

# Socio-Emotional Well-Being and its Determinants in School Students: A Comprehensive Review

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**Abstract** - This systematic review aims to present an overview of existing research on the socio-emotional well-being of students and other associated factors. After a rigorous search through Shodhganga, SAGE Journals Online, Elsevier, Springer-Journals Archive, Research Gate, and ERIC-Education Resources Information Centre, articles were carried out from 2000 to 2024. The review resulted in the identification of a total of 26 articles based on pre-established inclusion criteria. The results indicate that the Socio-emotional well-being of school students is associated with and influenced by other significant factors like school climate, mental health, peer support, etc. The results prominently identify the directions of other research conducted in the same domain, indicate thematic research trends, and highlight gaps to be further investigated. A limited study in the Indian context with adolescents clearly shows an extensive need for research on primary school students. Context-specific research is needed to understand the socio-emotional well-being status of students in a diversified and multicultural country like India.

**Keywords:** Socio-emotional Well-being, Socio-Emotional Competencies, School Climate, Mental Health, School Students

## I. INTRODUCTION

### *Background for Conducting the Study*

In recent years, there has been a remarkable increase in the acknowledgment of socio-emotional welfare as one of the critical aspects of schools (Samuels et al., 2017). It implies that learning extends beyond academic achievements by focusing on the all-round development of children in their emotional and social evolution stage. Teachers, researchers, and policy-makers now view socio-emotional well-being as one of the leading factors determining students' success and happiness during their formative years and transition to adulthood. Socio-emotional well-being is a broad concept encompassing emotions ranging from happiness to sadness and psychological elements like depression, which affect joy or pleasure (Samuels et al., 2017). For elementary school-age kids, this includes how to manage feelings expressively and in social situations, feelings of acceptance with peers and adults, coping with stressors, and feelings of worth and assertiveness. That is why socio-emotional well-being is not only a current position but a lifelong continuous state that is influenced by numerous factors inside and outside the person.

When the students are emotionally healthy their socio-emotional function yields positive interpersonal interactions and the behavior indicates that belong to the school. However, a positive school climate and a climate that 'allows' for inclusion fosters socio-emotional development because students attain affiliations and assets they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Despite the rising role that these variables have been given, little is known about the factors that influence primary school children's socio-emotional functioning and development. While prior research has evaluated those phenomena individually, it becomes necessary to invest a great deal of effort in exploring the combination of these concepts and searching for the gaps in knowledge. This research seeks to contribute to this literature by immersed investigation of socio-emotional well-being of school pupils and routes to its development. This paper seeks to unravel the extent of synchrony between SEWB and/or any other related factors by practicing a conceptual framework perspective that acknowledges both personal and environmental attributes (Veera Boopathy et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the subject of children's integrated development has been a focus of educational psychology and didactics in the past years. Relatedness is tied to academic achievement, relationships, and satisfaction rather than a person's cognitive aspects (Kodric et al., 2021).

Thus, this systematic review aims to develop a clear understanding of the state of socio-emotional health of students in school. It will be useful to educators, researchers, and policymakers in education and mental health since it will establish factors affecting student welfare (Lomotey & Deters, 2013). Thus, integrating a review of the relevant literature, theoretical concepts, and available data, this research agenda seeks to inform the more complex interplays and identify features that might impact on socio-emotional well-being of school children (Llopiz-Guerra et al., 2024). They influence achievement outcomes and affect profoundly mental health and development in adulthood, which makes them important in the educational setting during the years of learning the most important values (Muthukumar & Srinivasa Ragavan, 2019).

### *Socio-emotional Wellbeing*

Socio-emotional well-being is described as a complex concept that includes several components of human emotional and social life. The following are the main aspects that play a very important role in ensuring students' social and emotional learning support is developed and sustained. Affective self-regulation is important; it involves the capacity of a student to identify, appraise, and regulate emotions. It means managing stress, managing adversity, and showing how a person can manage and handle different difficulties that may occur in their lives. Social behavior relates to how learners behave in the social setting of their network. This includes cooperation, consideration of other's rights, acknowledgment of other's families, and adherence to other cultures and standards. Socioemotional, hyperactivity, and attentiveness are meaningful components of socioemotional functioning; they define the level of students' activation and distinct focus in various contexts. This is a form of executive functioning and entails the ability to stay focused, control behaviors and emotions one wants to act upon and exert needed amounts of effort to accomplish goals. Friendship relationship which is part of peer relations affects student's feelings of acceptance, support, and friends in school. Peer-related activities that have positive aspects enable the learners to gain social integration while negative aspects cause social alienation or lead to social confrontation. Also, self-organization is important encompassing voluntary coordination to support the community or attain a common goal.

