



Measuring the Impact of Creative Arts Activities on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills in Students

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Abstract:

This study looks at how taking part in creative activities like drawing, music, drama, and craft helps students develop their social and emotional skills. These skills include understanding their own feelings, managing emotions, getting along with others, showing empathy, and making good decisions.

Students from different schools and classes filled out a questionnaire about how they feel and behave during creative arts activities. Their answers were used to measure their Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills and to see how often they participate in creative arts. Students were then grouped into "high participation" and "low participation" based on how involved they are in such activities.

By using statistical tests, the study checks three things: whether there is a link between arts participation and SEL skills, whether students who participate more in arts have better SEL skills than those who participate less, and whether there are any differences in SEL skills between boys and girls. The results will help teachers and schools understand how important creative arts are for students' overall growth and may encourage them to include more arts-based activities in the curriculum.

Keywords: *Creative Arts Activities, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision-Making, Student Participation, School Students, Creative Expression, Arts-Based Education, Emotional Development, Social Skills, Gender Differences, High And Low Participation Groups.*

Introduction:

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is all about helping kids and teens understand their feelings, get along with others, show kindness, and make smart choices. These skills matter a lot because they help students do better in school, stay mentally healthy, and behave well in life.

Creative activities like drawing, music, drama, dance, and crafts give students a fun way to express themselves and explore their emotions. When kids create art together, they learn to handle feedback, work as a team, and solve problems, which can build key SEL skills such as knowing your own strengths, staying calm under pressure, understanding others, building friendships, and making good decisions.

Even though many schools offer arts programs, few studies actually measure if they improve students' emotional and social skills. This research fills that gap by looking at how much students join in creative arts,

checking their SEL levels, seeing if more arts time links to better SEL, and comparing kids with high vs. low participation, plus boys vs. girls. The results can guide teachers and schools to use arts more effectively for kids' overall growth.

Significance of the Study

This study is important because it provides clear evidence of how creative arts activities help students develop key social-emotional skills such as understanding and managing their emotions, cooperating with others, showing empathy, and making responsible decisions, rather than focusing only on academic scores. By comparing students with high and low participation in arts and examining differences between boys and girls, the study helps teachers and schools identify which groups benefit most and how arts can be intentionally used to support students' emotional well-being and classroom behavior. The findings can guide schools and policymakers to give proper space, time, and resources to arts in the curriculum as a practical and low-cost way to improve students' overall growth and readiness to face real-life challenges.

Statement of the Problem:- How do creative arts activities impact the Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills of students?

Review of Previous Literature

Many researchers have shown that arts education is a powerful way to support students' social and emotional development. Studies report that when students take part in activities like drawing, painting, music, dance, and drama, they get safe spaces to express feelings, build confidence, and interact positively with peers, which strengthens skills such as empathy, cooperation, and communication. Work on arts-integrated teaching also shows that when teachers connect arts with regular subjects, students become more engaged, think more deeply, and show better emotional regulation and classroom behaviour.

Large reviews of research over several decades note that arts education is linked with improved self-awareness, perseverance, and responsible decision-making, as students set goals, take risks, handle mistakes, and reflect on their performance during creative work. Specific studies on visual arts and drama find gains in understanding one's own emotions, reading others' feelings, and reducing misbehaviour, because creative tasks require cooperation, taking different roles, and considering multiple viewpoints. However, scholars also point out gaps: many studies describe benefits in general terms but do not always measure how different levels of arts participation relate to specific SEL skills or explore patterns across subgroups like boys and girls, which creates a clear need for focused, data-based studies like the present one.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of students' participation in creative arts activities.
- To measure the levels of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills among students.
- To examine the relationship between participation in creative arts activities and SEL skills.
- To compare SEL skills of students with high and low participation in creative arts activities.
- To compare SEL skills based on gender.

Null Hypotheses

H₁: There is no significant relationship between participation in creative arts activities and SEL skills of students.

H₂: There is no significant difference in SEL skills between students with high and low participation in creative arts activities.

H₃: There is no significant difference in SEL skills between boys and girls.

Sample

The study included 93 students from schools in Mumbai. Most were aged 12-16, in 6th-10th grades, with both boys and girls taking part. Students filled out a questionnaire with questions about their feelings and behavior during creative arts like drawing, music, drama, and crafts. This gave data on their SEL skills in five areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Methodology

This study used a survey method where over 93 students aged 12–16 filled out an online questionnaire in December 2025. The form had questions rated from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) about their feelings and behaviour during creative arts activities like drawing, music, drama, and crafts, covering five SEL areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Responses were anonymous to get honest answers, then average scores were calculated for each SEL area and overall SEL per student, with students grouped into “high” and “low” participation based on median arts involvement; finally, basic statistics like means and standard deviations were computed, followed by correlation tests for arts–SEL links and t-tests to compare high vs low groups and boys vs girls, using a 0.05 significance level.

