INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH

Analysis of 'The World Around Us' Textbooks of NCERT at Preparatory Stage through the lens of Socio-Emotional Skill Framework

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2583-5289
Volume: 05
Issue: 06
Received: 06-09-2026
Accepted: 04-10-2026
Published: 02-11-2026
Page No: 01-13

Abstract
Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) has become an important part of education, not only in terms of academics, but reaching the holistic development and potential of an individual. This study aims to examine the representation of the SEL components in *The World Around Us* (TWAU) textbooks developed by NCERT for the Preparatory Stages, in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023. Using the CASEL framework, the study examined the textbook and coded both visual and textual content for the presence and representation of the 5 SEL skills - interpersonal relationship skills, responsible decision-making, self-awareness, self-management and social-awareness. Findings from the study depict that all the CASEL competencies are present and distributed throughout the textbooks across all the three grades, though unevenly. The findings indicated that responsible decision-making skills dominate the textbook content, followed by interpersonal relationship skills. TWAU textbooks further connect SEL with daily life activities and experiences particularly through reflective questions and activities involving the learner's family and community. The study concludes that TWAU textbooks have immense potential for translating the vision of NEP 2020 of holistic education by refining the content in terms of making it more explicit for SEL skills, developmentally sequenced and more inclusively designed content.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMCR.2026.5.6.01-13

Keywords: Socio-Emotional Learning, The World Around Us textbooks, CASEL Framework, Content Analysis

Introduction

Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL), in simple words refers to the way in which individuals gain skills and knowledge to manage their emotions as well as understand others, set goals, display empathy and make responsible decision making (CASEL, 2020) [10]. It is an integrated set of skills enveloping the domains of cognitive, social and emotional context situated in everyday life. It was observed that many times, classroom learning has been inclined significantly towards rote learning and academic achievements, focusing distinctly on literacy and numeracy skills, and comparatively less explicit and systematic focus on socio-emotional learning skills among children. With the advent of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and its supporting curricular document, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023, there has been a shift in focus of education towards the holistic development of the children, locating Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) as an important component of the curriculum, rather than an outlying domain of education.

This idea has gained importance over the course of time considering the expanding pressure that children are facing in the light of academic performance and competition in the 21st century as well as familial and societal expectations such as peer comparison, parental expectations, digital influence, etc., which in turn has led to the development of anxiety, stress, depression,

etc. among them. This has in turn, thus, lead to the displacement of socio-emotional development and well-being of children and at the expense of their academic achievements. Yet studies reveal that early childhood is the critical window for the development of emotional competence and self-regulation, and during the middle childhood stage, peer relations take a central stage (Housman, 2017; DeWalt *et al*., 2013; Yeates *et al*., 2007) [16, 25, 52]. The advent of COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the undeniable need for paying attention to the mental health and socio-emotional aspect of children, which was largely brushed off under the facet of an academically weighted education. Anxiety, depression, loneliness was at peak during this period of uncertainty leading to learning loss and behavioural problems among children. Prolonged social isolation, lack of peer interaction, economic distress and family interference were among the many issues that children faced, leading to deprecation of their mental and socio-emotional well-being. Ali *et al*., (2012) and Chachar *et al*., (2021) reaffirmed that, during the pandemic the children's microsystem has been compromised by a number of restrictions, such as the prolonged closure of schools, homeschooling, and the absence of social support (peer relationships and extended families). Thus, taking these factors into account, NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 have advocated to integrate Socio-emotional learning into the school curriculum, rather than treating it as a separate realm of wellness intervention or school counselling.

Socio-Emotional Learning from the Perspective of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 states that "education must develop not only cognitive capacities- both the 'foundational capacities of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions" This further has been highlighted in the document by urging the educational institutions to attend to "each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres" (NEP, 2020). Thus, the triad of cognitive, social and emotional competencies is to be treated as the superordinate goal for holistic development of children, rather than considering them as three distinct objectives.

For Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), which serves as the foundation of a child's development, the NEP 2020 asserts for "physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy and numeracy" (NEP 2020). It also suggests for school system to focus on mental health of students, emphasizing that "the nutrition and health (including mental health) of children will be addressed, through healthy meals and the introduction of well-trained social workers, counsellors and community involvement into the schooling system" (NEP 2020). The document also suggests for active role of teachers to enhance the overall well-being of their students, highlighting that "teachers will also focus on socio-emotional learning – a critical aspect of any student's holistic development.").When they are informed and conscious, they can apply SEL effectively to coursework, practice, and institutional culture, thus, making sure that a future teacher starts his or her classroom prepared to create social-emotional competence in students (Donahue-Keegan *et al*., 2019) [17]. Moreover, the assessment of students has to be upgraded in a way that it not only flags academic achievements of the students, but also gives a broader picture of their overall progress and well-being. "The progress card will be holistic, 360-degree multidimensional report that reflects in great detail the progress as well as the uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains." (NEP 2020). Schools have an important role to play in raising healthy children by fostering not only their cognitive development but also their social and emotional development (Durlak et. al, 2011). Thus, the policy stresses and reassesses that education in India is not a mere tool to prepare students for rote learning and sit for examinations, but rather a catalyst to upscale them as competent, skilled and holistic human beings. Thus, NEP 2020's vision emphasizes that education should help students develop into moral, logical, caring, and compassionate individuals, and that pedagogy should be holistic, integrated, learner-centred, inquiry-based, experiential, and enjoyable rather than content-heavy and exam-focused.

