

Exploring the Role of Social and Emotional Learning and Personal Resilience Interventions in Saudi Higher Education Curricula

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Abstract

This study examines the integration of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and personal resilience into the curricula of higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia. Despite the growing empirical evidence highlighting the positive impact of SEL on academic achievement, emotional well-being, and resilience, there is a gap in research regarding its specific implementation within Saudi colleges. The study highlights that while SEL is increasingly recognised as essential for fostering emotional intelligence and resilience, its incorporation across various academic disciplines remains inconsistent. Through qualitative interviews with students and faculty, the research identifies several themes: a growing emphasis on emotional regulation and personal development, variability in SEL integration across departments, and the emergence of resilience-building in psychology and leadership programmes. The study also finds that SEL activities are often relegated to extracurricular programmes rather than integrated into core curricula, limiting their effectiveness. Faculty members acknowledge the importance of SEL and resilience, but face challenges related to time constraints, insufficient training, and competing academic priorities. Students, on the other hand, express a desire for broader SEL integration across all subjects, emphasising the need for resilience training to help them cope with academic pressures and personal challenges. The study concludes with recommendations for more structured SEL and resilience initiatives to enhance student outcomes in Saudi higher education.

Keywords: social and emotional learning, resilience, curriculum, higher education institutions

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Background

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a transformative educational approach that helps students explore and embrace their unique identities, develop meaningful relationships, and gain a deeper understanding of their emotions (Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Min et al., 2024). At its core, SEL empowers students to set and achieve personal goals. Essentially, students learn how to be proper goal-setters and achieve personal goals while being aware of the importance of compassion and empathy (Silke et al., 2024). This targeted approach aims to assess the essential skills required for success while minimising distractions or failures that could hinder emotional regulation or social development in the classroom (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2023).

Resilience building is a key component of SEL interventions. Resilience refers to a person's capacity to achieve positive outcomes in the face of challenging situations (Noltemeyer & Bush, 2013). It is a socially and contextually driven process that allows students to overcome adversity and attain success (Ang et al., 2021). Students who develop resilience can maintain stable levels of achievement, motivation, and functionality even under stressful circumstances (Carsone et al., 2024; Khedr et al., 2023). Resilience can be enhanced by addressing protective factors and minimising risk factors across multiple levels, including individual, family, school, and community (Noltemeyer, 2014). For example, academic resilience-related factors can heighten resilience levels in college students (Carsone et al., 2024). Resilience training, which helps students develop inner strengths and social competency, should be integrated into all higher education curricula to support college students both during their studies and beyond (Ang et al., 2021).

While there is a lack of sufficient research on the direct link between resilience and SEL, studies have shown that both resilience and SEL are critical to students' academic performance, well-being, and future success (Varela et al., 2013). Integrating SEL strategies in higher education can promote stress resilience, self-management, social awareness, and student motivation to learn (Elmi, 2020). A study conducted in Saudi Arabia found that a significant proportion of students transitioning to distance learning during the pandemic experienced high levels of anxiety, depression, insomnia, and low resilience (Alyoubi et al., 2021). Another study suggests that resilience serves as a protective factor against emotional exhaustion, while stress is a risk factor for emotional exhaustion (Alsharif, 2020). These findings emphasise the need for targeted intervention and instructional strategies that instil resilience and stress reduction in order to mitigate the adverse effect of the pandemic on students' mental well-being (Alyoubi et al., 2021). However, in the context of Saudi higher education, there is a lack of social and emotional support for students due to poor educational content that does not meet their learning needs (Alenezi, 2020; Almoslamani, 2022).

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Education

At all levels of education, including professional and continuing education programmes, there is an increasing focus on SEL (Conley, 2015; Keefer et al., 2018). SEL is not only a trend; it is an efficient strategy that can enhance classroom relationships, academic growth, students' motivation, and engagement (Reicher, 2010; Srinivasan, 2019; Tantillo Philibert, 2018). SEL has attracted growing interest in international educational reforms because it can equip students not only with academic achievement but also with the emotional and social difficulties they will face throughout their lives (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones-Schenk, 2019; Lisciandro et al., 2016; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Strahan & Poteat, 2022; Taylor et al., 2017).

SEL is increasingly recognised as an integral part of education, having a positive effect on both academic performance and personal resilience (Almakky, 2025; Khasawneh, 2023).