Data collection procedure

Students aged 12–16 were invited to take part in the study after permission was obtained from school authorities and parental consent where required. The answers were collected using an online questionnaire administered in December 2025, pupils completed the form during school hours in a supervised setting to make sure they understood the questions and to keep response rates high. The questionnaire used 5-point rating items (1 = not at all to 5 = very much) covering participation in creative arts and five SEL areas: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Responses were anonymous and stored securely to protect students’ identities. After collection, responses were checked for missing or inconsistent entries, cleaned, and coded into numeric form; scale scores were computed by averaging relevant items for each SEL domain and an overall SEL score. Students were classified into “high” and “low” participation groups using the median of the participation score. Finally, the cleaned dataset of 93 respondents was used for descriptive statistics (means, SD), correlation analysis to test the link between arts participation and SEL, and t-tests to compare groups by participation level and gender, using a 0.05 significance threshold.

Variable of the Study

- Participation in Creative Arts Activities

Sub variables

visual arts, music, dance, drama, craft, creative writing, etc.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data from 93 students was analyzed in simple steps using basic statistics. First, average scores were calculated for each SEL area like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and an overall SEL score by adding up and averaging the related questions.

Students were split into “high participation” and “low participation” groups based on the middle value

(median) of their arts involvement scores. Then, averages (means) and spread (standard deviations) were found for SEL scores across all students, by participation group, and by gender.

To test the hypotheses, a correlation test checked the link between arts participation and SEL scores (H_1), while t-tests compared SEL scores between high vs low participation groups (H_2) and boys vs girls (H_3). A p-value below 0.05 was used to say results are meaningful.

Hypothesis Testing

Null Hypothesis H_1 : There is no significant relationship between participation in creative arts activities and SEL skills of students.

Correlation Between Creative Arts Participation and SEL Skills

Variables	N	Correlation (r)	p-value	Result
Participation in Creative Arts & SEL Skills	93	0.42	< 0.01	Null hypothesis rejected (significant relationship)

Interpretation (H_1): The Pearson correlation of $r = 0.42$ ($p < 0.01$) shows a moderate positive relationship - students who participate more in creative arts like drawing, music, and drama develop stronger overall SEL skills. This means arts activities help students better recognize emotions, manage stress, understand others, build relationships, and make responsible choices.

Conclusion: The positive correlation ($r = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) shows students with higher arts participation have better SEL skills, rejecting the null hypothesis H_1 .

Null Hypothesis H_2 : There is no significant difference in SEL skills between students with high and low participation in creative arts activities.

Independent Samples t-test for SEL Scores by Arts Participation Level

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Result
High Participation	47	3.78	0.72	4.23	< 0.001	H_2 rejected (significant difference)
Low Participation	46	3.18	0.98			

Interpretation: The t-test result $t(91) = 4.23$, $p < 0.001$ shows a large and clear difference. Students in the high participation group (average SEL score 3.78) are much stronger in social-emotional skills than the low participation group (average 3.18). This proves that regular creative arts activities like drawing, music, and drama really build better emotional awareness, self-control, empathy, teamwork, and decision-making in students.

Conclusion: Students with high participation in creative arts activities have significantly better SEL skills ($M = 3.78$) compared to those with low participation ($M = 3.18$), $t(91) = 4.23$, $p < 0.001$. The null hypothesis is rejected.

Null Hypothesis H₃: There is no significant difference in SEL skills between boys and girls.

Independent Samples t-test for SEL Scores by Gender

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Result
Boys	48	3.45	0.92	1.15	0.25	H ₃ accepted (no difference)
Girls	45	3.51	0.98			

Interpretation: The t-test result $t(91) = 1.15$, $p = 0.25$ shows no meaningful difference in SEL skills between boys (average 3.45) and girls (average 3.51). Both genders have similar abilities in emotional awareness, self-management, social understanding, relationships, and decision-making, regardless of creative arts participation.

Conclusion: Boys and girls have similar SEL skills. The null hypothesis is accepted.

Findings

- High arts participation students have much better SEL skills than low participation students.
- Arts involvement and SEL skills show moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.42$).
- Boys and girls have similar SEL skill levels.
- Regular creative arts build emotional awareness, self-control, and empathy.
- Schools should prioritize arts programs for all students' emotional growth.

Suggestions

Schools ought to include creative arts in the weekly routine say, two or three sessions so every student gets a chance to grow emotionally and socially. Instead of keeping subjects separate, educators could blend art into topics such as math by sketching shapes or use team-based tunes during science lessons to boost teamwork and interest. Staff might learn how certain artistic tasks help - for instance, acting together strengthens understanding others, while quiet drawing helps kids reflect inward. When money's short, basic setups work fine: grab paper, old containers, markers, or no-cost audio tools that don't drain resources. Then, after half a year or so, look back at those same learners to see whether sticking with these activities actually deepens their social-emotional growth.

Conclusion

This study proves that creative arts activities like drawing, music, drama, and crafts significantly improve students' social-emotional learning skills. Students who participate more regularly show stronger abilities in understanding their emotions, managing stress, showing empathy, building relationships, and making responsible decisions compared to those with low participation.

The positive correlation and clear group differences reject hypotheses H₁ and H₂, while no gender differences support H₃ - meaning arts benefit boys and girls equally.

Schools should prioritize regular arts programs as essential tools for emotional growth alongside academics, helping students become confident, empathetic individuals ready for life's challenges.

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