The Role of Socio-Emotional Learning in Supporting Children with Disabilities: A Theoretical Analysis

Dr. Priya Mishra

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Apex University Jaipur
Email: dr.priyamishra81@gmail.com   ORCID ID- https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4602-2019

Dr. Mrutyunjaya Mishra

Associate Professor, Faculty of Special Education, Dr. Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow
Email: mrutyunjayamishra33@gmail.com   ORCID ID- https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5494-0231

Abstract

Children with disabilities often face challenges in social-emotional development, including difficulties in self-regulation, motivation, peer interactions, and adaptive behaviour. Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) frameworks provide a strengths-based approach to support these children by fostering core competencies such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Integrating SEL with disability-specific interventions can enhance educational experiences, promote academic motivation, and improve social inclusion, particularly in resource-constrained and heterogeneous classrooms common in India. Theoretical models highlight SEL's potential to mitigate social-emotional deficits while reinforcing adaptive skills, resilience, and behavioural regulation. In addition, SEL contributes to mental health, well-being, and participation in inclusive educational settings, complementing existing policies such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic factors further shape the effectiveness of SEL programs, necessitating contextually responsive approaches. This theoretical analysis underscores the significance of embedding SEL in educational strategies for children with disabilities in India, emphasizing the need for comprehensive frameworks, teacher training, community engagement, and policy alignment to promote holistic development and reduce barriers to learning and social integration.

Keywords: Socio-Emotional Learning, Children with Disabilities, Inclusion, India, Adaptive Skills, Educational Equity, Behavioural Regulation

1. Introduction

Children with disabilities can have difficulty developing appropriate social skills

and may struggle with self-regulation, motivation, or self-management. The socio-emotional learning (SEL) framework emphasises the development of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, all of which are pertinent to the needs of children with disabilities (Boro & Kalita, 2021).

The framework of SEL supports disability-specific interventions by focusing on universal social-emotional skills that children with disabilities might otherwise struggle to master. Disability-specific approaches alone may risk labelling children or framing them only as problems to be solved, whereas a universal strengths-based framework conceives of these children as capable and NOVEL fuller concept of SEL holds considerable potential within India's challenged special needs context. A social-emotional curriculum implemented alongside traditional disability-specific interventions, would greatly enhance many children's educational experience, academic motivation, and peer relationships. The rationale for integrating SEL holds especially true within resource-constrained, underprepared educational settings characterised by large heterogeneous classrooms, since accommodating diverse learner needs through differentiated instruction remains more difficult than meeting cognitive, behavioural, or affective challenges using broadly applicable strategies designed for typically developing children (Sharma, S., & Singh, R. 2024).

2. Theoretical Foundations of Socio-Emotional Learning

Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) encompasses the acquisition of core competencies related to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies facilitate the process of developing social-emotional skills, ultimately guiding children's thoughts, behaviours, and interactions with others. Recent advancements in the field have acknowledged that school-age children with disabilities face specific social-emotional challenges that can be addressed through targeted SEL interventions developed within diverse theoretical frameworks. Such interventions are designed to prevent the emergence of social-emotional difficulties, mitigate existing ones, and promote adaptive goal-directed behaviour in children facing various developmental challenges, including those with physical impairments and motor disabilities. However, a comprehensive framework that articulates the applicability of early concepts and foundational frameworks of SEL in relation to children with disabilities has not been established (Gupta & Kaur, 2022).

In parallel with the growing recognition of the importance of disability studies, international literature has explored the connections between SEL and disability across various academic subject domains, including SEL itself. The absence of a similar body of research within the Indian context further emphasizes the need to examine the intersection of SEL and disability within the country. Exploring the relevance of socio-emotional learning for children with disabilities from theoretical and policy perspectives, including educational equity and disability rights as enshrined in the Constitution of India, can facilitate a deeper understanding of these phenomena in Indian schools and motivate the development of practices that directly support children with disabilities.