Extensive research also attests that SEL skills can be instructed and assessed effectively. Not only do these skills foster positive growth but also decrease problem behaviour. They lead to academic success, improved citizenship, and healthier lifestyles (Durlak & Weissberg, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014). In addition, studies have demonstrated that SEL is a predictor of long-term life success, including high school graduation, college graduation, and stable employment (Hawkins et al., 2008; D. E. Jones et al., 2015).

The growing body of evidence demonstrating that SEL promotes academic, personal, and professional success has led to supportive policies at federal, state, and local levels. These policies aim to integrate social, emotional, and academic development in young people (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Taylor et al., 2017). Various SEL frameworks have been proposed, each outlining the different elements affecting SEL, including school culture, climate, and pedagogical competence of teachers. These models target student outcomes like academic success and social-emotional competence (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Literature Review

Students' and Teachers' SEL Competencies

SEL involves processes through which students acquire and apply knowledge, attitudes, and skills to understand and manage their emotions. It also helps them feel empathy for others, set and achieve positive goals, develop positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Silke et al., 2024). CASEL has identified five interrelated competencies central to SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023; Elmi, 2020; Silke et al., 2024; Weissberg et al., 2015).

Teachers' social-emotional competence plays a significant role in shaping the learning context and fostering SEL within classrooms and schools. Their ability to manage social and emotional demands in the classroom directly influences student outcomes, including academic performance and SEL development (S.M. Jones et al., 2013). Warm teacher-student relationships promote deeper learning, as students who feel comfortable with their teachers are more likely to engage with challenging material and persist through difficult tasks (Merritt et al., 2012). On the contrary, when teachers struggle with managing social and emotional demands, students may show lower performance and reduced engagement (Schonert-Reichl, 2017). Therefore, improving teachers' ability to foster SEL in their students requires enhancing their own social-emotional competence (Jennings & Frank, 2015).

Research indicates that classroom environments, characterised by positive teacher-student relationships, promote both academic learning and SEL (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak & Weissberg, 2015; Lisciano et al., 2016; Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014; Silke et al., 2024). Teachers need more than just the knowledge to teach SEL; they must also possess the dispositions and skills necessary to create a safe, caring, and responsive classroom community. Teachers' own emotional well-being and competence significantly affect their ability to promote SEL effectively (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

Any conversation about teachers and SEL should begin by examining whether teachers accept the idea that education should explicitly promote students' SEL. Recent research shows that the answer is overwhelmingly yes. However, teachers have expressed a need for stronger support from district and school leaders to effectively implement and promote SEL in their classrooms (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

The Role of SEL and Personal Resilience in Higher Education Curricula

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has increasingly integrated SEL into its educational curricula, driven by a growing awareness of its importance in fostering resilience among students (Almakky, 2025; Khasawneh, 2023). SEL has been recognised for its role in promoting emotional intelligence, critical thinking, and problem-solving, skills essential for navigating the complexities of modern educational environments (Al-Asmari, 2014; Al-Ghamdi, 2014; Al-Shakifi, 2015; Pham, 2024; Saud, 2019). As part of this process, resilience enables students to overcome academic and personal challenges, enhancing their ability to manage stress and regulate emotions.

A study conducted in Saudi Arabia by Rayani et al. (2024) explored factors influencing well-being and resilience among nursing students. The study found that nursing students exhibited higher levels of resilience, positively correlating with more favourable perceptions of their well-being. This highlights the potential of SEL in improving students' emotional and academic outcomes.

Further emphasising the connection between resilience and academic achievement, Almulla (2024) assessed academic resilience among college students in Saudi Arabia and explored its correlation with academic performance. The study revealed a significant positive relationship between academic resilience and academic success. Additionally, resilience was particularly high in the sub-dimensions of perseverance, followed by adaptive help-seeking, underscoring the importance of these traits in students' academic journeys.

The studies from Saudi Arabia are consistent with Pham (2024) who emphasises that culturally responsive SEL frameworks are crucial for addressing the socio-cultural context of Saudi students. By implementing SEL in a way that aligns with the cultural and societal values of Saudi Arabia, its effectiveness in promoting resilience can be significantly enhanced (Almakky, 2025). Thus, SEL programmes in Saudi higher education should not only aim to improve academic performance but also foster an emotionally supportive and inclusive environment for students.

The primary role of SEL and personal resilience in higher education curricula is to nurture emotional regulation, self-awareness, relationship building, and decision-making skills (Lubit, 2019). Research has shown that developing social and emotional competencies in these areas is essential for students' overall development, adjustment, and success in higher education (Conley, 2015). Elmi (2020) found that instructional practices supporting SEL are well-suited for engaging learners' multiple intelligences, contributing to better student engagement and resilience. In particular, integrating SEL may be a valuable strategy for promoting interest in subjects like science, building resilience to stress, and enhancing student engagement.