## **II. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

As a research scholar in the area of education, the choice of the topic emanates from a growing appreciation of socio-emotional development as a significant determinant of a child's total well-being and academic achievement. The study area is sensitive because the chronic effects of this trajectory on the well-being and social potential of students can be crucial. It is important to grasp what contributes to the socio-emotional well-being of this group as the foundation for defining direction and approaches for further action. Thus, this research is useful to the existing knowledge by exploring the complexity of the relationship between socio-emotional health and other basic critical factors among school students. This research aims to provide insights to inform the development of targeted interventions and school-based programs to promote positive mental health and social integration among school students. This exploration seeks to lay the foundation for resilient and emotionally healthy individuals in the future by fostering a supportive and nurturing school environment that prioritizes holistic development.

Driven by a genuine interest and enthusiasm for advancing understanding in this area, the researcher is committed to conducting thorough, insightful research that can make meaningful contributions to education and student well-being.

## **III. OBJECTIVES**

The scope of this systematic review is limited to relevant studies and journal articles published in English between 2000 and the present that have investigated the socio-emotional well-being of students of different age groups.

Therefore, the objectives of the proposed study are as follows:

1. To systematically review the existing empirical papers on the socio-emotional well-being of students of different age groups.
2. To identify other associated variables or factors that have the potential to show the strength of the relationship with the socio-emotional well-being of students across the studies.
3. To understand whether the socio-emotional well-being of students is always correlated with other factors irrespective of the sample variation.
4. To depict a clear idea about the nature of studies up to the date and to find out the research trends and research gaps in this field.

### • *Methods*

#### *Locating Studies*

The focus of the literature review was on the socio-emotional well-being of students within the last 25 years. In locating relevant studies, journal articles published between 2000 and 2024 were searched in Internet databases (e.g., Shodhganga, SAGE Journals Online, Elsevier, Springer-Journals Archive, Research Gate, ERIC- Education Resources Information Centre, etc). The keyword used in the search was as follows: *Socio-emotional well-being of students*. Cross-referencing citations from previously identified studies found other articles. Of the 500-plus studies identified, only 26 met the criteria for inclusion in this review.

#### *Inclusion-exclusion Criterion*

The researchers initially collected all the articles titled "Socio-emotional well-being of Students." Final research papers were selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any study that met the inclusion criteria was included in the analysis. The population and sample areas of interest were not confined to any age, stage, or culture.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were:

1. Studies adapted to survey type, empirical, experimental, and longitudinal research study associated with the Socio-emotional well-being of students, leading us to exclude thesis and meta-analyses.
2. Only Papers published in English were included, leading us to exclude the papers published in all other languages.

3. Only full-text articles are included.

The studies included and excluded in this analysis are presented in Table I.

TABLE I INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Category	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Publication dates	Published studies from 2000 to 2024	Published before 2000
Publication language(s)	English language	Non-English languages
Mode of search	Computer-based Internet/ Online search	Offline searching.
Resources	Shodhganga, SAGE Journals Online, Elsevier, Springer-Journals Archive, Research Gate, ERIC-Education Resources Information Center	Any other than mentioned.
Publication Type	Journals, articles, working papers, papers presented in seminars, conferences, symposiums, and theses submitted to fulfill any degree. (Only full-text articles).	Other than full-text articles.
Keywords for search	Socio-emotional well-being of students	
Study types and designs	Survey type, empirical, experimental, and longitudinal research, Systematic review	Thesis and Meta-analyses.
Population of interest	Any age, stage, or culture (both Boys & Girls)	
Sample Size	Studies with small and large samples.	
Sample characteristics	school - students, College/university- students & mixed sample etc.	Any other than mentioned.
Types of measures	Surveys (Quantitative assessment), Qualitative assessment including interviews and observations, Standardized tests, Mixed measures.	Non-standardized measures.

• *General Characteristics of Included Studies*

Studies published online between 2000 and 2024 (March) were included. The online search showed that no significant research was available before 2000 in which the primary variables, i.e., the Socio-emotional well-being of students (SEW), were present. Brief information about the selected studies in this review is shown in Table II. These tables describe the name of the author and publication year, sample characteristics, methodology and principal findings of each

study, and factors behind SEW. To present the results systematically, the researcher would consider separately the studies performed with various characteristics of samples like primary school students, high school students (Adolescents), mixed samples, etc. Selection Process with the Number of Studies Identified at each Stage shown in Fig. 1.