2.1. Core Competencies of SEL

High-quality social–emotional learning (SEL) programs promote positive social–emotional and academic outcomes for students with and without disabilities. Such programs create supportive, engaging classroom environments; help students set learning goals, cope with challenges, and persist through obstacles; and enhance well-being and inclusion (L. Atkins et al., 2023). Effective SEL programming within general

education promotes both equality and nurture. Instruction is adaptive and flexible; emphasis is placed on the extent to which a student with a disability operates outside natural social and emotional development. Enrichment is built on skills and knowledge already acquired rather than upon remedial programming.

Core competencies outlined by governmental and non-governmental organizations provide a helpful reference framework for the identification, implementation, and evaluation of SEL-related goals and teaching practices that apply across diverse educational settings and to the variable needs of individual learners, including those with disabilities. Five key competencies typify high-quality SEL programming: emotional regulation, prosaically behaviour, adaptive coping, support-seeking, and positive self-identity. Educational and socio–emotional developmental milestones for these competencies are well established (Kumar & Patel 2023). Competency development aligns with classroom learning goals and disability-related individualized education program (IEP) objectives, and robust assessment frameworks exist to monitor student progress.

2.2. Theoretical Models and Frameworks

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) aims to cultivate the broad range of social and emotional competencies necessary for effective participation in society and everywhere else. Building on earlier models developed by researchers such as Daniel Goleman, these competencies can be organized into five core clusters: self-awareness; self-management; social awareness; relationship skills; and responsible decision-making (Menon, 2019). Each of these five clusters can be mapped onto two types of need or support that are commonly associated with disabilities. In short, the first type of need or support is the development and strengthening of positive social and emotional competencies because students with disabilities often enter school with fewer such skills, a greater need for explicit instruction, and less exposure to typical positive peer interactions. The second type of need or support is the amelioration of negative social and emotional competencies, such as emotional deregulation, poor coping with frustration, premature aggression, and diminished resilience, which considerably hinder the functioning, performance, and experience of students with disabilities in school.

SEL frameworks address both types of need and support. Proponents of each of the five core clusters argue that such competencies are highly important, frequently build on one another, and clearly yet differently connect with children's development and learning that is socially and emotionally appropriate and relevant, therefore justifying not only the connection of each cluster to the situation of children with disabilities but also treating the enhancement of such competencies as a goal for all children, including those with disabilities. The very nature of such frameworks, moreover, secures their position as supplementary and compatible with the myriad of disability-specific provisions, practices, techniques, and alternatives that already constitute an important part of pedagogy and any intervention-package concerning children with disabilities. SEL frameworks neither supersede such provisions nor assume that they alone are in any way sufficient.

3. The Five Core Competencies of SEL in the Context of Disability

Social and emotional learning (SEL) guides students in developing their social-emotional skills. These competencies support effective communication and positive interactions, bolstering academic performance and emotional and behavioural development. This guidance is vital in the context of disabilities, which may impair

communication and the ability to assess and understand social cues. Such challenges make it harder to foster rapport and empathy, increasing the potential for conflict and misinterpretation. Addressing students' unique disability-related academic, social, or emotional needs requires additional focus.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness involves the capacity to identify, assess, and understand one's emotions, strengths, and needs and their influence on behaviour. Self-management includes managing one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours, and setting and working toward personal goals. Social awareness refers to the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including understanding social norms for behaviour and recognizing family, school, and community resources. Relationship skills encompass establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups. Responsible decision-making involves making constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. Applying these competencies within a disability context facilitates developmentally appropriate support.

3.1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to identify and understand one's thoughts, feelings, strengths, and needs. People with strong self-awareness know what makes them excited and upset. They understand their abilities and seek help accordingly. Self-awareness allows for better communication about one's state of mind. Students with disabilities may develop an inaccurate self-image; for example, a child with a learning challenge may be seen as less intelligent than peers. Students should practice identifying their feelings and tracking their progress. Charting progress toward personal goals is a concrete way to assess development.