According to Dahleb et al. (2024), integrating SEL in classrooms has been shown to improve both students' emotional well-being and academic outcomes. This is achieved by fostering

essential life skills such as stress management and conflict resolution, which are critical for students navigating the pressures of university life. These skills contribute to their overall resilience, making SEL an essential part of the Saudi educational context.

Moreover, Brill et al. (2025) emphasise the direct relationship between SEL programmes and improved resilience. Their research suggests that SEL helps students develop the capacity to recover from setbacks and maintain effective functioning across various life situations. This focus on resilience is particularly important in Saudi higher education, where societal expectations and academic pressures can be overwhelming (Rayani et al., 2024; Dahleb et al., 2024).

Educators' Perceptions of Incorporating SEL and Personal Resilience

Teachers have a central role to play in successfully implementing SEL and personal resilience in curricula because they are also required to proactively address both students' academic and social and emotional needs (e.g., Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). A study conducted by Min et al. (2024) indicates that teachers are increasingly identifying the significance of SEL in building students' emotional resilience. However, their perceptions of SEL's effectiveness are influenced by their level of training and understanding of emotional intelligence and resilience (Al-Asmari, 2014; Al-Ghamdi, 2014; Al-Shakifi, 2015; Saud, 2019).

In the context of Saudi higher education, incorporation of SEL programmes has been well received, especially among academic staff who view the possibility of such programmes establishing a more balanced approach to student development. Dahleb et al.'s (2024) study found that several teachers recognised the benefit of SEL in enabling students to better face challenges of real life. However, views on its adoption in Saudi colleges are not uniformly positive. On one hand, some educators are enthusiastic about fostering an emotionally supportive learning environment that promotes resilience, viewing it as essential for student development. On the other hand, there are concerns regarding the practical application of SEL within the traditional educational structure, which often prioritises academic results over emotional and social development. Dahleb et al. (2024) recommend that in order for SEL to be successfully incorporated, teachers should receive proper training and resources so that they can establish a conducive and engaging environment for learning. The SEL approach should also entail strategies that explicitly teach social-emotional skills. This involves building self-awareness and empathy, encouraging collaboration through group work, and dealing with the emotional needs of students. These practices in turn build resilience (Silke et al., 2024).

Despite the enthusiasm, challenges remain, especially in the area of educator preparedness. Although beginning teacher education mainly addresses academic knowledge, it sometimes neglects social and emotional ability. Teachers have little to no direct training in emotional self-regulation, regulation of their own emotions and actions, or tracking their progress towards personal and professional objectives (Pham, 2024; Schonert-Reichl, 2017). This gap in preparation not only impacts their own health but also influences student achievement and behaviour (Jones-Schenk, 2019; Lisciandro et al., 2016). In order to overcome these difficulties, effective training initiatives must be implemented and sufficient resources made available to support educators in incorporating SEL in their instruction.

Students' Perceptions of Incorporating SEL and Personal Resilience

The perception of SEL among students is often shaped by their personal experiences and their awareness of emotional challenges in both academic and personal aspects of their lives (Lubit, 2019). According to Durlak et al. (2011), students exposed to SEL programmes in school tend to perform better than their peers on various indicators, such as demonstrating positive social behaviours, empathy, teamwork skills, and improved academic outcomes.

Research also shows that students' ability to understand and manage their emotions and relationships is closely linked to academic and career success (Jones-Schenk, 2019; Strahan & Poteat, 2022). Pham (2024) found that students participating in SEL programmes report enhanced emotional well-being, improved stress management, and stronger resilience, all of which are essential for navigating the challenges of higher education. Moreover, SEL programmes help students develop a sense of belonging, fostering positive social interactions and emotional stability.

Several studies have demonstrated that learning SEL skills and building resilience help students manage stress, improve relationships, and boost their academic perseverance (Ang et al., 2021; Maunder et al., 2023; McGillivray & Pidgeon, 2015). Students, particularly those involved in specific SEL initiatives, for instance the "HEROES" programme, have demonstrated improved resilience, suggesting that SEL interventions can significantly contribute to both personal growth and academic success (Brill et al., 2025). However, some students view SEL as an additional burden on their already demanding academic workload. These students may not fully understand the long-term benefits of SEL, focusing more on immediate academic pressures (Brill et al., 2025; Dahleb et al., 2024).