Supporting the vision of NEP 2020, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) 2023 roots for integrating socio-emotional learning skills in the curriculum design, assessment and pedagogical approaches. Social and emotional skills are referred to as the critical components of the 21st century and employability skills (Trilling & Fadel, 2009) [47], and they are critical for individuals' development (i.e., personal and professional) and function in society (National Academy of Sciences, 2012) [35]. In an era of globalization and constant change, learners are required to develop both academic understanding and at the same time build competence for socio-emotional skills like empathy, ethical reasoning, citizenship values, inclusion, teamwork, mental well-being and responsible decision making. The NCFSE 2023 recognizes this need and thus, urges for a holistic approach towards education. In this light, Socio-Emotional and Ethical Development has been underlined as a core component in the Foundational Stage curriculum. The document also marks 'Guidance and Counselling' as an important section that identifies schools' responsibility towards mental health and well-being of their students. In addition to providing remedial mechanisms, NCFSE 2023 suggests for teaching social participation, emotional regulation and motivation among students. Weaving the paradigms of both contemporary developmental and scientific approach and Indian philosophy, NCFSE 2023 states "Emotional and spiritual development or the *Manomaya Kosha* involves' becoming aware of and skilfully regulating our emotions." Attuning to this notion, some of the curricular goals, competencies and learning outcomes are comprehensively and intricately framed to foster emotional awareness, self-regulation, cooperation, ethical behaviour. For example, Curricular Goal 4 (CG4) for the domain: Socio-Emotional and Ethical Development at foundational stage is to 'develop emotional intelligence, i.e., the ability to understand and manage their own emotions, and responds positively to social norms' is further operationalised into different competencies such as responding positively to emotional needs of others, showing cooperative behaviour, regulating emotions and interacting comfortably with peers and adults.

Theoretical Foundations for Understanding Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Socio-Emotional Learning as a domain is vast and is drawn from many prominent psychological theories and perspectives of human behaviour. For instance, Mayer and Salovy's concept of emotional intelligence, which was popularized by Goleman refer to the mental processes involved in the recognition, use, understanding, and management of one's own and others' emotional states to solve problems and regulate behaviour (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) [42]. According to this theory, emotional intelligence should be viewed as ability or competency based (Cf. Saarni, 1999) [41], as distinguished from being rooted in personality attributes.

In addition, there is a large body of research evidence showing that both children and adults can acquire attitudes, emotional responses, and new patterns of behaviour as a result of observing filmed or televised models. (Bandura, 1971) [6]. Bandura's Social Learning theory highlights the role of observation, modelling and reinforcement in learning social behaviour among individuals, which also includes learning Socio-Emotional Skills. This can also be traced back to how school textbook content, narratives and illustrations can shape and influence how a child will observe, learn and model socio-emotional behaviour.

Another important theory of psychology, the Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory stresses on how the child's development is largely shaped by its environment and how socio-emotional learning cannot be taught in isolation. Children's development is shaped through reciprocal interactions with multiple environmental systems, including the family, school, peer groups, community and broader socio-cultural contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) [9]. Starting from immediate environment, the Microsystem, i.e. the setting a child interacts with daily (e.g. family, classmates, teachers, neighbours etc.), and gradually moving towards the Mesosystem, i.e., the interaction among the microsystems (e.g.: relationship between the child's parents and teachers), and then moving towards the Exosystem, i.e., the external environment and social institutions and structure which has an indirect impact on the child (e.g., a parent's workplace), then comes the Macrosystem, which refers to the larger social and cultural norms, that layouts how the child would express, behave and seek support. Finally, the last encompassing environment is the Chronosystem, which is the life transitions and socio-historical events in a child's life that shapes his development across his lifetime. Thus, according to this theory, the environmental setting of the child plays and important role in his development which also has been prominently dwelled on as the starting point of learning for children, as mentioned in NCFSE 2023 as 'immediate social and natural environment' of the child. As discussed, there are several theoretical frameworks describing SEL. CASEL framework is one of the notable theoretical frameworks that explains SEL in detail.

CASEL Framework

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework defines SEL as a process through which individuals acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible and caring decisions. It addresses five broad, interrelated areas of socio-emotional competence:

1. **Self-awareness:** The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behaviour across contexts.
2. **Self-management:** The abilities to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.
3. **Social awareness:** The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.
4. **Relationship skills:** The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.
5. **Responsible decision-making:** The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behaviour and social interactions across diverse situations.

These competencies take a systemic approach and give a broader and rich description of what SEL skills entail across various contexts, making this framework globally accepted as an apt model for measuring Socio-emotional learning.

Review of Literature

Research on Implementation and Impact of SEL in School Education

Chen *et al.*'s (2026) study on CASEL competencies reveal that constructivist approaches like Inquiry-based, Activity based and problem-based learning promote Social and Self-Awareness, which Self-Management remains a neglected SEL skill. This study only focused on the pedogeological aspect of the curriculum, rather than textbook content.

Shah, Azam & Ali (2025) [43] analysed the perspectives of primary school level teachers on SEL of students. They interviewed 9 primary school teachers in Karachi, using the CASEL framework. The findings revealed that the students displayed diverse levels of the SEL components in terms of self-management, relationship skills and social awareness. The teachers emphasized the need for an integrated SEL programme to address the existing gap. However, the study was only restricted to teachers' perception of SEL development, and excluded analysing textbook & curriculum materials.

Bokhari, Anis & Muhammad (2025) [7] examined how socio-emotional learning is integrated into the classroom climate by including 12 elementary teachers in Pakistan, employing Erikson's assertion development methodology. The findings demonstrated and highlighted the role of micro-interactions among teachers and students, peer relations and improvisational practices in creating an inclusive environment in classrooms and fostering socio-emotional competencies, more than textbook and curricular materials.

Cipriano, Strambler, Naples, *et al*. (2023) updated this evidence with 424 studies across 53 countries (575,361 students), reaffirming gains in skills, attitudes, behaviour, school climate, peer relationships, and academic achievement for students in K–12 universal SEL interventions.

Durlak *et al.*'s (2011) meta-analytical study found that explicit and structured instructions substantially improve SEL skills, academic performance and pro-social behaviour. The study took into account 213 school-based SEL programmes comprising more than 270,000 students. This

confirms the needs for integrating SEL integration in the curriculum and gives ground for analysing textbook content for SEL competencies.

