academic performance in children across diverse socio-economic settings. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2017) demonstrated that primary students exposed to SEL curricula exhibited higher prosocial engagement and lower behavioral problems compared to control groups.

Recent studies continue to highlight the importance of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) in promoting students' adaptive and prosocial development across diverse educational contexts. Wikman et al. (2022) emphasized that SEL fosters self-concept, well-being, and academic skills from a whole-child perspective. Similarly, Brass et al. (2022) found that prosocial behavior and self-regulation significantly mediate students' school engagement during adolescence. Li et al. (2022), through an intervention study in rural China, demonstrated that SEL programs effectively improve emotional adjustment and peer relationships in low-resource schools, supporting its applicability in disadvantaged contexts. In the Indonesian setting, Lestari and Azizah (2023) revealed that SEL-based classroom activities—such as circle time and cooperative reflection—enhance empathy and collaboration among elementary students. Astuti et al. (2024) further identified a growing SEL awareness among junior high school students in Java, indicating increasing national relevance. Complementing this, Qisthi et al. (2024) showed that SEL approaches can mitigate academic stress and improve students' psychological well-being. A global review by Almardiyah et al. (2023) confirmed that multidimensional SEL programs significantly reduce school bullying and foster safer learning climates, while recent findings by behavioral scholars (Prosocial Behavior and Resilience in School Coexistence, 2023) demonstrate that SEL-related prosociality contributes to higher resilience and emotional balance. Collectively, these studies underscore that SEL remains a globally and locally effective approach to strengthen students' emotional regulation, social interaction, and academic resilience—especially in underprivileged educational environments.

Despite such evidence, SEL implementation in Indonesian primary schools remains limited, particularly in resource-constrained regions. At SDN NO. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, no structured SEL program currently exists, and students show deficits in resilience and social cooperation, highlighting a critical gap between the recognized benefits of SEL and its practical application. Addressing this gap is essential to improve student learning outcomes and social development.

In response to these challenges, the present study investigates the effects of a 12-week SEL curriculum on academic resilience and prosocial behavior among students at SDN NO. 100907 Muara Ampolu I. By focusing on empirically demonstrated SEL strategies, this research aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for integrating social-emotional learning into primary education in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings, ultimately contributing to both educational equity and student well-being.

This study offers a novel contribution by contextualizing Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) implementation within Indonesian primary schools situated in high-poverty, rural environments—an area that remains underexplored in global SEL research.



While previous studies in Western contexts (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017) have established the general effectiveness of SEL in improving students' emotional and behavioral outcomes, limited empirical evidence exists on how SEL operates in culturally collectivist societies with constrained educational resources. This study provides new insights into how SEL principles can be adapted to align with Indonesian cultural values of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and community-based learning, demonstrating that SEL not only enhances academic resilience and prosocial behavior but also strengthens social cohesion within disadvantaged school communities. Therefore, the findings extend current theories of social-emotional learning by integrating socio-cultural contextualization into resilience and prosocial development frameworks.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group to examine the effects of a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum on academic resilience and prosocial behavior. Eighty primary school students from SDN No. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, Kec. Muara Batangtoru, were selected using purposive sampling based on class level and willingness to participate. The participants were divided equally into an intervention group, which received the 12-week SEL curriculum, and a control group, which continued with the regular school program. The SEL curriculum was structured around five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, delivered through weekly classroom activities, group discussions, and role-playing exercises.

Data were collected using two validated instruments: an academic resilience scale and a prosocial behavior scale, both adapted to the local context and tested for reliability. Pretest scores were measured before the intervention, and posttest scores were collected immediately after the 12-week program. Data analysis was conducted using paired sample t-tests to assess within-group changes and independent sample t-tests to evaluate between-group differences. Ethical approval was obtained from the school authorities, and informed consent was secured from parents or guardians of all participants. The research ensured confidentiality, voluntary participation, and adherence to ethical standards in educational research.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Academic Resilience

The pretest results indicated that both the intervention and control groups had comparable levels of academic resilience, with mean scores of 52.3 (SD = 4.7) and 51.8 (SD = 4.9), respectively. After the 12-week SEL intervention, the intervention group showed a substantial increase in academic resilience, with a posttest mean score of 68.7 (SD = 5.2), whereas the control group only increased slightly to 54.1 (SD = 5.0). Paired sample t-test results confirmed a significant improvement within the intervention group ( $t = 18.46$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the control group's change was not statistically significant ( $t = 2.12$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ). Independent sample t-test analysis of posttest scores also showed a significant difference between groups ( $t = 13.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

These findings indicate that the SEL curriculum effectively enhanced students' academic resilience, enabling them to better cope with academic challenges and maintain



engagement in learning activities, compared to students who did not receive the intervention.

### Prosocial Behavior

Analysis of prosocial behavior revealed similar trends. The intervention and control groups had pretest mean scores of 48.5 (SD = 5.1) and 49.0 (SD = 5.3), respectively, indicating comparable initial levels. Following the SEL program, the intervention group exhibited a notable increase in prosocial behavior, with a mean posttest score of 64.2 (SD = 5.6), while the control group showed a minor increase to 50.2 (SD = 5.4). Paired sample t-tests indicated a significant within-group improvement for the intervention group ( $t = 16.83$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), whereas the control group's change was not significant ( $t = 1.87$ ,  $p = 0.11$ ). Post-intervention comparison using an independent sample t-test confirmed a significant difference between the groups ( $t = 12.14$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The results suggest that the SEL curriculum successfully promoted prosocial behavior, increasing students' willingness to help, cooperate, and engage positively with peers, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in enhancing social-emotional competencies.