Certain disabilities affect self-regulation, and students may struggle to set or pursue goals. Flexible action plans can allow students to aim for long-term improvement without feeling discouraged. One option is to encourage students to pursue a goal backward: beginning with the desired outcome, they work backward to identify what they can do right now. Another approach is to integrate maintenance and other goals; for example, a student may focus on improving social skills within a broader goal of enhancing peer relationships. Students might also borrow plans and ideas generated by others, either from reliable peers or from toolkits including exemplars.

3.2. Self-Management

Self-management involves regulating one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviours to achieve goals. It encompasses self-regulation, stress-management techniques, coping strategies, and the development of routines to enhance daily function, stability, and productivity. Research demonstrates that students with disabilities exhibit lower levels of self-management than their peers. As a result, the goals and objectives outlined in the Individual Education Plan (IEP) can be especially challenging.

Disability factors often impede goal-setting and goal-persistence skills. Goals can therefore be reduced to objectives or expanded to increase flexibility within the framework of the goal. For example, "Turn in homework on time" may become "Turn in homework;" and "Hand in late homework" should one wish to adopt an alternative

approach. Consider expanding academic goals that depend on homework completion (e.g., of five homework assignments per week) to broader ones, such as "Obtain good mark in subject" or "Stay on track in subject".

3.3. Social Awareness

Social awareness refers to understanding the perspectives and feelings of others and showing empathy and respect (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2021). Students learn to appreciate the values and norms of diverse cultures, view equality and inequity from multiple points of view, and recognize how friends, family members, and community members have shaped their own beliefs. When disability is present, the informal cues that indicate the thoughts or feelings of others may be less accessible to the person with a disability (Rose Cassiere, 2017). For example, eye contact, body posture, facial expression, tone of voice, and physical proximity may convey social information that is more easily overlooked by students who face challenges in noticing or interpreting these signals. Consequently, students with certain disabilities may not be aware of subtle messages from peers that are common in informal social settings. Within disability contexts, helping students recognize cues that peers frequently express can increase their ability to gather information about the feelings, perspectives, and thoughts of others. When relationships have been constructed and maintained, those attending to social awareness begin noticing whether communications are reciprocated or not. Communication aids that can help attract attention or provide information about how to pursue the interaction can also be useful.

3.4. Relationship Skills

Relationship skills involve communicating, cooperating, and resolving conflicts with others. These competencies can be challenging for some students and are easier for others. With supports that target relationship skills, even students who struggle with peer interactions can develop positive, reciprocal connections.

Many students with disabilities benefit from targeted prompts that help them build rapport, maintain interactions, and develop cooperation and conflict-resolution skills. Teachers can model and reinforce these practices by giving students specific, concrete descriptions of effective relationship-building strategies or by providing opportunities for practice in school settings.

3.5. Responsible Decision Making

Responsible decision making involves making constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. It includes the ability to identify and evaluate choices, consider the consequences of various options, and distinguish between right and wrong. It can also involve seeking input from others and reflecting on the decisions that have been made. Though these steps may seem simple, they can be quite complex, especially for young people with disabilities who often face a range of choices different from those of their peers.

Students may be confronted with choices related to their disability, such as whether to accept support or assistance (such as using a wheelchair or assistive technology) in order to access the same environment as their peers, or how to deal with stigma and exclusion. Because these decisions are often more challenging for students with disabilities, additional support may be necessary. For some students, these decisions may be addressed through the IEP process (e.g., what types of accommodations assist in decision making). Other situations may require the development of more thorough

resources, such as a social story, to guide choices. Finally, it is also crucial to ensure that students are provided with opportunities to make ethical decisions, given their unique ability to empathize with others.