Furthermore, SEL interventions that focus on practical strategies, such as mindfulness, role-playing, self-evaluation, reflective thinking, and reflective journaling, have been shown to foster a deeper connection with oneself. Studies have found that these activities help students improve emotional regulation and develop a better understanding of their own behaviours (Hammad Al-Rashidi & Aberash, 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Taylor et al., 2017). Despite this, the level of integration and student engagement with SEL varies, often depending on the support and motivation provided by faculty members (Brill et al., 2025; Dahleb et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, integrating SEL into the curriculum presents several challenges. As Lisciandro et al. (2016) point out, students often resist SEL programmes due to their novelty and the difficulty in reconciling emotional development with academic priorities. This resistance underscores the need for educational institutions to clearly communicate the benefits of SEL and to integrate it in a way that does not overwhelm students with additional burdens.

Research Gap

Despite mounting empirical evidence indicating that SEL interventions have positive effects on academic performance, resilience, and stress reduction (Alyoubi et al., 2021), there is a substantial gap in the literature from Saudi Arabia on the subject. Although SEL and resilience are known for their capability to promote academic achievement and emotional well-being, few studies have focused on their particular embedding in Saudi higher education courses.

This study seeks to close this gap by examining the role of SEL and personal resilience in Saudi higher education. In particular, the study examines how SEL and resilience are integrated into curricula and assess the perceptions of both teachers and students with regard to these interventions. Through these perceptions, this study offers significant insights into how SEL and resilience can be improved so that they address the changing demands of Saudi higher education students.

Knowledge of how university students and teachers perceive the integration of SEL interventions like resilience into the curriculum is central to an improved understanding of this phenomenon. The study seeks to fill this gap by addressing the following research questions:

- 1) What is the role of SEL and personal resilience in the curricula of Saudi colleges?
- 2) How do educators perceive the incorporation of SEL and personal resilience into the curriculum?
- 3) How do students perceive the incorporation of SEL and personal resilience into the curriculum?

Methodology

A qualitative research design was adopted for its small-scale study. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from faculty and students. Participants were selected using criterion sampling to ensure “selection of cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Patton, 2001, p. 23). Since this is a small-scale study, the sample consisted of 6 students and 4 faculty members from one HEI in Jeddah. An interview protocol was used to collect data pertaining to SEL and resilience and perceptions of the presence of these concepts in the curricula of the higher education institutions. The collected data were analysed using a thematic analysis framework suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts yielded 12 overarching themes.

Table 1

Overarching Themes

Research Question	Themes
How are SEL and personal resilience addressed in the curricula of Saudi colleges?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emphasis on personal development and emotional regulation 2. Variability in SEL integration across courses and departments 3. Growing recognition of resilience and coping strategies 4. SEL and resilience as emerging educational priorities
How do educators perceive the incorporation of SEL into the curriculum to build students' personal resilience?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Challenges in integrating SEL into the curriculum 6. The need for resilience training in higher education 7. Emphasis on both personal and social aspects of resilience 8. Need for ongoing support and institutional commitment

How do students perceive the incorporation of SEL into the curriculum to build personal resilience?

9. Desire for broader integration of SEL across the curriculum
10. Perceived inadequacy of SEL in addressing holistic student needs
11. Need for integrating resilience training into the curriculum
12. Emphasis on developing social competency

The Role of SEL and Personal Resilience in Saudi Higher Education Curricula

The qualitative data from both students and faculty indicate that SEL and personal resilience are increasingly recognised in Saudi higher education, but their integration into the curriculum is still inconsistent. Several themes emerged from the responses:

Both students and faculty highlighted the focus on self-awareness, emotional regulation, and stress management as part of personal development in the curriculum. However, as noted by Student 1 and Faculty 1, these SEL elements are often framed as personal development rather than core academic subjects.

In our courses, we focus a lot on self-awareness and emotional regulation. It's mostly seen as a personal development aspect, rather than a core subject. (S6)

Incorporating SEL into the curriculum has been a relatively recent development. We primarily focus on academic excellence, but in my courses, we try to integrate resilience-building exercises, like group discussions on stress management and personal reflection. (F1)

This aligns with the findings in the literature, where SEL is viewed as a way to improve emotional well-being, social awareness, and stress management but is not always integrated into academic curricula (Elmi, 2020; Reicher, 2010).

The integration of SEL is not uniform across all disciplines. Some courses incorporate SEL activities like teamwork and empathy, but others lack such initiatives.