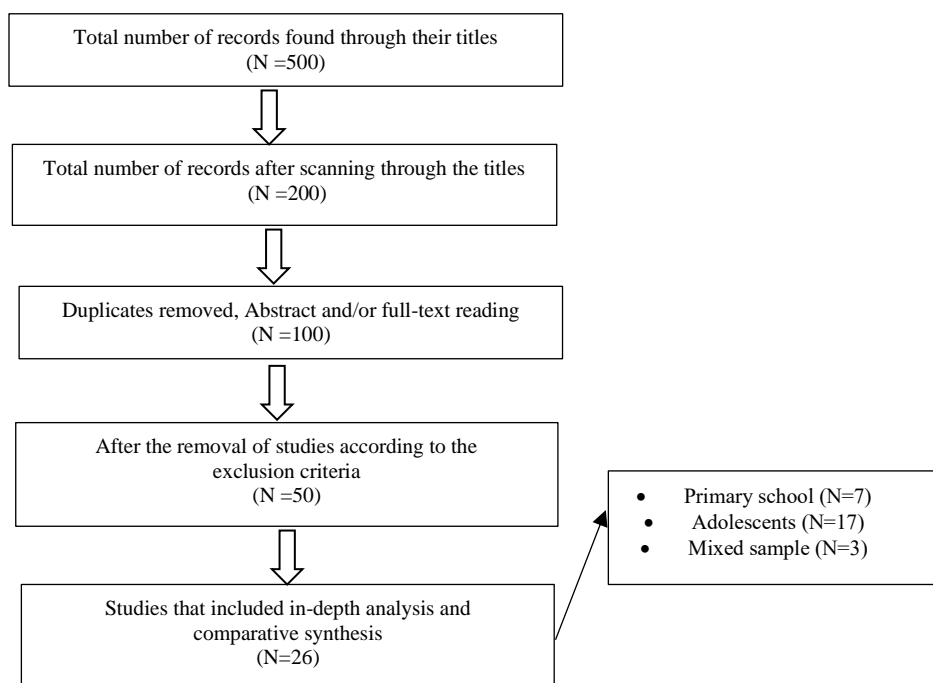


Fig. 1 Selection Process with the Number of Studies Identified at each Stage

**IV. RESULTS**

• *Systematic Review of Literature*

In the present systematic review, 26 empirical studies were finalised for inclusion. The studies included in the final in-depth review had publication dates ranging from 2000 to

2024, all of which varied in different geographical locations. The reviews covered diverse age groups, such as primary school children, adolescents, adults, and mixed groups.

*Socio-emotional Wellbeing*

The total included studies with socio-emotional well-being as a factor of consideration is 26 numbers.