3.6. Applying SEL in Disability Contexts

"Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a process through which children and adults obtain skills and attitudes to manage their emotions, set goals, establish relationships, and make decisions. Attending to SEL could provide additional benefits when the focus is on students with disabilities, and addressing these competencies may require adaptations to conventional approaches" (Shihadih, 2019). The following outlines the Five Core Competencies of SEL, as identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in its Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning and its subsequent publications. When planning for these competencies for students with disabilities, it is advisable to identify common universal and individualized supports that enhance the learning of all educators, students, and families involved. Numerous on-going collaborations with Joe Wehby, Ben Ahlgrim-Delgado, and Timothy Lewis provided critical ideas and feedback on the selections proposed and the variety of approaches required when planning for the learning needs associated with disabilities (Alexander & Vermette, 2019). Each competency is thus briefly linked to settings and supports for action across classroom, home, and community environments that may facilitate its development.

The SEL competencies of Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making are presented along with commonly anticipated actions. Each of these competencies may be addressed in a range of classroom, home, and student community contexts and certain selections within those environments are further suggested. Comprehensive SEL programming addresses representative targets for all students within these competency areas. When focusing specifically on addressing the needs of students with disabilities, universal and individualized supports are nonetheless identified. Those commonly identified as universal largely aim to remove or reduce unnecessary barriers to educational experience and are thus relevant for all learners. Tailored or individualized supports, linked here to the 'Responsiveness' construct of the MTSS framework, guide the selection of additional supports and accommodate the broader range of factors that influence the pace and path of student learning.

On-going engagement with families and specialized support staff further increases the relevance of SEL efforts for individual learners and expands the breadth of available options. Operating within a wider structure of clearly linked classroom, home, and community approaches enhances the overall effectiveness of collective objectives. Such a structure can also clarify how to deploy resources most effectively in the interests of achieving that effectiveness. Each competency is therefore organized around the three common settings of Classroom, Home, and Student Community, with straightforward steps that demonstrate how to initiate action.

4. Intersections of SEL and Disability: Conceptual Synergies

Disability, inclusion, and education at a glance: The evolution of inclusionary education policies in India since the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities parallels trends in inclusive education practice worldwide. The 2005 National Policy on Education categorically stated that "studies indicate that about 80% of the students with disabilities do not require separate

schooling;" similar conclusions inform more recent reforms. The overarching theme of inclusion across the educational landscape addresses apparent inequities within the nation's diverse school systems. Nationwide guidelines underscore the rights of vulnerable populations began taking shape as early as 1990, yet as of 2018, only 98 of 603 districts accounted for more than 50% of the estimated backlog of missing, disabled, and out-of-school girls. Access chasms persist, obviating the need for a robust, rights-based approach resistant to the vicissitudes of supporting organizations, programs, and frameworks—an objective central to India's 2005 legislation. The Children with Disabilities (Rights and Rehabilitation) Bill, officially introduced in 2009, suggested disbursing 10% of all floor space among government-run and private-sector providers without stipulating accessibility criteria beyond the building's physical premises, thereby favouring a repair-centric, rights-based disposition (Singal, N. 2021).

Disability, inclusion, and education in India's schools: Teacher shortages disproportionate to rural populations further handicap children deprived of education due to disability-related, socio-cultural or geographic factors. True-to-form approaches transverse socio-economic-cultural barriers while exposing students with disabilities to concentrated disability-specific provisions, inevitably stigmatizing their reception by non-disabled peers. Learner-borne limitations often outweigh restrictions deriving from the disability itself in planning and meeting individual education plan objectives. The dialogue demands a paradigm beyond educating for inclusion or preparing exclude, extending across the socio-emotional and curricular domains, reinforcing missed skills while presently conserving developmental merits of a diverse co-educational population.