I believe that the curriculum has begun to recognise the significance of emotional intelligence. For instance, in some of my courses, we participate in activities that teach teamwork, empathy, and communication skills. However, honestly, I do not believe that it is a regular part of all courses. (S3)

The integration of SEL into the curriculum remains limited to certain courses and is often seen as an extra component rather than a core educational focus. (F2)

This variability is consistent with research indicating that while there is increasing awareness of SEL's importance, its application remains uneven, particularly in institutions where the focus is more on academic excellence than on holistic student development (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

There is a noticeable shift toward resilience-building, particularly in psychology and education programmes.

In some of the education and psychology courses, there is emphasis on building resilience skills. We are taught how to recover from failure, set realistic goals, and cope with academic pressure. (S3)

We focus on equipping students with the skills to regulate their stress and emotions. (F4)

Students and instructors alike emphasised the value of educating students on how to manage academic stresses and personal struggles, in concordance with the literature highlighting the value of resilience training on campus (Almulla, 2024; Pham, 2024). The findings resonate with research indicating that resilience is needed to overcome academic and personal adversities (Carsone et al., 2024).

SEL activities are frequently offered through workshops and seminars, but they are not always integrated into core courses. As Faculty 4 mentioned, while there is a growing recognition of SEL's importance, it remains largely "supplemental". This echoes the broader trend in higher education where SEL is often relegated to extracurricular programmes rather than being systematically integrated into the curriculum (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

Both students and faculty noted the increasing incorporation of SEL and resilience, especially in leadership and personal development programmes.

In our leadership courses, self-management and coping are a given priority. I believe that resilience is getting more ingrained in some areas, particularly as students struggle academically and move into the workplace. (S3)

In my courses, I emphasise the development of strong relationships and cultivating resilience in adversity. (F4)

The increasing recognition of such competencies also aligns with the research of Rayani et al. (2024), which reveals that resilience programmes positively affect students' academic and emotional performance. Full institutionalisation of these practices across all departments, however, remains a work in progress.

Educators' Perceptions of the Incorporation of SEL into the Curriculum to Build Students' Personal Resilience

Educators' responses reflect both recognition of the importance of SEL and the challenges in its implementation:

Faculty acknowledged the importance of SEL but pointed out several challenges, including time constraints, lack of structured training, and competing academic priorities.

I believe integrating SEL is crucial, but we have time and resource issues. We require more training for teachers to be able to teach these ideas effectively. It's usually left as an optional section of the curriculum, but I feel it should be a mandatory component for all students. (F2)

This is consistent with the literature that highlights the need for faculty training and institutional support to successfully integrate SEL into the curriculum (Durlak & Weissberg, 2015; Min et al., 2024).

Faculty members expressed strong support for the inclusion of resilience training, highlighting its benefits for managing academic pressures and enhancing students' overall well-being.

I strongly believe that resilience training should be part of the curriculum. It is necessary to equip students with coping mechanisms for failure, stress management, and cooperation. (F2)

This perspective is supported by research suggesting that resilience training can significantly improve students' ability to cope with stress, thus enhancing their academic experience and success (Alsharif, 2020; Dahleb et al., 2024).

Educators highlighted the importance of addressing both emotional resilience and social competency, noting that students need to develop not only emotional strength but also the skills necessary for positive interpersonal interactions.

Resilience-based programmes need to extend beyond stress management. It should enable students to become emotionally resilient and socially competent, which are the keys to their overall success. Inner strength enables students to cope with pressure, and social competency enables collaboration and effective communication in academic and interpersonal environments. (F1)

This is consistent with evidence in the literature that highlights the dual role of resilience programmes in developing both inner strength and social competence (Brill et al., 2025; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Faculty also expressed the need for ongoing institutional support to effectively deliver SEL.

I think incorporating SEL is essential, but we face challenges in terms of time and resources, besides continuous training. (F3)

This finding echoes the research by Dahleb et al. (2024), which emphasises that the successful implementation of SEL programmes requires continuous support, training, and resources from the institution.

Students' Perceptions of the Incorporation of SEL into the Curriculum to Build Personal Resilience

Students' perceptions align with many of the findings from the faculty interviews but also highlight unique challenges and desires:

Students expressed a desire for SEL to be integrated into all subjects, rather than just being addressed in isolated workshops or seminars.