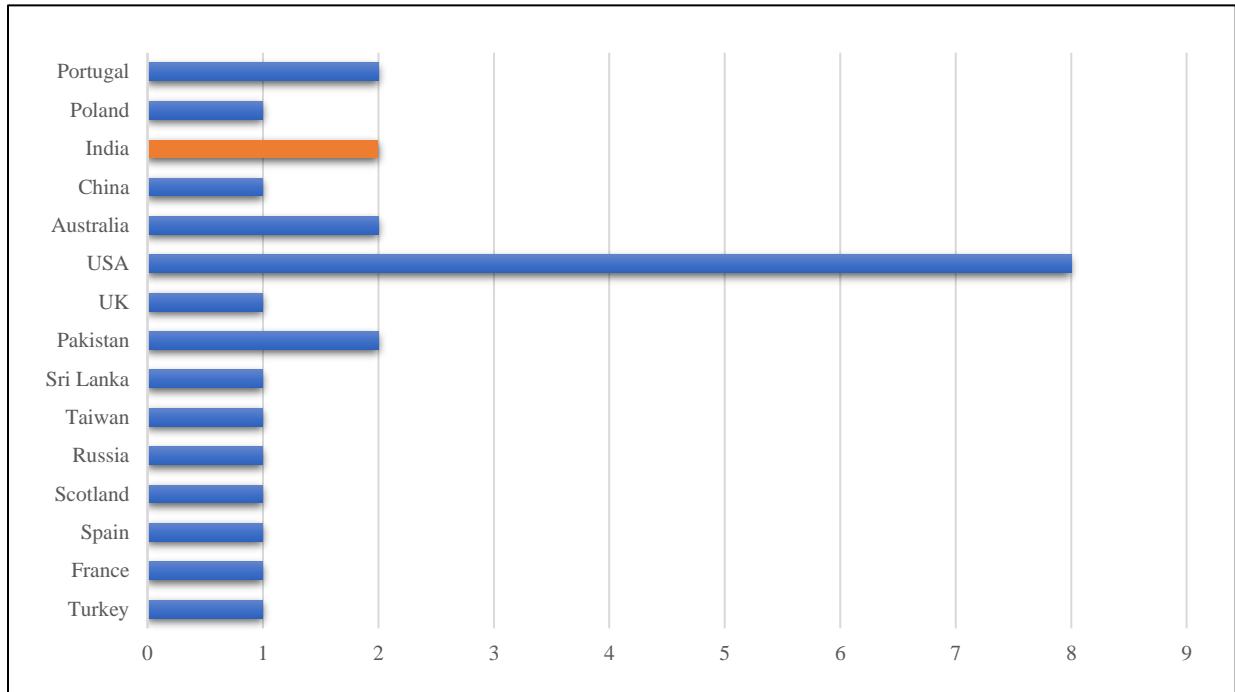


Fig. 2 Country-wise Included Studies

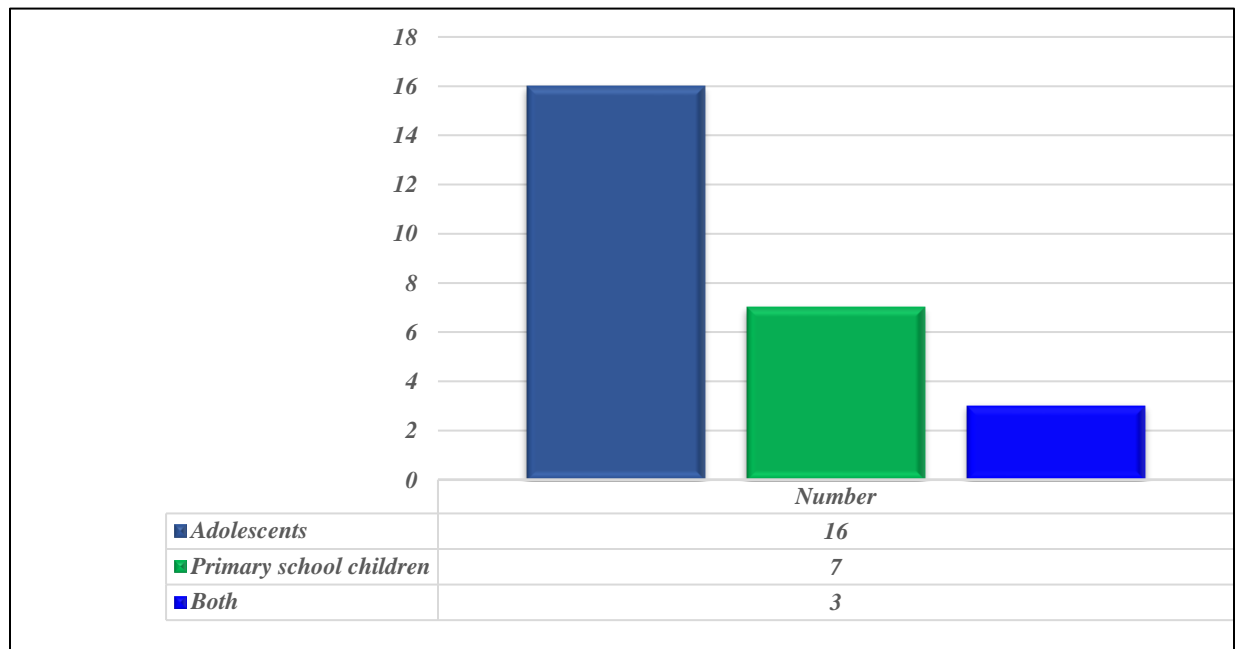


Fig. 3 Sample-wise Included Studies

• *Principal Outcomes*

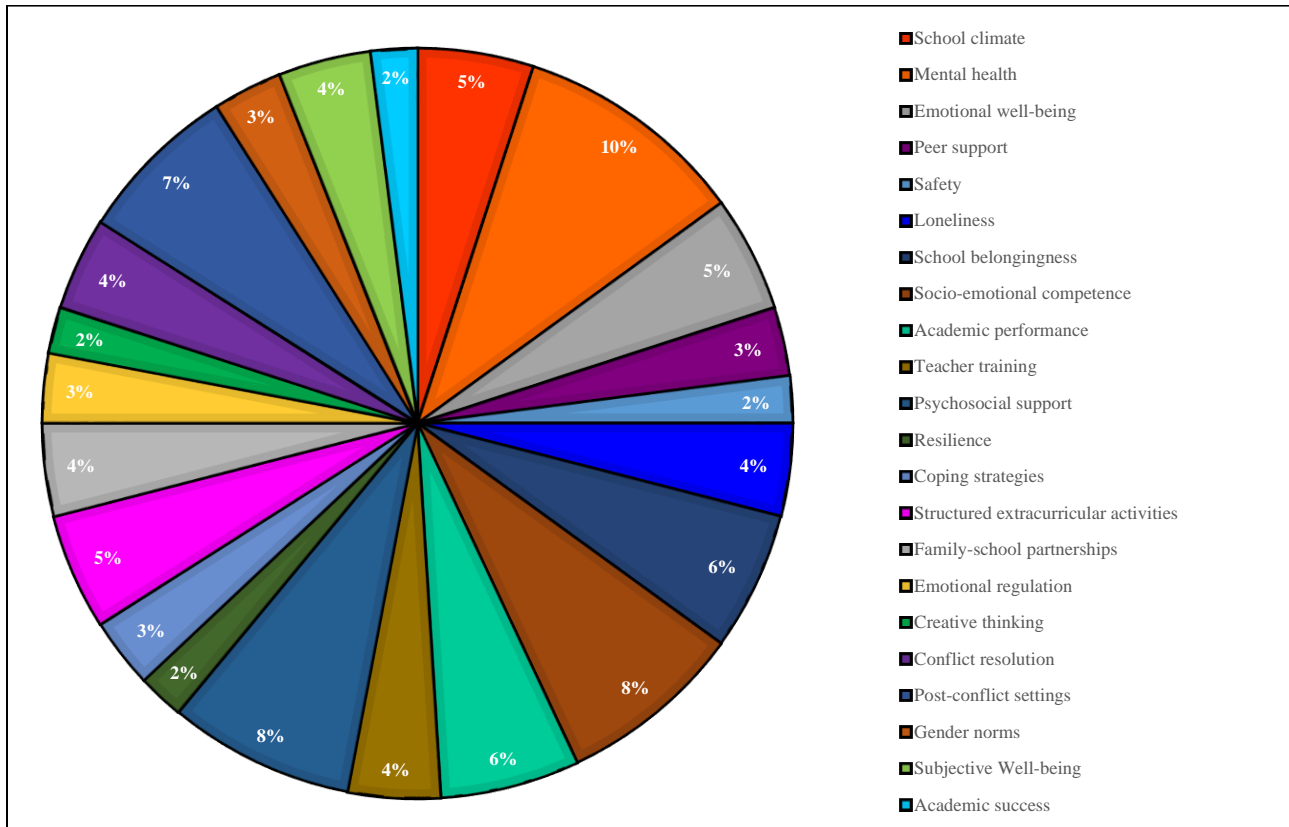


Fig. 4 Occurrence of Major Critical Factors Associated with Socio-emotional Well-being

In conclusion, our systematic review of the included papers has played a crucial role in identifying the occurrence of associated key factors, as shown in the diagram. These factors are instrumental in shaping the socio-emotional well-being of any person, especially students. Among these factors, mental health emerges as a major contributor, with a significant 10% occurrence rate in the included studies.

*A. Occurrence of Two Critical Parameters at a Time from the Included Studied*

Further, when two numbers of associated vital factors are taken simultaneously, and occurrence is calculated, school climate, mental health, and peer support are the major factors with the highest percentage of occurrence in the included studies. Details are shown in the following Fig. 4, 5.