4.1. Social-Emotional Development in Children with Disabilities

Social-emotional development in children with disabilities is a complex process influenced by neurological and environmental factors. Early perceptions of the world may be distorted and, as a result, social interaction becomes impaired. Commonly used definitions for social awareness, both for oneself and for others, are complicated, given the unique qualities of the individual and the many shared and unshared characteristics that allow for insight into their perceptions and feelings. Young children also display problem behaviors such as hyperactivity, perseveration, and excessive touching. During the preschool years, these behaviors may go undetected due to the influence of supportive adults. Upon entering school, however, the likelihood increases that children will be perceived differently and will become susceptible to misunderstanding and ridicule. Social difficulties do not reside solely with the children but extend to adults as well who may misinterpret children's actions. Such factors contribute to disability-specific social-emotional avoidance and suggest the need for direct interventions (Boro & Kalita, 2021).

4.2. Challenges and Opportunities in SEL Implementation

A child is a human being who has not yet fully developed physically or socially. Compared to children of physical pain is registered earlier, children can have more than a year before the first smile (Menon, 2019). Children with disability differ to others physically and socially, their development retards because of the difficulty to acquire experiences. Therefore, adequate attention needs to be presented to them to recover or improve disability problem as early as possible.

Children with cognitive level retardation are usually accompanied with other ID disabilities. For a long time, their development of social skill receiving less emphasis than thinking skill does not support them to grow up with good friends together. School opening to them is a most critical period. Classroom instructions must be different and

more advantageous for children, at least colour. The availability of social skill intervention in elementary classroom are still in limitation. It is difficult to define properly whether children grow with verbal coordination or only draw pictures. The situation of conducting is more obvious if lack of opportunity to interact with friend.

To assist improvement of interpersonal skill easy to apply out of classroom must be extremely essential (Kim, 2018). All students especially these with disabilities are unable to adopt the similar method through strengths-based approach avail. Such atmosphere needs to develop peers to drive forward an intervention mode. The method not only benefits a specific group but also turn large body of students backward casually.

5. Mechanisms by Which SEL Supports Disability-Related Outcomes

Research on school climate suggests that socio-emotional learning (SEL) improves engagement and emotional development, especially for students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Socio-emotional skills remain a critical platform for students with disabilities to fully derive the benefits of an enabling environment. Such competencies enhance resilience and coping ability in the face of academic, social, and psychological challenges. In India, schooling systems continue to grapple with adaptation to the diverse needs of students, especially children with disabilities. These challenges have intensified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. A focus on SEL may help educate educators and communities on these developmental trajectories.

Social-emotional learning (SEL) promotes the development of skills that enable individuals to make responsible decisions, establish supportive relationships, and manage their emotions and conduct appropriately to succeed in life. Such abilities are foundational for students with disabilities who tend to be handicapped in one or more of these areas and remain vulnerable to school dropout, dependency on special education, and repeated grade placement. SEL thus helps to build resilience, reduce dependence on special education, and promote the acceptance and inclusion of students with more severe disabilities.

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) positively influences students' ability to adapt to the academic environment, generating motivation to set and reach academic goals and enhancing commitment and perseverance in learning tasks. SEL encourages the practice of self-regulation or the ability to manage one's own emotions and behavior to facilitate classroom participation and compliance with the rules. Finally, SEL helps minimize socio-emotional problems, promoting mental health and well-being, fostering social acceptance and inclusion by peers and teachers, and reduces the risk of school dropout due to failure to meet the demands of learning and living in school.

5.1. Academic Adaptation and Motivation

Students with disabilities often experience variations in social interaction throughout their school years. Many children form a bond with a close friend at school around the age of four but progressively appear to devote less time to chatting and more to solitary activities from age six to nine compared to their typically developing peers. Studies show that the enthusiasm for social interaction and friendship diminishes over time, particularly among children with learning disabilities. Thus, planning social intervention programs is important, as social difficulties at an early stage reduce the chance of developing an interest in peer relationships (Lynn Mills, 2007). Social–emotional development trajectories, including peer interactions and attention to social recommendations, may differ for students with disabilities (Menon, 2019). While

trajectory models can be informative, progression along those trajectories is not guaranteed. These symptom–level indicators, therefore, probe the operationality of the SEL framework in the specific educational context of disability.