I think it's good that they are trying to teach us emotional intelligence, but I'm not sure if it's enough. It would help if SEL topics were more incorporated into every subject, rather than just in occasional workshops or seminars. (S1)

In my experience, it's not something that's well embedded in the curriculum. I'd like to see more emphasis on practical emotional management techniques that we could apply in day-to-day situations. (S2)

This reflects the literature's call for SEL to be incorporated throughout the curriculum, as it can significantly impact students' academic performance and personal resilience (Conley, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011).

Students acknowledged the value of SEL but felt that its scope was limited.

I like the occasional resilience workshops, but overall, I believe the focus is on grades. It seems like SEL is reserved for students who are struggling emotionally or academically, as opposed to something that might benefit everyone. (S2)

I believe in the value of personal resilience courses, particularly when we are working with pressure, but there is still a stigma in talking about feelings openly. (S6)

Students believed that although resilience training was useful in coping with academic stress, it did not cater to overall mental health needs. This is consistent with research that suggests SEL programmes must cover both academic stress and overall emotional well-being to be effective (Alyoubi et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2024).

Many students expressed support for resilience training as a consistent part of their education.

I believe including resilience training in the curriculum would be very beneficial. It would equip us with the skills to handle academic stress and failures as well. (S5)

Resilience is certainly relevant in college. Having it part of the curriculum would allow us to develop coping skills early on, and I believe it could really alter the way we respond to challenges. (S4)

The students argued that resilience training would enable them to better cope with the pressures of university life. This argument is consistent with research findings indicating that resilience training enhances students' academic outcomes and emotional regulation (McGillivray & Pidgeon, 2015; Dahleb et al., 2024).

Students also highlighted the significance of emotional resilience and social skills, including communication and teamwork skills.

Resilience programmes must equip us to have self-confidence and emotional resilience so that we can also overcome personal setbacks. Learning to manage relationships, develop empathy, and manage setbacks positively is essential. (S4)

He is consistent with literature suggesting that effective resilience programmes should build both personal and social skills to support students in navigating academic and personal challenges (Strahan & Poteat, 2022; Varela et al., 2013).

Conclusion

The incorporation of SEL and resilience at Saudi higher education is ongoing but continues to face challenges in terms of consistency across departments and institutional support. Students and educators alike appreciate the value of these skills in supporting academic success and well-being, but greater institutional commitment, structured training, and more consistent curriculum incorporation are urged. The results affirm the increasing body of research highlighting the importance of SEL programmes in addressing personal as well as social dimensions of resilience in order to make students flourish academically and personally. More work is required to completely integrate SEL in Saudi colleges' educational system in a way that all students can enjoy access to these essential life skills.

Results of this study can be utilised to design initiatives that aim at SEL and individual resilience in order to enhance academic performance, student well-being and long-term success prospects. Outcomes of this study can provide valuable information on how Saudi university instructors can facilitate the cultivation of effective learning strategies among students.

Implications for Educational Practice

The results of this research highlight the increasing awareness of SEL and personal resilience in Saudi higher education. These findings are significant for educators and policymakers seeking to promote comprehensive student development. The implications of the study indicate that universities need to more systematically integrate SEL and resilience-building practices in all academic fields. Although some of these programmes, especially in leadership and psychology, have begun incorporating these skills, an even more standard and holistic application is imperative. Teachers need to be well-trained to implement SEL programmes consistently and thoroughly, thus ensuring depth and consistency of application. In addition, the development of resilience through formal curricula can do much to improve students' capacity to manage academic stress as well as personal adversity, enhancing both emotional well-being and academic performance. Institutions must incorporate SEL as an integral part of their curriculum, apart from voluntary workshops and extracurricular activities, so that students can acquire essential life skills, including emotional control, social understanding, and stress management.

Limitations

While the study provides valuable insights into the integration of SEL and resilience in Saudi higher education, there are certain limitations that have to be noted. To start with, the research is built on a limited sample of 6 students and 4 faculty members at a single higher education institution within Jeddah. This smaller scope could limit the generalisation of the research to other institutions or even geographical areas within Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the research utilises qualitative approaches, which, although rich in detail, are prone to researcher bias and cannot advance absolute conclusions on the extent or efficacy of SEL programmes in the larger educational community. Moreover, the use of interview data from participants in the study implies that SEL and resilience perceptions may not have captured actual practices or results completely. Future research can be based on larger, more representative samples, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology to gain more complete insights into the effect of SEL on pupils' achievement and well-being within various settings.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

Generative AI or AI-assistive technology such as Grammarly and ChatGPT 4.5 with advanced reasoning were used in writing, improving, or proofreading this manuscript. Include information such as the name of the software, the intended use, and the extent of use.

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