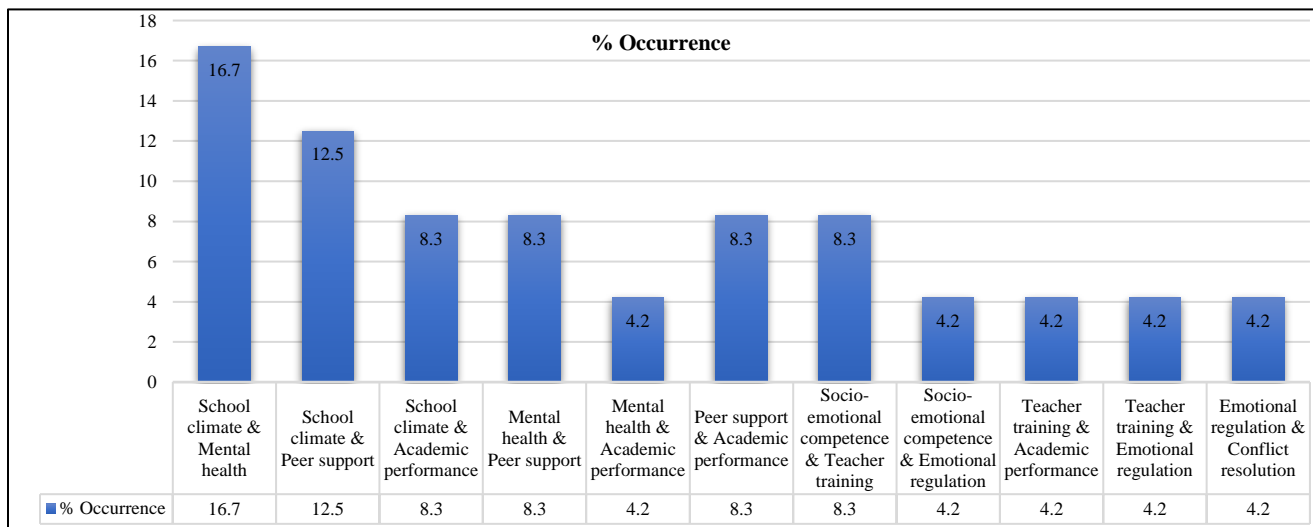


Fig. 5 Occurrence of Two Critical Parameters at a Time from the Included Studied

*B. Extracted Details from the Included Studies*

The compiled data in Table II presents insights from 26 diverse studies examining factors that influence students'

socio-emotional well-being within educational settings across various countries.

TABLE II INFLUENCE STUDENTS' SOCIO-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING WITHIN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS ACROSS VARIOUS COUNTRIES