Research on Prevalence of SEL Elements in Textbook Content Analysis

Jafari, VahidiAsl & Masjedjamei's (2026) [26] mix-method study employed Natural Language Processing (NLP) with content analysis of Ekman's 6 emotion framework. The study analysed the Social Science textbooks of Iranian Elementary grades (Grade 3 to 6), which depicted happiness as a recurring and dominant emotion in textbooks of lower grades connected to emotional security, while the themes of higher grades textbooks represented a comprehensive and extensive range of emotions, including emotions embedded in civic and historical themes. The emotion of surprise remained underrepresented across of the grades. This study thus, focused on emotion-word frequency rather than socio-emotional competencies.

Kuzu & Egmir (2026) [31] conducted a qualitative case study on socio-emotional readiness in Grade V (students age of 10-11 years) EFL classrooms in Türkiye. The study adopted document analysis, teacher interviews, focus group discussions with students and observations. The findings revealed that textbook and curriculum materials prioritized vocabulary recall more than contextualized usage of socio-emotional learning. However, the study paid more weightage to classroom experiences than analysing textbooks for Socio-emotional Learning. It also focuses on language learning instead of taking an integrated approach for subjects like *The World Around Us.*

Using the CASEL framework, Parker & Cronin (2025) [40] examined 40 children's trade books. The study found that self-awareness and self-management were more prevalent than social awareness than relationship skills. However, the research study did not look into the mandated textbooks for school curriculum and was limited to trade literature which emphasizes the need for comparable studies of textbooks, like *The World Around Us*.

Pareek & Verma (2025) [30] used a framework to compare the Grade IV Environmental Studies textbooks of NCERT and SIERT. The finding of the studies reveal that both the textbooks supported the development of values and depicts a potential for gender neutral representation across the content and illustrations. However, the study did not analyse the textbook content in accordance to the NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 reforms, and locates 'value' a s broader term, and not specified to the SEL framework.

Ping Wei (2024) [50] analyses patriotism content in Chinese language textbooks of primary grades and found that they align with the CASEL framework competencies. On the other hand, this content could not be effectively transacted due to weak questioning skills of teachers and generalised assessments. Moreover, the study is limited to understanding SEL in the context of Chinese language textbooks, leaving a scope for SEL studies in integrated subjects like *The World Around Us* in Indian context.

Using the CASEL framework, Majadly and Yahya (2024) [32] examined 9 Arabic textbooks of Grades 1-6. They discovered that, despite the presence of SEL components, they were unevenly distributed across all the textbooks, with more prevalence in higher grade textbooks. Among the SEL categories, interpersonal skills remain dominating, while content to develop social awareness skills were underrepresented. Moreover, the implementation standards (focus, explicitness, sequencing, active practice) were not fulfilled by the textbooks. Despite being confined to analysing language textbooks, the study does provide a strong methodological approach for examining the CASEL framework for SEL competencies.

Another study employing the CASEL framework was by Usakli (2017) [48], who examined 9 Turkish elementary Social Studies textbooks of Grade 1 to 3. The five competencies were present, aligning through activities of the textbooks, although the study surfaced gaps of physical design, content balance and applicability. The study, was however, limited to Turkish context, leaving scope for the present study to map SEL competencies within the Indian context.

Babaei & Abdi's (2014) [5] study attempted to map the content, illustrations and exercises of the Social Science and Natural Science textbooks of secondary grades, following the 5 component and 26 sub-categories of the Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework. The components were found to be disproportionately spread throughout the textbook material with a larger proportion addressed in Social Science textbooks than in Natural Science textbooks. There was a disproportionate spread of the components across the textbook content, with a larger proportion covered in Social Science textbooks as compared to the Natural Science textbooks. However, the analysis was limited only to the non-South Asian, Persian-medium context secondary grade textbooks, leaving the Preparatory grade textbook content overlooked. It also relied precisely on the Goleman's theoretical components, without considering the more comprehensive CASEL framework.

The studies in the review of literature brings out an overlapping gap in terms of conceptual, methodological and contextual range. Research studies on textbook analysis, particularly in the South-Asian regions largely share an analytical and conceptual perspective which is fragmented into isolated themes of religion, gender, moral values, environmental awareness, etc., and not focused on an exclusive demarcation for Socio-emotional Learning, footing on the competencies of the CASEL framework. Furthermore, many of the research studies that examine the content in the textbooks, apart from the language textbooks, are generally restricted to coding basic emotions, while failing to underline the extensive competencies of Socio-Emotional Learning like responsible decision making, relationship skills, social awareness, etc. In contrast to evaluating narrative text alone, only a few studies systematically and critically investigate the operationalization of the SEL components in the pedagogical approaches used in structuring the textbook content, which includes, texts, illustrations, classroom activities, questions and discussion sections that depict critical and reflective thinking, assessments, etc.). This study aims to fill this gap by focusing also on the pedagogies of the TWAU textbooks.

Moreover, a substantial number of research studies examine and assess the existence of SEL learning in school curriculum through the perspectives of teachers and classroom interaction, often excluding the textbook materials from their data collection when it comes to evaluating SEL components.

Finally, another recurring gap in the literature denotes that a majority of the existing studies on SEL learning covered in the Indian textbooks, precedes the advent of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and implementation of the NCFSE 2023, which narrow the scope of research for newly introduced subjects at the Preparatory Stage like *The World*

Around Us in the light of mapping these textbooks within the guidelines of the SEL domains highlighted in the current education policy and curricular framework.

Thus, the existing literature reveals that most of the previous research studies have not provided a lens for looking at the textbooks, specifically at the Preparatory stage through a competency-based Socio-Emotional Learning framework. The present research will structurize a framework driven critical analysis of how and in what ways *The World Around Us'* textbook series inculcates socio-emotional learning among students at the Preparatory Stage by integrating the findings of textbook analysis research at both global (including South Asian countries) and local levels.