In India, the need for SEL support to address social isolation and enhance motivation to attend school is particularly acute. Students with disabilities confront a 'dilemma of discrimination', where the very characteristics viewed as disabling are also sought and valued by their peers. These students exhibit relatively lower access to motivation-enhancing emotional states, which predictatively impacts goal-setting and perseverance on 'non-winning' school-related activities. Therefore, practices that facilitate the development of such emotional states are intrinsically relevant and taken up within the proposed framework.

5.2. Behavioral Regulation and Classroom Participation

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) offers a different theoretical perspective through which disability and support can be understood. Every student requires opportunities for socio-emotional development, but there is also a distinctive trajectory for many students with disabilities. Participation in peer interactions is often limited, reinforcing existing gaps in mutually positive exchanges. The presence of stigma in relation to disability can also impede acceptance and reciprocity, further extending this cycle. These implicate the value of such models that address both student need and educational goal while translating constructive principles into transferable practices capable of meaningful enactment (Hetrick-Ortman, 2007).

The capacity for regulating behavior represents a second progression whereby students are encouraged to participate more actively within the classroom and conform more closely to prescribed practices. Such regulation can be associated with a range of governing processes encompassing emotional, attitudinal, social, and cognitive dimensions, and it is applicable in varied contexts. Supportive, responsive environments serve as a fundamental prerequisite for individual intentionality and disposition among students—the collective, even if implicitly, steers that reality (Lynn Mills, 2007).

5.3. Mental Health, Well-being, and Inclusion

For students with disabilities, social-emotional development follows different trajectories than for their peers without disabilities (Lakhan, 2013). Although the frequency and quality of their peer interactions often decline in the transition from primary to secondary school, many face greater socioemotional challenges than students without disabilities. An inclusive educational approach can help reduce stigma and facilitate the development of prosocial skills (Menon, 2019). Compounding these difficulties, inclusive approaches to education and social-emotional learning (SEL) are more likely to be available to students with disabilities in smaller, less resourced, and more heterogeneous schools, which are often better served by generic learning and participation-based models of Universal Design for Learning (Frazier & L. Doyle Fosco, 2024). Such contextual constraints increase the need to explore how SEL practices and pedagogies can be adapted to meet the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

6. Cultural, Socioeconomic, and Linguistic Considerations in the Indian Context

In India, various cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic factors shape the attitudes of families and communities toward Disability, Inclusion, and Education (Mills, 2019). These same factors influence how agents and agencies engage with the constructs of

socio-emotional learning (SEL). Attention to these considerations, therefore, can be expected to enhance the appropriateness and effectiveness of SEL initiatives that promote both access to and improvement in the quality of the educational experience for children with disabilities. For example, socio-economic factors govern the availability of developmental resources and the capacity to act on such positively reinforcing inputs. Some families and communities hold entrenched socio-cultural beliefs about disability that delimit engagement with children with disabilities, and by extension school-based investment in children perceived as disabled. Further, curriculum and pedagogical choices determined by societal concerns for children without disabilities may limit the focus on the socio-emotional domain in classrooms accommodating children with disabilities randomly or unlocated.

Cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic considerations influence the implantation of SEL frameworks to support children with disabilities in India. Some communities possess entrenched socio-cultural beliefs that delimit engagement with children perceived as disabled. Teachers and parents report limited opportunities for children to paint, draw, shape, and construct objects, and socio-economic factors govern the availability of developmentally supportive materials and toys. Children without adequate early experiences or exposure miss opportunities to develop behaviour and skills. Teachers may also be advised to focus on acquiring a specified advancement before a lower attainment is deemed ready because greater opportunities to attend to each behavioural aspect are not available in the limited time allocated.