Author(s)	Year	Sample/target group	Methodology	Major Findings	Factors Affecting Socio-emotional Wellbeing (SEW)
Cristóvão et al.,	2020	Primary school students	A qualitative study analysing teachers' perceptions	Emotional Literacy and Creative thinking positively impact teacher development and the classroom environment	✓ Teachers' emotional leadership, ✓ Teachers' explicit instruction on social and emotional skills
Lester & Cross	2015	N=1800 students, Age-11-14 years	Longitudinal study	School climate influences students' mental and emotional well-being during the transition from primary to secondary school	✓ Peer support, ✓ school connectedness ✓ safety
Arslan	2021	N= 244 adolescents	Quantitative study	School-based social inclusion and exclusion predict loneliness, mental health problems, and subjective well-being.	✓ School belongingness ✓ loneliness ✓ social inclusion/exclusion
Mella et al.,	(2021).	N= 3400 adolescents	Weighted network analysis	Self-regulation is a critical mediator in linking socio-emotional skills with academic achievement	✓ Socio-emotional competencies ✓ self-regulation, school adjustment
Santamaría-Villar, et al.,	2021	N=100, primary school students	Quasi-experimental design, general linear model	The socio-emotional program reduces violence and improves conflict resolution	✓ Self-awareness, ✓ emotional regulation ✓ assertive communication
Dusenbury et al.,	2017	N=571 adolescents	Quantitative study	Social-emotional competence is crucial for positive adjustment and reducing risk	✓ Social-emotional competence
Tarasova	(2016).	N-192, primary school students	Quantitative study	SEC development is non-uniform and emphasises a hetero-chronical nature.	✓ Socio-emotional competence (SEC) ✓ Self-awareness ✓ social skills
Lin	(2022).	N=24 nos in 6 groups of primary school students	Micro-level analysis of verbal and nonverbal interactions	Peer dynamics are critical in improving struggling students' engagement	✓ Psychological safety ✓ Peer support ✓ cognition
Qadeer et al.,	2019	N=40, primary school students	Interviews	Academic problems, learning disabilities, and exam stress are primary psychological stressors	✓ Psychological issues ✓ academic performance ✓ Learning disabilities
Samuels et al.,	2017	N=192, adolescents	Qualitative fieldwork	Psychosocial support is crucial in post-conflict settings	✓ Gendered norms ✓ Psychosocial support ✓ Psychosocial vulnerabilities
Muñoz-Silva et al.,	2020	N=247, primary school students	Quantitative study	Gender differences in sociometric status impact psychosocial adjustment	✓ Sociometric status ✓ Gender differences ✓ Prosocial behaviours
Kolchik	2019	N=180, primary school students	Empirical study	Psychological safety is vital; over 30% experience heightened anxiety	✓ Psychological safety ✓ Interpersonal tension ✓ Social acceptance
Maclean & Law	2021	N=179 Scottish primary school teaching staff	Qualitative study	Teachers' perceived lack of knowledge/training hinders mental health support	✓ Teacher roles ✓ Professional development ✓ Early intervention
Dollard & McTernan	2011	N=29, Adults	Multilevel theoretical model	PSC influences work conditions, psychological health, engagement	✓ Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) ✓ Work stress ✓ Governmental policies
Barry et al.,	2017	Not specified	Systematic review and case study	Evidence-based interventions need sustainable strategies for school practices	✓ Intervention strategies ✓ School systems
Han	(2021).	Not specified	Literature review	Grit and school connectedness are crucial for student well-being	✓ Grit ✓ School connectedness ✓ Positive psychology
Wong et al.,	(2021).	N=1114, adolescents	Longitudinal experimental study	School climate elements like safety and discipline impact social-emotional health.	✓ School Climate ✓ Safety ✓ Discipline ✓ Teacher-student relationships
Seth	(2017).	N=300, adolescents	Intervention study	Life skills intervention improved self-awareness, empathy, communication, critical thinking	✓ Life skills ✓ Gender differences
Antoija	2015	N=228, adolescents	Quantitative study	Resilience mechanisms vary by gender, with different protective factors	✓ Resilience ✓ Gender differences ✓ School connections
Bhat	(2014).	N=600, adolescents	Quantitative study	Supportive home environments enhance psychosocial competence and resilience	✓ Home environment ✓ Psychosocial competence ✓ Resilience
Bertills	(2010).	Not specified	Systematic review	School climate significantly impacts mental health, academic, and behavioural outcomes	✓ School Climate ✓ Mental health ✓ Cultural sensitivity
Yadav	(2010).	N=200, adolescents	Quantitative study	Parental care and coping mechanisms influence happiness and mental health	✓ Parental care ✓ Coping mechanisms ✓ Subjective well-being
Christenson & Reschly	2009	Not specified	Comprehensive review	Family-school partnership is crucial for student well-being and academic success	✓ Family-school partnerships ✓ Communication ✓ Trust
Frydenberg et al.,	(2009).	N=536, primary school students	Path analysis	Productive coping promotes emotional well-being	✓ Coping styles ✓ School connectedness
Battistich et al.,	(2004).	N=1246, primary school students	Longitudinal study	School interventions promote resilience and reduce risk behaviours	✓ Resilience ✓ School interventions ✓ Student Engagement
Gilman et al.,	(2004).	Not specified	Systematic review	Structured extracurricular activities enhance student engagement and achievement	✓ Extracurricular activities ✓ Social belongingness ✓ Academic achievement

- *Trend Analysis and Identification of Theme*

The key themes and findings from these studies can be summarised as follows:

### 1. *Socio-Emotional Competencies*

**Development and Impact:** Many studies emphasise the importance of developing socio-emotional skills such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, critical thinking, and resilience. These competencies are linked to positive academic outcomes, improved mental health, and better interpersonal relationships.

**Interventions:** Programs that enhance these skills, like emotional literacy and creative thinking initiatives, have been shown to reduce behavioural issues, promote conflict resolution, and foster a supportive classroom environment.

### 2. *School Climate*

**Influence on Well-being:** A positive school climate characterised by peer support, connectedness, safety, and strong teacher-student relationships significantly enhances students' mental and emotional well-being. This is especially important during transition such as Transitional from lower to higher classes, for instance from a primary school to secondary school.

**Interventions and Policies:** Measures should be put in place to encourage safety, relatedness and quality of peers' interactions in order to reduce stress for students.

### 3. *Teacher Roles and Training*

**Emotional Leadership:** Being the emotional leaders in the classroom teachers have a vital role. Their capacity for the modeling and the teaching of S-E skills can be critical in students' learning process.

**Professional Development:** Research also shows a gap that reveals the need to train teachers in better ways to meet the student's emotional and psychological needs through emotional and psychological literacy training.

### 4. *Psychological Safety and Well-being*

**Secure Environment:** Making the academic environment psychologically safe and supportive reduces such things as anxiety, loneliness, and other work, in students.