Rationale

Learning through textbooks has been one of the eminent and most dominant pedagogical resources available to Indian schooling and education. Children's literature offers rich opportunities for young readers to explore and deepen their emotional intelligence in a way that ignites their awareness and understanding of SEL topics (Sullivan and Strang, 2002) [45] It also offers young children a space to notice, consider, discuss and evaluate how characters behave. (Griffith, 2026) [21]. Anchoring this view, here is a great potential in textbooks for SEL as they have the ability to offer diverse texts, narratives, illustrations and thought-provoking questions that aids for laying the foundation of critical thinking, becoming aware of self and instigating a discussion and dialogue among peers for understanding and respecting diverse perspectives, cultures and social contexts. NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023 has marked SEL as an important domain of holistic education, which has been comprehensively analysed in language textbooks in previous studies, but overlooked in subjects like *The World Around Us* across global contexts.

The World Around Us (TWAU) as a subject has been introduced at the Preparatory Stage (Grade III to V), for understanding the world through multiple and integrated disciplinary domains of science, environmental science, social science, real-life experience and culture through dialogues, illustrations, case studies, stories and reflective and critical thinking questions which help the learners develop socio-emotional qualities like empathy, collaboration, compassion, self-reflection, etc. TWAU reinforces the inculcation of civic awareness, justice, inclusivity in its content which helps learners navigate through the social and communal understanding of their environment. Moreover, it is during the preparatory school years that young children develop their identity and experience peer relationships and group dynamics. Social time spent with peers increases, tightly knit cliques develop, group identity and acceptance become more central, and some aspects of peer relations become more stable (Camodeca, Meerum, & Schengel, 2002). Textbooks socialise and legitimise cultural norms, and therefore, learners' social worlds should find expression in their textbooks (Sibanda & Herman, 2024) [44]. Thus, the SEL components included in the textbook series are intended to assist students in developing meaningful identities and navigating relationships and groups as they explore the "world around". An educational benefit of this approach will be to enhance the cognitive ability to make decisions and to comprehend material, thus creating a joyful and successful learning experience. Moreover, the rationale of this study is further supported by a few gaps in the existing literature which reveals the need for a fresh conceptual and methodological approach in the domain of TWAU subject area. The literature review underlined how textbooks, specially at the Preparatory Stage were not the primary source of SEL understanding in the education setting. On the other hand, those which did have SEL lens of analysis, specially with regard to Indian studies on school textbooks precedented the advent of NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023. Thus, previous research gaps have highlighted the need for examining how SEL is actually operationalised by treating textbooks as a primary tool for this study and examine the textual and pedagogic content across the full range of SELs. This will lay the preliminary roadmap for translating these competencies in these textbooks into actionable teaching-learning practices.

Thus, this paper intends to not only evaluate a certain set of skills present in the textbook, but also unveil the potential that TWAU textbook may have to lay the foundation for developing socio-emotional learning among the children from a young age. This, as a result, aligns with the values ingrained in the NEP 2020 policy to uphold empathetic, democratic and transformative education.

Objectives of the Study

1. To analyse the representation of SEL competencies in TWAU textbooks (Grade III to V) of NCERT using the CASEL framework.
2. To identify gaps and opportunities for enhancing SEL integration in TWAU textbooks.
3. To propose evidence-based recommendations for enhancing curriculum to strengthen socio-emotional competencies in the TWAU textbooks.

Methodology

This study employs two qualitative methods to analyse the TWAU textbooks. Content analysis comprehensively categorises and analyses text to reach a conclusion, while semiotic analysis interprets visual data.

Content analysis extracts and classifies data of the written material into different categories and subcategories according to the themes of Socio-Emotional Learning. On the other hand, Semiotic analysis evaluates visual elements or illustrations from the textbook by sample selection, followed by identifying the connotative and denotative meanings that elucidates the presence of Socio-emotional learning. Integrating these two methods for textbook analysis provides an extensive bird's eye view of both textual and visual elements in the textbooks and reduces biases during interpretation.

Research Sample

The review analysed *'The World Around Us'* (TWAU) textbook series for Grade III to V which has been developed by NCERT, aligning with NEP 2020 and NCFSE 2023. These textbooks have attempted to integrate social science, science and environmental studies through cross cutting themes and elements to promote a holistic and experiential approach to learning. The selection of these textbook gives primacy to its relevance with the present policy and curriculum discernment.

The TWAU textbook series includes: Our Wondrous World - Grade III (published 2024), Our Wondrous World – Grade IV (published 2025), Our Wondrous World – Grade V (published 2025).

Research Procedure

In the first stage, the TWAU textbooks were selected for analysis of all the chapters of the 3 books. The 'Our Wondrous World' textbook - Grade III consists of 12 chapters covering 4 units. The 'Our Wondrous World' textbook - Grade IV consists of 10 chapters covering 5 units. And, 'Our Wondrous World' textbook- Grade V consists of 10 chapters covering 5 units.

In the second stage, different sections of the chapters, including the textual passage content, activity questions, reflective questions, and illustrations that represent Socio-Emotional Learning were marked and categorised into 5 competencies of the CASEL Framework – Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. For example, a reflective question regarding how one can take care of the elderly and sick family members was classified under *responsible decision-making* as it emphasizes on taking actions and being responsible for their well-being. Likewise, an illustration depicting a father cooking food for his children was categorised as *relationship skills*, highlighting the breaking of gender stereotypes and supporting family in household chores.

In the third stage, these data were analysed using a mixed-method approach of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Frequency counts of the 5 competencies were calculated and converted into for the purpose of comparison between the categories.

Finally, in the fourth stage, the research findings were synthesized about the descriptive and qualitative analysis of each Socio-Emotional Learning category with illustrative examples and identification of predominant skills at each grade, followed by recommendations for strengthening the integration of SEL components in the future textbook development.