### Discussion

#### The Impact of the SEL Curriculum on Academic Resilience

The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' academic resilience following the implementation of the SEL curriculum. Students in the intervention group demonstrated increased persistence, motivation, and adaptability when facing academic challenges, as indicated by the rise in their posttest scores. These results align with the theoretical framework proposed by Martin and Marsh (2006), which emphasizes that academic resilience is shaped not only by cognitive abilities but also by emotional regulation and self-efficacy.

The improvement observed supports the argument that SEL competencies particularly self-awareness and self-management play a pivotal role in developing resilience (CASEL, 2020). This outcome also corroborates Durlak et al. (2011) findings by Durlak et al. (2011), who concluded that SEL programs contribute to improved emotional balance and learning perseverance. In the context of SDN No. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, where socio-economic challenges are prevalent, the SEL program provided students with structured opportunities to reflect on their feelings, set academic goals, and manage frustration during difficult tasks.

The enhancement of academic resilience in the intervention group underscores the importance of embedding SEL into daily classroom practice, especially in underprivileged schools. It demonstrates that developing emotional competencies can substantially strengthen students' academic persistence even when material resources are limited.

#### The Effect of SEL on Prosocial Behavior

The study also found a substantial increase in prosocial behavior among students who participated in the SEL program. The intervention group showed greater tendencies to cooperate, share, and assist peers, consistent with the theory of social learning which posits that positive social behavior can be cultivated through guided modeling and reinforcement (Bandura, 1977). The focus of the SEL curriculum on social awareness and relationship





skills effectively nurtured empathy and respect, crucial components of prosocial development.

These findings are consistent with the results of Taylor et al. (2017), who reported that SEL interventions lead to higher levels of prosocial behavior and improved classroom relationships. In addition, Eisenberg et al. (2015) highlighted that prosocial behavior not only benefits peer interactions but also enhances students' emotional well-being and academic engagement. The improvement in this study suggests that SEL activities such as group collaboration, empathy exercises, and role-playing successfully internalized cooperative values among students.

The rise in prosocial behavior reflects that SEL programs can effectively transform classroom dynamics in high-poverty schools. Encouraging empathy and cooperation contributes not only to harmonious peer relationships but also to a more supportive and inclusive learning environment.

### General Discussion and Implications

Overall, the results confirm that SEL interventions are a viable strategy for addressing socio-emotional and academic disparities in disadvantaged educational contexts. The integration of SEL within the primary school curriculum fosters both cognitive and non-cognitive growth, equipping students with essential life skills that support academic achievement and social adaptation.

From a practical perspective, the study offers strong evidence that SEL programs should be institutionalized as part of the national curriculum, especially in under-resourced schools. Teachers need to be trained to deliver SEL activities consistently and to model positive emotional and social behaviors. The study also highlights the importance of culturally adapting SEL materials to ensure relevance and sustainability within local educational contexts. In conclusion, the study demonstrates that the implementation of a structured SEL curriculum significantly enhances academic resilience and prosocial behavior among students in high-poverty primary schools. These findings reinforce the theoretical and empirical foundations of SEL and provide actionable insights for policymakers and educators aiming to reduce educational inequality through holistic, socio-emotional approaches.

Beyond confirming the effectiveness of SEL interventions, this study contributes a novel socio-cultural perspective to the global discourse on Social-Emotional Learning. In the Indonesian context, characterized by collectivist cultural values, communal relationships, and the principle of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), SEL implementation takes on a distinct form. Rather than emphasizing individual self-regulation as in many Western models, Indonesian SEL adaptation highlights collective empathy, cooperation, and harmony as core competencies of emotional intelligence. This finding extends current SEL theory by showing that emotional and social competencies are culturally mediated—students' resilience and prosocial behavior develop not only from individual reflection but also from shared experiences and group solidarity. Hence, this research offers a culturally grounded model of SEL that bridges global frameworks with local educational realities, contributing to a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of social-emotional development in education.



#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the effects of a Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum on academic resilience and prosocial behavior among students in a high-poverty primary school, SDN No. 100907 Muara Ampolu I, Kec. Muara Batangtoru. The results provide strong empirical evidence that structured SEL interventions can substantially enhance students' adaptive academic skills and social-emotional competencies. Students who participated in the 12-week SEL program demonstrated significant improvements in both academic resilience—reflected in their persistence, motivation, and ability to manage learning difficulties—and prosocial behavior, as shown through higher levels of cooperation, empathy, and peer support.

The findings validate the theoretical assumptions of SEL frameworks, which emphasize the interconnectedness of emotional, social, and academic development. In contexts of socioeconomic disadvantage, where students often face chronic stress and limited educational support, SEL can serve as an equalizing tool to foster resilience and social harmony in the classroom.

From a practical standpoint, this study highlights the need for educational policymakers and practitioners to integrate SEL curricula systematically into Indonesia's primary education system. Teacher training and context-based adaptation of SEL materials are crucial to ensure sustainability and cultural relevance. Future research should examine the long-term impacts of SEL on students' academic trajectories and explore its integration with digital and community-based learning approaches.

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