6.1. Family Engagement and Community Norms

Socio-emotional learning (SEL) shares important conceptual parallels with disability studies, notably with respect to inclusion, equity, and the recognition of diverse learner strengths and needs. Each of these dimensions is relevant to children with disabilities and to educational policies and practices that are intended to support them. Among children with disabilities, the acquisition of socio-emotional competencies can facilitate their participation in inclusive schooling, both as learners and as members of the school community.

SEL provides students, including those at risk of exclusion, with the cognitive, behavioral, and affective tools and supports necessary for successful adaptation to the classroom context. Students with diverse disabilities can benefit from SEL in ways that reinforce their academic motivation, goal setting, perseverance, adaptive coping, and classroom participation, and that help them regulate their own behavior and comply with the routines of inclusive schooling. SEL can also enhance mental health and well-being, social inclusion, and the ability to navigate peer groups and friendships. Such competencies, in turn, help decrease the probability of exclusion and school dropout (Lynn Mills, 2007).

Disability, socio-emotional development, and SEL are intertwined in this respect. Schooling represents a fundamental transition for all children, including those with disabilities; the arrival of school creates new opportunities for peer interactions as well as new vulnerabilities. Taking up school almost invariably engenders a reduction in the number of available interactions during the day with familiar, much-valued family members. Moreover, children with disabilities often arrive at school with distinctive trajectories of social-emotional development or with long histories of stigmatization. These circumstances underscore the importance of planning for the social-emotional aspects of schooling, and of considering how SEL can support children with disabilities

in adapting to inclusion and participating actively in classroom life (Menon, 2019).

6.2. Resource Allocation, Training, and School Readiness

International initiatives addressing disability often emphasize the critical role of early childhood development (ECD) in realizing children's rights and achieving education for all. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include targets for ensuring that all young women and men, especially those in vulnerable situations, are aware of their sexual and reproductive health, including information on HIV prevention and treatment; and for the provision of universal access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and higher education. (Menon, 2019) Caliber and quality of early-age health and education for children with disabilities is directly linked to learners' subsequent degree of socio-emotional, personal, educational, and social well-being development. The prominence of early-age securing of these competences remains relevant not only in developed nations but also in low- and middle-income economies such as India. (K. C. Nair et al., 2023) Non-availability of comprehensive survey reporting on the size of the population of children under five with disabilities in India further complicates and challenges national efforts to help children possessing the full range of disabilities. Prioritization) of national survey efforts towards collecting other non-disability baseline data and survey information directly of national priority significantly constrains the ability to secure sufficiently broadly representative surveys on children-determined disability and other capability needs.

7. Conclusion

As the preceding analysis has shown, socio-emotional learning (SEL) and disability frameworks converge at several conceptual and practical points. The social and emotional dimensions occupy a central position in the rights-based discourse surrounding education and disability in India. The international indivisibility of social-emotional and academic outcomes for students with disabilities also lends support to a complementary focus on SEL within broader disability efforts. Integration of the two realms within inclusive education mirrors larger global efforts to eradicate the separation of SEL and academics in favour of holistic student development across cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal domains. Within highly resource-constrained and heterogeneous settings like India, however, implementation obstacles abound. The urgency of the social-emotional developmental task itself remains elevated within disability contexts—yet undertaking the complementary educational challenge of SEL remains complex and multifaceted. Curriculum preparation and implementation, pedagogical approaches, institutional settings, community engagement, and evaluation all present substantial demands, particularly in the absence of explicit policy direction. Inclusive practices in these areas often fail to touch the needs of learners grappling with academic barriers, let alone address the additional burden of sociocultural and psychological stresses that have risen sharply during recent years.

Policy and practice across the Indian landscape reflect these complexities and disparities. Yet a strong momentum exists for addressing social-emotional learning, and a compelling case has emerged for attached yet separate consideration of the complementary yet distinct concerns of disability. The preceding exploration has aimed to clarify these theoretical connections while providing a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of insight and activity around SEL implementation with regard to children with disabilities across diverse dimensions.

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