Findings

In this section, the results are analysed according to the 5 CASEL components of Socio-emotional skills. A total of 205 content items (both textual and visual) depicting socio-emotional components were located in the 3 textbooks across the grades III to V. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of SEL categories in Textbook content (textual and visual)

Sl. No.	Categories of SEL Components	Incidence	Percentage
1.	Interpersonal Relationship Skills	47	22.92%
2.	Responsible Decision Making	70	34.14%
3.	Self-Awareness	19	9.26%
4.	Self-Management	29	14.14%
5.	Social Awareness	40	19.51%
	Total	205	

As can be learned from Table 1, of the three textbooks, it appears that out of the 205 content items that represent socio-emotional skills, 70 (relative frequency of 34.14%) content items focused on the skill of responsible decision making, which is the most frequent in the textbooks. The category that appeared with the lowest frequency was self-awareness (9.26%).

Examples of Socio-Emotional Skills from the Sample Books

Table 2: CASEL Component: Interpersonal Relationship Skills

Grade	Chapter & Pg. No.	Sample Quote
III	Family and Friends (Pg. No. 17)	Let Us Reflect: Write How do family members show their love and care for each other?
III	4. Getting to Know Plants (Pg. No. 55)	Activity 2: Make Friends with a Plant! Choose one plant, preferably a shrub with a thick stem or a tree that you want to make friends with. You can do this by yourself or with a group of your classmates. Name your plant, just like you might name a pet. Take care of the plant by watering it each day. Also protect it as your friend.
IV	Living Together (Pg. No. 10)	Discuss: It is important for communities to come together in times of need. What do you think about this statement? Do people in your locality come together and support each other? Can you remember one such occasion?
IV	Living Together (Pg. No. 11)	Write: Think about your family or community. How do you work together to help each other while preparing for a festival or any other occasion?
V	10. Earth - Our Shared Home (Pg. No. 176)	Write: What does 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' teach us? How can we live like one big family, even when we are different?

Table 3: CASEL Component: Responsible Decision Making

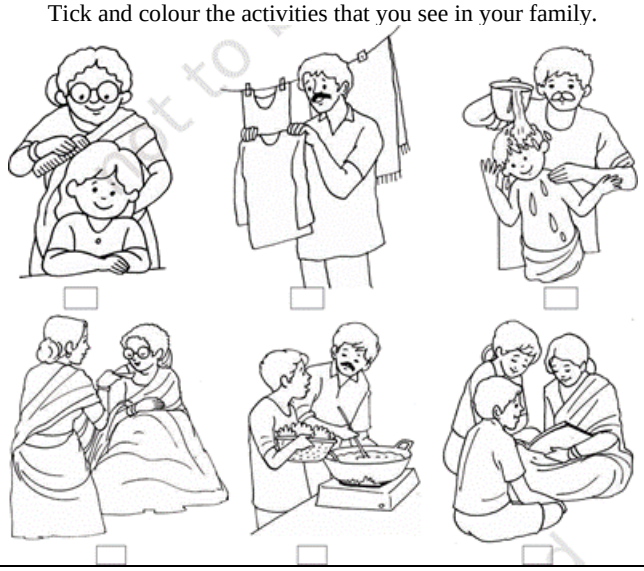
Grade	Chapter & Pg. No.	Sample Quote
III	Family and Friends (Pg. No. 9-10)	Activity 1: Tick and colour the activities that you see in your family. 
III	8. Food We Eat (Pg. No. 108)	Let Us Reflect: Discuss 2. Why is it important to avoid wasting food? Can you think of some ways to reduce food waste at home?
III	12. Taking Charge of Waste (Pg. No. 160)	Write: List the things that you can do to keep your home and classroom clean?
IV	Living Together (Pg. No. 13)	Discuss: What are some of the ways by which we can take care of nature and our neighbourhood? List a few.
IV	2. Exploring Our Neighbourhood (Pg. No. 31)	Let Us Reflect: 1. Imagine you have 100 to utilise in a month. Your task is to plan how to spend and save wisely. Think about your expenses for stationery, snacks, toys, etc. Decide how much you will save in your piggy bank and how much you will use for your expenses. After making this plan, think about how saving money could help you in the future.
V	2. Journey of a River (Pg. No. 31)	Write: Can you list three things you can do to protect the water bodies near you? _____ _____ _____
V	2. Journey of a River (Pg. No. 34)	Activity 7: Discuss what actions you will take to — • prevent flooding • prevent damage caused by flooding • keep elderly people and people with disability safe • keep animals safe

Table 4: CASEL Component: Self-Awareness

Grade	Chapter & Pg. No.	Sample Quote
III	6. Living in Harmony (Pg. No. 79-80)	Visiting your Plant Friend When you are feeling sad, upset or angry you can go to your plant friend and talk to it about how you are feeling. You can also talk to your plant when you are happy. How did you feel after sharing your feelings with the plant?
IV	6. Happy and Healthy Living (Pg. No. 85)	'When do you feel happy? Write your answers in the bubbles given below.'
IV	6. Happy and Healthy Living (Pg. No. 99)	Write: What would you do if someone's touch made you feel uncomfortable ? If you face an unsafe situation, who would you tell? List two situations where you would firmly say 'No'. 'Remember, if anyone ever makes you feel uncomfortable, it is okay to say 'No' and tell a trusted adult, like your teacher or your parents. You do not have to feel uncomfortable or guilty.'
V	4. Our School- A Happy Place (Pg. No. 71)	Let Us Reflect: 3. Sharing one's feelings is exciting. Write a letter to your teacher on 'My School — My Happy Place'.
V	9. Rhythms of Nature (Pg. No. 147)	Write: Try to remember the time you were in Grades III and IV. Think and write about the changes that you have noticed in yourself and your friends, in your school, and in your environment.