**Peer Dynamics:** Friendly peers and possible companions help encourage social inclusion and make the person feel safe.

### 5. *Home Environment and Family-School Partnerships*

**Influence of Home Life:** A positive climate at home is beneficial to psychosocial well-being, competence, and coping ability among adolescents.

**Collaboration with Families:** Communication, trust, and mutual support are the key components of meaningful

family-school relationships that are important for children's difficulties resolution and their achievement-related success.

### 6. *Gender Differences and Coping Mechanisms*

**Variations in Experiences:** There is(^) evidence about sex differences in coping, resilience processes, and school effects indicating the calls for sex- and gender-responsive intervention.

**Impact on Well-being:** Knowledge of these differences is useful to inform the development of strategies for supporting learners with specific needs.

### 7. *Extracurricular Activities and Structured Programs*

**Positive Outcomes:** Organized sports and after and/or school activities have positive effects on student attendance, performance, and self-esteem.

**Holistic Development:** All these activities afford valuable and relevant personal as well as social learning pursuits beyond the class curriculum.

### 8. *Overall Implications*

**Comprehensive Approach:** The research data accumulated cumulatively support the notion for the conception of the broad-spectrum strategy for enhancing students' socio-emotional health. This involves promotion of socio-emotional learning, promotion of school climate, establishment of sufficient training for teachers, involvement of families and application of researched based interventions.

**Policy and Practice:** Educational policies and practices should prioritize mental and emotional well-being as foundational elements of the learning environment to support students' holistic development.

In summary, the studies collectively highlight that fostering socio-emotional competencies, creating a positive and safe school climate, supporting teachers through professional development, engaging families, and implementing structured interventions are critical strategies for enhancing students' social and emotional well-being in educational settings.

## V. DISCUSSIONS

The extracted data shows that there is a scope for research in the Indian context. As shown in Fig. 2 and Fig. 3, a meager amount of research has been carried out in the Indian context. Further, both identified studies are with adolescents. Therefore, in the Indian context, research on socio-emotional well-being among *primary school students* is critical due to its implications for holistic development and academic success. However, a comprehensive gap analysis reveals several areas requiring further investigation and intervention implementation.

Firstly, while studies like (Cristóvão et al., 2020) emphasize the importance of equipping students with socio-emotional skills, there is limited research focusing on the specific needs and challenges of Indian primary school students. Identities and cultural practices in the Indian learning environment and context, and students' socio-economic differences may have a different impact on students' socio-emotions. As such, there is a significant need for research that adapts socio-emotional intervention accordingly to the Indian educational system.

Second, as also pointed out (Lester et al., 2013), the stage from primary to secondary school appears to be particularly at risk for students' socio-emotional development. Nevertheless, research like this one, looking into the transitional phase of students and the effects it has on Indian students in particular is limited. Exploring issues like peer support, school climate, as well as safety during this transition period, can help better understand what 'works for students' socio-emotional adjustment during this period thus filling this knowledge gap. Thirdly (Arslan, 2021; Santamaría-Villar et al., 2021) pointed out that students' loneliness and skills in conflict resolution are areas that need to be tackled. As seen in the Indian context, a very large class size, students from different cultural backgrounds, that acts as a key feature of every class, means that the teacher must know how to engage the common group-focused feelings and sentiments and how to teach the students about conflict management effectively. Given such a context, research that reviews culturally sensitive approaches and assesses the outcomes in the Indian initial teaching scenario is required. Besides, as several recent works point out the potential of teachers to support socio-emotional learning (Barry et al., 2017; Maclean & Law, 2022), there is a lack of information on requirements for the professional preparation of Indian primary school teachers. Examining the effectiveness of training programs to improve teachers' skills for promoting students' socio-emotional development may be helpful to teacher education policy. Also, apart from (Wong et al., 2021; Battistich et al., 2004) on school climate and extracurricular, the present literature lacks sufficient investigation of these in the Indian context. This paper aims to explore school climate and students' participation in other activities and activities that support the well-being of children in primary schools in India. Altogether, the above discussions reveal that more context-specific studies are called for in the Indian context about the socio-emotional well-being of primary school students although prior research has provided a significant amount of useful information in this area. An investigation of these and other similar gaps would help in creating relevant intervention and policy initiatives to support the comprehensive accomplishment and academic achievement among Indian primary school students.

- *Delimitation of the Review*

The researcher solely followed the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the strategy of a systematic review. Focusing on this aspect, the present review aimed at the identification of various factors influencing the socio-emotional development

of students of different ages. However, because of the inclusion-exclusion criteria, the following other factors may have been left out.

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