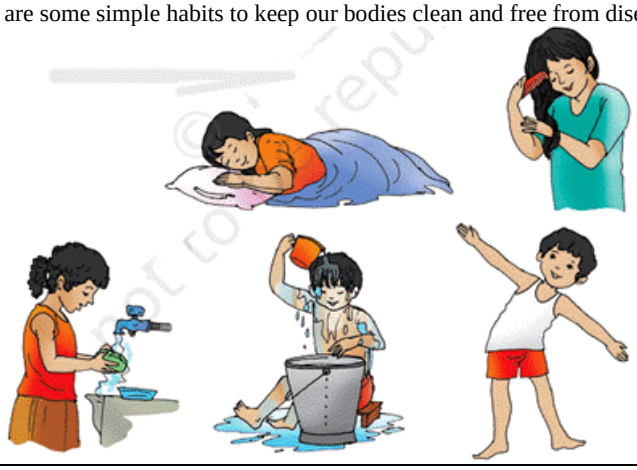
Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study examined how socio-emotional skills are represented in the newly introduced *The World Around Us* for the Preparatory Stages. Anchoring the aims and vision of NEP 2020 and the Curriculum Goals of NCF-SE 2023, the new textbooks have seen a shift to a more integrated and theme-based weaving of SEL components within the textbook content. Through the *Panchkosha Vikas* model that circumferences the 5 interdependent sheaths *(koshas)* of human development: physical *(annamaya)*, vital-energy *(pranamaya)*, mental *(manomaya)*, intellectual *(vijnanamaya)* and finally the bliss sheath *(anandamaya)*, the NCFSE 2023 operationalizes these goals. For the Preparatory Stage, the NCFSE 2023 mandates that socio-emotional development should not be treated in isolation, but rather should be moulded in the play-based, interactive and discovery-based pedagogy. This significance of integrating socio-emotional learning in the educational curriculum has been highlighted in many of the findings of previous research studies (Fisher & Frey, 2019, Adams & Richie, 2017, Kress & Norris, 2004) [23]. This incorporation is of utter importance for curricular area like TWAU, as by default of its nature, the subject is equipped with an expanded horizon for socio-emotional learning to be organically woven into the textbook content covering themes like - community life, interpersonal relationship with nature, health, functioning of everyday objects, etc.

Accordingly, the findings of the current study cater to the research objectives, followed by recording of fresh gaps that emerged from our critical reading. The study reaffirms that all these SEL components - interpersonal relationship skill, responsible decision making, self-awareness, self-management and social awareness - are reflected across all the grades of textbooks to varying degrees, for both texts and pictures.

In comparing all the SEL components represented in the TWAU textbooks, we find that responsible decision making emerges as the most prominent skill. This dominance is structural rather than incidental. Given that the thematic nature of TWAU centres around civic and environmental issues, the content and pedagogical design of this multidisciplinary subject is problem-oriented, where the child is recurrently given opportunities to observe, weigh consequences and choose a course of action - to make changes in his personal life as well as contribute to the social and natural environment in terms of - water conservation, following road safety measures, taking sustainable measures to protect animals and plants, waste segregation, mindful consumption of meals, etc. These examples evidently operationalizes NEP 2020's vision of education as the cultivation of 'good human beings' with ''sound ethical moorings and values' in everyday actions. Thus, educational intervention is indispensable in the Preparatory stages of development of a child to develop and improve decision making skills. For instance, study by Utzschneider & Pruneau (2010) [49] depicted how children aged 10-11 years advanced from simple and egocentric choices to a more structured reasoning, making a balance between their personal needs and environmental. On the other hand, it has also been noted that the content and pedagogies depicting responsible decision making skills in the textbook, yet to some extent also adopts a prescriptive and narrative tone to it, giving directions or instructions to the child to make decisions, rather than creating application based situations that require them to make decisions. Study by Hugerat *et al*., (2021) using conservation dilemmas emphasised on scaffolded, activity based learning, as being environmentally aware does not necessarily translate into action.

Table 5: CASEL Component: Self-Management

Grade	Chapter & Pg. No.	Sample Quote
III	2. Going to the Mela (Pg. No. 21)	Discuss: How do you prepare yourself for a trip?
III	9. Staying Healthy and Happy (Pg. No. 109)	Here are some simple habits to keep our bodies clean and free from diseases. 

<table>
<tr><td>IV</td><td>6. Happy and Healthy Living (Pg. No. 93)</td><td><u>Activity 4:</u>
For a week, keep a record of the food you eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. After every meal, make an entry in the following table. If you ate everything, write ‘Yes’ and add a happy smiley If you left some food, write ‘No’ and add a sad face.
<table><tr><th>Day</th><th>Breakfast</th><th>Lunch</th><th>Dinner</th><th>Did you eat fully?</th><th>Did you waste?</th><th>How do you feel?</th></tr><tr><td>1.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>2.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>3.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>5.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>6.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>7.</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table></td></tr>
<tr><td>V</td><td>4. Our School - A Happy Place (Pg. No. 71)</td><td><u>Let Us Reflect:</u>
4. Which actions would you extend to your home, neighbourhood and communities to make it a happy place for all? Describe any one of them in detail.</td></tr>
<tr><td>V</td><td>6. Energy- How Things Work (Pg. No. 130)</td><td><u>Let Us Reflect:</u>
7. Create and Share:
(b) Make ‘my energy diary’ for one day, record the number of times you have used the electricity fuel and so on.</td></tr>
</table>

Another interesting point noted in the textbook content is TWAU’s modest yet valuable attempt to extend the competency of responsible decision making through financial literacy, a topic which is rarely touched upon at the Preparatory Stages. Questions on saving pocket money, why savings matter and planning expenditure naturally familiarizes the child with responsible finance management, delayed gratification and resource planning, before introducing them as concrete concepts.

The study also noted the presence of interpersonal relationships as the second most dominant SEL skill in textbooks across both textual and visual content; a deliberate mirroring of the Indian socio-cultural fabric. India is broadly characterized as a collectivist society, where the emerging of an individual’s self-identity is embedded in relational domain of one’s family, neighbourhood, community, etc. rather than being centred as an autonomous individual. The Garde IV chapter, ‘Living Together’ of the TWAU textbook introduces the child to the dynamics of living together as a community, sharing food and celebrating festivals such as Van Mahotsav and harvest festivals, pooling in resources and working together at the times of crisis and caring for shared spaces. Thus, TWAU treats interdependence and interrelationships as the initial ground and entry point for further SEL skill development, which then gradually extends towards inculcating and forming relationships with nature (making friends with plants) and subsequently viewing ‘the world as one family’ against the principle of *‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’* , as highlighted in NEP 2020. This foregrounding of interpersonal skills also determines how the pedagogical approach of the textbook does not limit the child to only classroom learning, but expands to his larger socio-cultural environment with adequate scope for activities that involve interaction at the community level. This pedagogic objective has been executed by including a range of formative activities, inquiring and reflective questions that involve interview and ‘ask a family member’ activities that recognizes and builds upon the potential of family and community in learning of the child. Academic activities combining cognitive challenges with social interaction increased the student’s level of involvement in learning and prompted deep and long-term learning (C. Farrington *et al*., 2012; K. Kopelman-Robin, 2020) [22, 27]. Moreover, involvement of parents in the learning process could positively affect students’ achievements academically as well as in terms of emotional and behavioural indicators (M. P. McCormick *et al*., 2016) [33]. In this regard, the underscoring of interpersonal relationship skills in this textbook series expresses a broader pattern with regard to collectivist context, where relationship based competencies are given due importance in the curricula, situating the child culturally and relationally, rather than identifying and labelling them individually (Majadly & Yahya, 2024) [32].

Table 6: CASEL Component: Social Awareness

Grade	Chapter & Pg. No.	Sample Quote
III	12. Taking Charge of Waste (Pg. No. 156)	Show Your Gratitude You can give this to the person who helps to keep the locality or home clean. Tell them that you have made this so that you can reduce waste and their workload. Do not forget to say a big 'Thank You' to them.
IV	Living Together (Pg. No. 8)	Find out from your family members or neighbours about their work. What questions would you ask them? Here are some examples: (a) What do you like the most about your work? (c) What challenges do you face?
IV	Exploring Our Neighbourhood (Pg. No. 31)	Let Us Reflect: 3. As a class, take help of the elders around you to list people in your neighbourhood who helped the community during COVID-19. These could include doctors, nurses, garbage collectors, shopkeepers, teachers and others. Discuss how they made the community safer and why it is important to thank them.
V	5. Our Vibrant Country (Pg. No. 84)	Activity 5: Find out about the languages spoken by students in your class and name them
V	5. Our Vibrant Country (Pg. No. 84)	Activity 5: Find out about the languages spoken by students in your class and name them.
V	5. Our Vibrant Country (Pg. No. 90)	Spirit of Togetherness 'India is a shining example of the spirit of togetherness. We have a rich variety of languages, religions, clothing and traditions. We live together, helping and supporting each other.'

Third, the intrapersonal arena of self-awareness and self-management is relatively narrow in the textbooks as compared to the other three SEL components. Self-awareness and self-management are present particularly in chapters dealing with health, hygiene and routine. Certain chapters promote awareness of contextual and personal changes by asking to observe and note the changes they see in themselves and their peers over the course of time. In other context, this component appears in the form of showing gratitude towards nature, resources, and people whose work and services (for e.g. farmers and sanitization workers) contribute to the society. However, the explicit vocabulary to label one's emotions - the naming of feelings such as anger, sadness, fear, happiness is underutilised in the text. This is important because self-regulating skills and emotions begin from infancy, when the brain has higher receptivity for neural plasticity, within a window where cognition, language and emotions develop and interact together. Thus, providing the right environment becomes necessary to nurture these capacities (Housman, 2017) [25]. On the other hand, the skill of self-management has manifested in the content majorly through behavioural routine - daily health routine, mindful eating habits, sleep schedule, etc., rather than active cognitive or emotional regulation. Aligning with this, study by Wenz-Gross *et al*. (2018) [51] found that a child's self-regulatory behaviour develops mostly during the Preparatory years, particularly between 3-7 years, making this an important stage for self-management scaffolding. Thus, resilience-focused SEL programmes emphasises that developing self-awareness and self-management skills during elementary years strengthens the child's ability to cope with stress in later life, leading to improved self-regulation, reduced behavioural conduct and better academic performance (Durak *et al*., 2011) [19].

Lastly, Social awareness - the ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts- is primarily represented through cultural and regional diversity, festivities and food. The TWAU textbooks of all the three grades have adequately portrayed India as a plural society - a socio-cultural milieu - inherently recognizes the need for developing competency for social awareness. Chapters like 'Different Lands, Different Lives', 'Our Vibrant Country' and 'Some Unique Places' covers the geographies and ways of life of people across the country, along with constitutional values of fraternity and unity in diversity. However, the concept of pluralism and scope of developing social awareness skills do not penetrate into a structured perspective taking of the social arrangements that exist at large. Exposure to difference, is not by itself sufficient to produce tolerance or cohesion (Alan *et al*., 2021) [2]. Narratives of differently abled individuals, people from weaker socio-economic backgrounds, gender stereotypes, caste and class division are topics that can add depth to the essence of social awareness as an active skill.

New Emerging Insights

The findings from the study also revealed that major proportion of the SEL skills have been introduced in the earlier stages of the textbooks of Preparatory years. Grade III depicted a slightly heavier SEL load than the later grades, which re-emphasises that elementary level is infact a highly receptive stage for consolidating empathy and self-regulation. This cautious design of socio-emotional content embedding is prominently been established in meta-analytical studies that tracked SEL outcomes over time (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak & Weissberg, 2017) [46], and research on emotional competence in early childhood indicate that when SEL skills are systematically taught, the more durable they are and can be generalized to the later outcomes of the child's life (Denham, 2006) [15].

One distinct feature of some of the SEL content designed for the TWAU textbook is that, rather than treating SEL competencies as isolated categories, there is a layered scaffolding - where the development of one socio-emotional competency lays the bedrock or the building block for developing another SEL competency. This gradual layering of competencies has been realised, for instance in the chapter of grade IV 'Food and Health'. The content not only covers about the nutritional value of food but at the same time traces the source of food, the helping hands involved in bringing the food to the table which in turn develops the virtue of 'gratitude' among children - while at the same time also cultivates the self-management competency of mindful eating and preventing wastage of food. Gratitude here is therefore, not a standalone outcome of respecting and valuing food, but also a scaffolding virtue and competency for

developing another socio-emotional skill of self-management evident in one's eating habits.

A further incidental but noteworthy feature that transacts SEL competency in everyday domain of family life is the depiction of interpersonal relationship skills, self-management and responsible-decision making through a non-stereotyped gendered lens. Family members across all ages participate and share household chores, both in the visual and textual content: father cooking, bathing his child and washing clothes, grandmother combing her grandchild's hair, mother teaching her children. This division of domestic labour signifies shred responsibility and cooperation, rather than assigned conventional roles. This extends to the competency development of responsible decision making in household tasks, such as taking care of the elders, children of both genders packing their own belongings for a family trip, etc. This is a fresh departure from the usual depiction of domestic labour shared in an Indian household. According to a study by Huang & Liu (2024), the school textbook usually depicted women and children to be the sole bearer of household responsibilities with minimal or no male participation. This is supplemented by the findings of another study by Kosir & Lakshminarayanan (2022) where analysis of Social science textbooks reportedly portrayed patriarchy and gender bias in it's gender structure.

Limitations of the Study

This study has a few limitations. The sample taken for analysis is narrowed down to only *The World Around Us* series textbooks of NCERT at the Preparatory stage, which restricts the generalisability of the results to the broader curriculum and other textbooks across different subjects and grades of different boards. A comparative meta-analysis of the textbooks, teacher handbooks, workbooks, assessment practices across different subjects, boards and grades would give a more concrete and holistic bird's eye view of SEL integration in the Indian curriculum in accordance with the guidelines of the new NCF-SE 2023. Moreover, this study is precisely confined to textbook content analysis of visual and textual representation of SEL competencies, and does not include findings on how these competencies are transacted to the students. Further studies may look at how the SEL competencies in textbooks are perceived and implied through classroom observation, student interviews, teaching-learning interactions, supplementary LTMs and documenting teacher's perspectives. This would facilitate in measuring if these SEL competencies have been met, and not just what the textbooks contains. Additionally, the study is based on the CASEL framework, which does provide a structured and systemic method for content analysis, but at the same time is laid on the grounds of Western frame of reference. This may lead to missing out on many socio-emotional constructs which are very peculiar to the Indian culture's milieu. Thus, a SEL taxonomy, rooted in India's context, encompassing the essence of the NCF-SE framework may be developed.

Recommendations to Implement Textbook

Based on the findings of the study, here are a few recommendations that can serve as an apparatus for integrating these SEL components in everyday learning-teaching classroom practices:

- First, the integration of SEL skills can be more explicitly depicted by the teacher while transacting the textual and visual content to the class, rather than keeping it incidental part of the lesson. As the chapters progress, the teachers can name the SEL competencies visible, or ask reflective questions to their students at the end of a narrative, activity or illustration to gauge and extract their understanding.
- Teachers can creatively have a hand in spreading and balancing the SEL components throughout the textbooks and curriculum in their teaching practices, rather than engaging with these components in a unidirectional chapter-wise method. Connecting the various SEL competencies throughout the textbooks with context-appropriate references would balance out the presence of unevenly distributed content depicting SEL competencies. In particular, the components of Self-awareness and Self-Management warrant more intentional integration in the classroom practices.
- A few of the instruction-driven narratives of textbook content targeting the SEL components, for instance, responsible decision making on social, environmental and civic issues (for e.g. following safety rules, resource sharing, judicious use of food, water and other resources, etc.) could be naturally delivered by the teachers through child-centred application-based dilemmas from real life instances. This would give more agency to the child to weigh the options and consequences, which will in turn build a stronger base for their skills for responsible decision-making.
- The SEL component of 'social awareness' has been majorly depicted through celebration of plurality, in the context of honouring diversity of food, region, language and festivals. The teachers may supplement this understanding of plurality with the dimension of inclusion during classroom activities and discussions. A more structured perspective taking content, narratives and activities on inclusion of children with disabilities, migrant and socio-economically disadvantage families, etc. may help the children actively develop and exercise empathy along with a knack for cultural appreciation.
- The teachers can plan and construct formative assessments that provide clear markers to track the progress of the child in terms of SEL development, rather than treating it outside the assessment criteria. This can be executed through simple portfolio tasks, observation markers and rubrics for socio-emotional learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this textbook analysis were to gauge and map the prevalence and the foundation of socio-emotional skills in *The World Around Us* textbook series, rooted in the vision of NEP 2020 and NCF-SE 2023 curriculum. The textbook series did take a noteworthy step in integrating and representing these SEL competencies rooted in the child's everyday context. It fosters these goals by utilizing many creative and community- involving pedagogical approaches that creates opportunities for the child to interact with his social, physical and natural environment beyond his classroom settings - a comparatively overlooked strategy in other subjects. The textbook, did however have an implicit take of these SEL competencies which were altogether unevenly spread throughout the chapters, across all the three Preparatory grades. Content depicting the development of explicit SEL skills were concentrated in a handful of chapters, rather than maintaining a consistency across the series. It was also noted that more

weightage was given to one particular SEL skill, i.e., at the expense of adequate representation of other SEL skills like
This textbook series has immense potential for enhancing and sustaining SEL exposure, given that it already has rich contextual narratives for the child, multidisciplinary approach in understanding concepts, inculcation of inclusivity and handing over the child the agency to observe, contribute and take independent decisions, through reflective questions and activities. In this regard, the limitations that emerged out of this study is not a verdict but a roadmap for the next editions and the teachers to balance the competencies, name the skills and make these skills explicitly applicable from textbook content to real-life practice.

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How to Cite This Article

Nath T, Krishnan D. Analysis of 'The World Around Us' textbooks of NCERT at preparatory stage through the lens of socio-emotional skill framework. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Comprehensive Research. 2026;5(6):1–13. doi:10.54660/IJMCR.2026.5.6.01-13.

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